



Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

Local Roots, Global Connections.

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

Greetings! Much has happened in the past year with the COVID-19 pandemic, and all of our lives have been impacted and forever changed. The Central Missouri RPCV group had to pivot all of our activities to a virtual space, and we made hard decisions to postpone some community engagement efforts and partnerships. Despite the challenges we all experienced, the group has come together to support one another and our communities in a beautiful way. With around 175 members, that is no small feat. **In the past year, we hosted in nearly 30 engagement efforts!** This includes but is not limited to: a virtual social, EPCV webinar, informational webinars, Trivia Night, Loaves & Fishes, Adopt-a-Spot, congressional advocacy, supporting local voter engagement efforts, 3rd Goal Film Series, and celebrating Peace Corps Week. We also developed several new community partnerships, and look forward to working with these organizations as the world becomes a healthier place.

I wish to thank all of those who have worked hard to make our impact possible. Particularly, **I give a heartfelt thanks to the Board of Directors, Don Spiers, Ashlee Christiansen, Trevor Harris, and Pat Westhoff for everything you do.** Here's to another year of community building, engagement, advocacy, and education!

ERIN ROBINSON

*Board President
Botswana, 2006-2008*

MEET THE BOARD



ERIN ROBINSON

President
Botswana, 2006-2008



JENIFER PILZ

3rd Goal Film Festival
& Social Chair
Mali, 1993-1994



WHITNEY CRAVENS

Vice President
Ukraine, 2018-2020



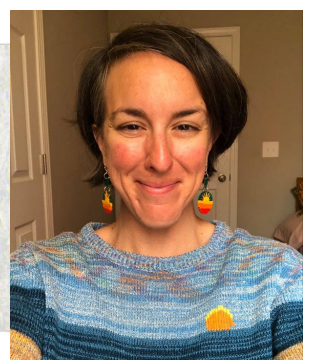
STEVE OLSON

Outreach &
Speaker's Bureau
Guatemala, 1995-1997



FRANK YATES

Treasurer, Webmaster,
& Membership Chair
Ghana, 1973-1976



MEGAN GORE

Social Chair
Guyana, 2009-2010



JUDITH STALLMANN

Secretary
Honduras, 1973-1976

New to the Board was Jenifer Pilz who was elected in May 2020, and Whitney Cravens who was appointed in June 2020. The Board reorganized roles and Erin Robinson served her first year as President. We said goodbye to Megan Gore, who retired from the Board in April 2021. We will also say goodbye to Judith Stallmann and Whitney Cravens in May 2021, as they are not seeking re-election. Thank you for your service! The Board met five times over this past year. Interested in serving? It's fun and a great way to network with other RPCVs.

MEET OUR VOLUNTEERS



TREVOR HARRIS

MU Strategic Recruiter
Zambia, 2008-2010

ASHLEE CHRISTIANSEN

Loaves & Fishes
Coordinator
Zambia, 2008-2011



DON SPIERS

Advocacy & Adopt-a-
Spot Coordinator
Venezuela, 1973-1975

PAT WESTHOFF

Calendar Sales
Guatemala, 1979-1981



Our regular RPCV volunteers are the essential workers of this organization! Ashlee Christiansen, Trevor Harris, Pat Westhoff, and Don Spiers devote invaluable time, energy, and skills to help fulfill our mission and engage with our communities. We owe them a big THANK YOU for all they do.

We are always looking for more individuals to volunteer their talents. If you have some ideas for volunteer activities, please reach out to us!

THANK YOU!

VISION, MISSION, & GOALS

Vision. The vision of the Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteers is to create a space for the Peace Corps community in mid-Missouri.

Mission. Our mission is to connect people in the Peace Corps community with one another and to foster Peace Corps ideals in the broader community.

Goal 1. Provide RPCVs in Central Missouri with networking opportunities.

Objective 1.1. Build awareness of the organization on behalf of RPCVs in mid-Missouri.

Objective 1.2. Create opportunities for members to connect with one another.

Objective 1.3. Create opportunities for members to connect with the community.

Objective 1.4. Create opportunities for members to connect with the broader Peace Corps community.

Goal 2. Provide education about international service and diverse cultures.

Objective 2.1. Engage with media outlets to facilitate public education.

Objective 2.2. Coordinate, sponsor, and participate in educational events.

Objective 2.3. Provide public speakers with experience in international service and skill in another language.

Goal 3. Act as a resource for individuals before and during their Peace Corps service.

Objective 3.1. Engage in advocacy efforts to support Peace Corps interests.

Objective 3.2. Assist in recruitment for the Peace Corps.

Objective 3.3. Provide resources for current Peace Corps Volunteers.

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the Peace Corps program, as all volunteers were quickly evacuated from site in March/April of 2020. This was devastating for those volunteers. The Central MO RPCVs quickly responded by reaching out to volunteers from Missouri to offer our support. We were able to connect with several evacuated PCVs and connect them to mental health supports and offer solidarity. A panel was organized by Whitney Cravens, who also joined our Board this past year. Peace Corps is hopeful to continue programming in early 2022, and we look forward to supporting our PCVs once again!

In light of the pandemic, the Central MO RPCVs also had to adapt and we moved nearly of our programming to virtual formats. As we followed our city/county health official's guidance, we were able to enjoy a few in-person activities - Loaves & Fishes and Adopt-a-Spot - wearing masks and at a safe distance, of course! We hope to resume more in-person programming in later 2021, following the guidance of health officials.

COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY

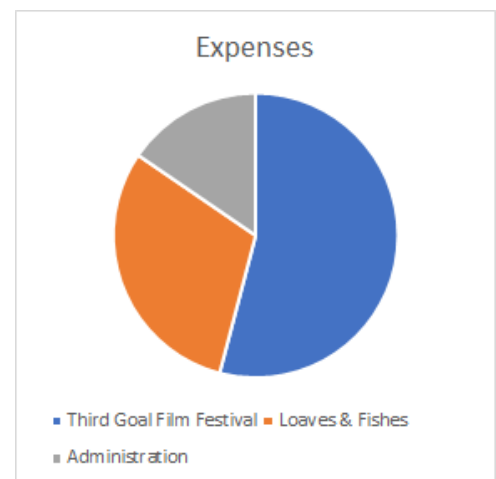
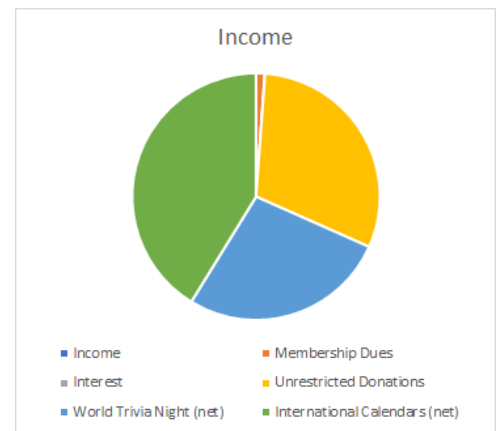
In May 2020 the United States witnessed the murder of George Floyd, a Minneapolis man who died at the hands of police. The Central MO RPCVs put out a statement of solidarity with our Black, indigenous, and communities of color (BIPOC) in the United States. In this statement we highlighted the ways in which our organization could promote the beauty of racial/ethnic diversity and address racial inequity within own communities here in Central Missouri. With this, several of our efforts this past year focused on voter engagement and supporting local organizations/businesses that promote the BIPOC community. We will continue those efforts into 2021, and beyond.

GOODBYE TO MEMBERSHIP DUES!

In August 2020, the Board voted unanimously to eliminate our annual membership dues. We believe this decision has helped promote inclusion among our membership, and we received much positive feedback on the decision. Therefore, there is no going back!

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Income	
Membership Dues	\$ 15.00
Interest	\$ 0.55
Unrestricted Donations	\$ 405.00
World Trivia Night (net)	\$ 360.00
International Calendars (net)	\$ 547.50
	\$ 1,328.05
Expenses	
Third Goal Film Festival	\$ 300.00
Loaves & Fishes	\$ 168.84
Administration	\$ 85.77
	\$ 554.61
Balance Sheet (as of 05/14/2021)	
Assets	
Checking Account	\$ 3,108.61
Savings Account	\$ 6,500.98
PayPal	\$ 149.38
Petty Cash	\$ 98.00
	\$ 9,856.97



As the COVID-19 pandemic limited our ability to gather, we had far less expenses this fiscal year. In addition, while we typically make multiple grants to PCV projects, we weren't able to do that either. Instead, the Board focused on setting priority areas for this year and invested in our 3rd Goal Film Series and Loaves & Fishes. Our two fundraising endeavors, Trivia Night and the calendar sales, yielded us over \$900 in profit that we will stash away until the right community project or PCV grant presents itself. The organization is in great fiscal shape.

Thank you to Frank Yates, for the work you do as Treasurer!

ADVOCACY



In June 2020, Pat Westhoff and Frank Yates participated in a virtual call with other RPCV groups around the country to discuss the murder of George Floyd, and how individual groups can promote a call to action. The Board crafted a statement in response, with concrete details of how the organization will promote our local communities of color.

In August 2020, Frank Yates and Don Spiers attended the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) virtual meeting to discuss the future of Peace Corps.

This past year, our group partnered with the Kansas City and St. Louis RPCV groups to engage in legislative advocacy. On two occasions, members of all three groups met with representatives from Senator Blunt's office to discuss Peace Corps funding, legislation for mental health services for Evacuated RPCVs, and extended health care support for RPCVs. We will continue partnering with both groups to advocate for the future of the Peace Corps, volunteers, and PCVs.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Adopt-a-Spot

Don Spiers continues to coordinate our Adopt-a-Spot volunteer efforts. For those of you who are not aware, our group is responsible for a stretch of Elm Street in downtown Columbia. This past year, we have had a steady turnout of regular volunteers to pick up trash on four separate occasions. As we remained socially distanced and wearing masks, it was nice to have human interaction during times in which everything else around us stood still. As always, thank you to Don for your commitment to our community and coordinating this volunteer effort!



Loaves & Fishes

Ashlee Christiansen coordinates our Loaves & Fishes meal, which is served on the 5th Friday of each month in which there are five Fridays (7/31, 10/30, 1/29, and 4/30). It is hosted at the Wilkes Blvd United Methodist Church. The City of Columbia took over operation of the Loaves & Fishes meal for several months due to the pandemic, however RPCV volunteers were needed to serve to-go meals during those times. About 90 meals were served each date, which culminated into approximately 30 service hours per date (150 hours total). Ashlee, thank you for all of your efforts this year!



Tiger Pantry Food Drive

In October, our organization partnered with the MU School of Social Work and Tiger Pantry to help restock the shelves for students in need of extra food supplies. Sarah Rielley, who is a member of our group and the faculty coordinator for Tiger Pantry initiated this partnership. We collected food for two weeks and held a drive through food donation event towards the end of the month. Volunteers at the food drive showed up in Halloween costumes and 451 pounds of food were collected!



Voter Engagement

Erin Robinson, Jenifer Pilz, and members of our group worked to get out the vote this past fall as the 2020 elections were upon us. The organization partnered with the League of Women Voters to provide various volunteer opportunities. We appreciate everyone's efforts to help promote voter engagement in our communities!

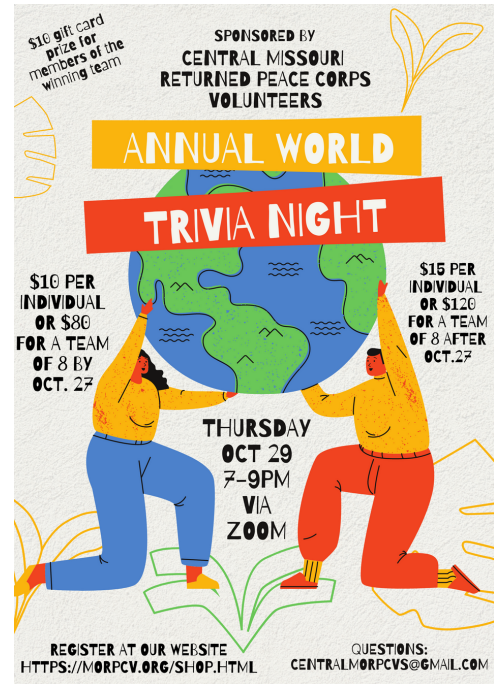
Community Partnerships

Steve Olson has been in touch with local organizations and schools this past year, to help maintain our community partnerships. Steve pitched the idea of creating a World Map Mural with a few of these groups, which he received enthusiastic responses. We hope to get planning underway for this project this summer! Steve donated several 2020 calendars to local high school language departments. He provided them with information about our group in hopes of developing more outreach opportunities in the future. Thank you, Steve!

FUNDRAISING

Our two main fundraiser events, the Annual World Trivia Night and the International Calendar sales, raised over \$900 for the organization. Trivia Night was held virtually in October and nearly 30 people participated. It was a fun night, and Team Infinitesimal won the royal trivia crowns! A lot of laughs were shared all night. Thank you to Jeremy Winter who created the trivia questions and acted as the emcee for the night!

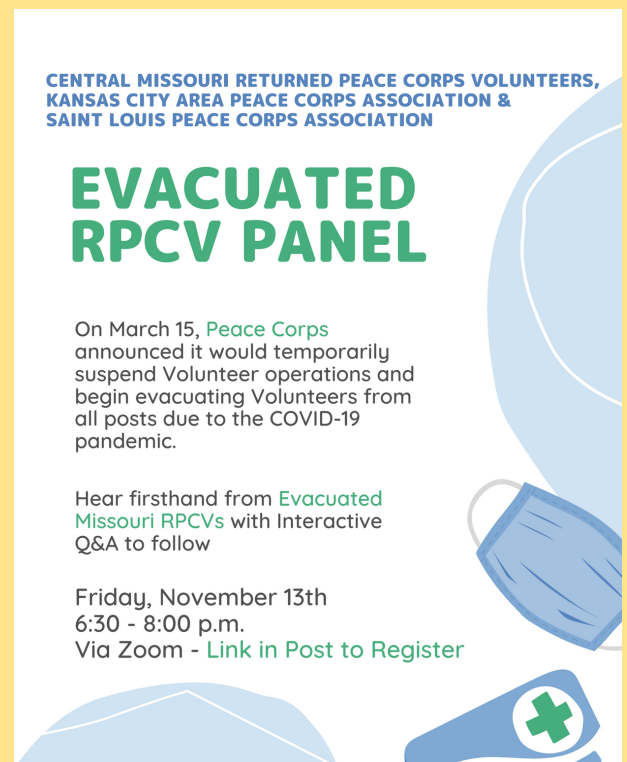
We were happy to continue our tradition of selling the beautiful international calendars produced by the Wisconsin-Madison RPCV group. With some extra effort, we sold nearly all of the 100 calendars that we ordered. Pat Westhoff volunteered his time to help promote calendar sales, thank you to Pat!



SPEAKER'S BUREAU & EDUCATION

Evacuated RPCV Panel

In November 2020, Whitney Cravens coordinated with the Kansas City and St. Louis RPCV groups to organize a panel of evacuated PCVs (EPCVs). The panel included volunteers from the Dominican Republic, Senegal, South Africa, and Ukraine. The volunteers did a great job of portraying their personal experiences, both of leaving and getting re-established in the United States.

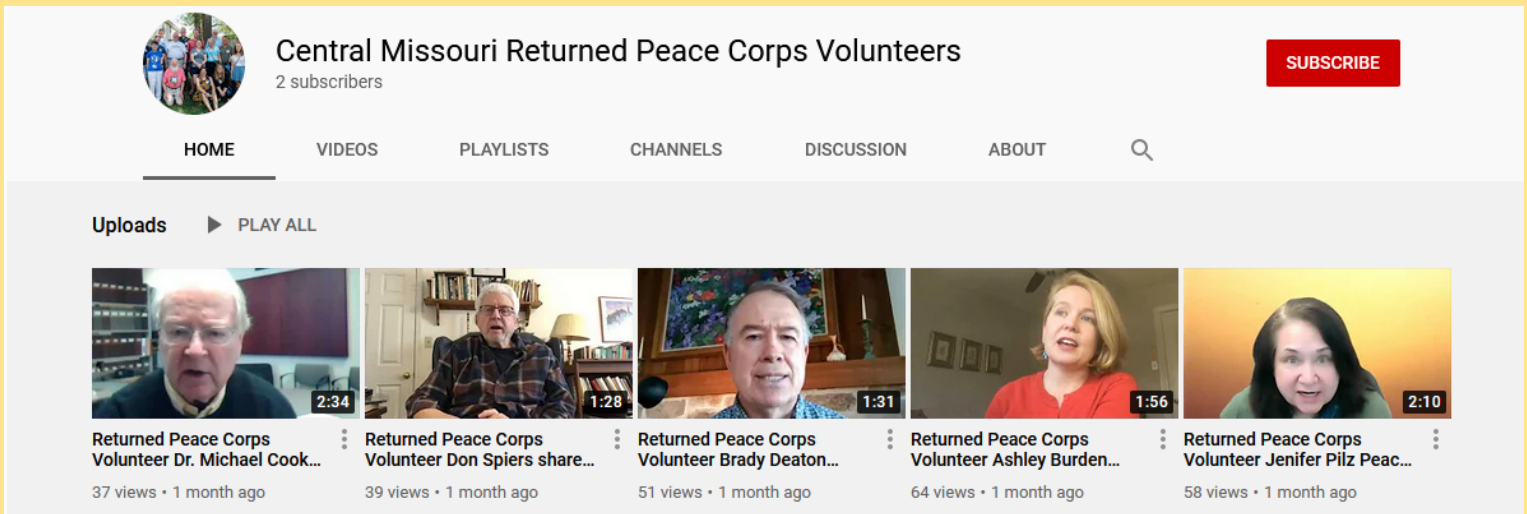


The panel illustrated how leaving experiences differed between countries. For some, it was more chaotic than others. Some EPCVs spoke about the complications with closed borders and cancelled flights. Leaving also differed by how much advance notice people had to pack and say goodbye. There were good questions and engagement from the audience.

The Board voted to support a project of an EPCV from Missouri, but the project was fully funded before the approval was finalized.

Peace Corps Week

Trevor Harris, with the help of Jenifer Pilz, created five RPCV videos to commemorate Peace Corps Week. The videos featured Michael Cook, Don Spiers, Brady Deaton, Ashley Burden, and Jenifer Pilz. Each spoke about memories from their service and its impact on their lives. The videos are posted on the Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteers YouTube channel, check us out!

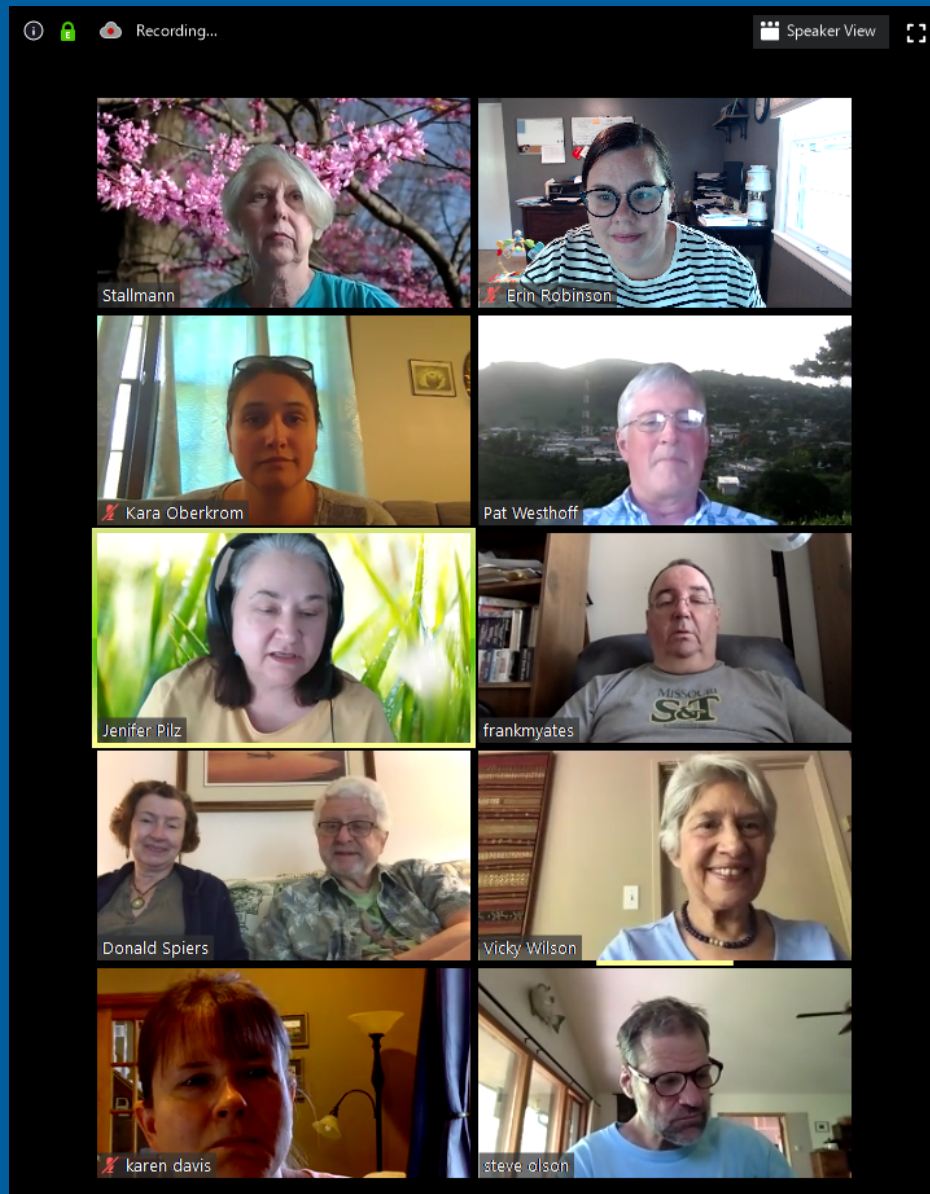


Daniel Boone Regional Library Info Session

Trevor Harris has been hard at work. Trevor coordinated with the Daniel Boone Regional Library to host 'Stories of Peace Corps Service,' a virtual event that highlighted several RPCV's experiences. Panelists included: Lisa Groshong, Mike Burden, Trevor Harris, and Nathan Means. The event was well attended and a fascinating glimpse into the lives of PCVs. Thanks to all who played a role!



SOCIAL ACTIVITIES



Early on in the pandemic, we held one virtual social to help our members connect with each other. It was nice to meet new people, share a few stories, and laugh! Thank you to those who attended. We hope to get back to in-person social activities this year!

3RD GOAL FILM SERIES


The Central MO RPCVs has been coordinating with the MU Africa Hub to continue our 3rd Goal Film Series. Board member Jenifer Pilz leads this effort, and has organized one film screening this year in which we co-sponsored. The Board provided \$300 dollars toward the virtual screening of *Mediterranea* in April 2020. The film details the lives of two friends who immigrated from Burkina Faso to Italy. Grace Oyenubi, a Nigerian journalist who has covered the migration of Africans to Europe introduced the film and RPCVs from Burkina Faso were invited to serve on a guest panel. A total of 29 people attended this virtual event.

We look forward to continuing the legacy of the 3rd Goal Film Festival with this film series format, and will continue to sponsor and co-sponsor events throughout the year!



GRACE OYENUBI, JOURNALIST

MU Africa Hub Presents...




Mediterranean covers the global migrant crisis, as it follows best friends Ayiva and Abas on their treacherous journey from Burkina Faso, in West Africa to Italy.


The two friends find themselves conflicted with reality and the dream life they set out for.

Join us Wednesday, April 21st at 6:00 PM.

The event is free and open to the public. Can also use this link: <http://bit.ly/3vS4xslAfricanfilmSeries>



 African Interdisciplinary Studies Hub

 Missouri Student Association

Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Association



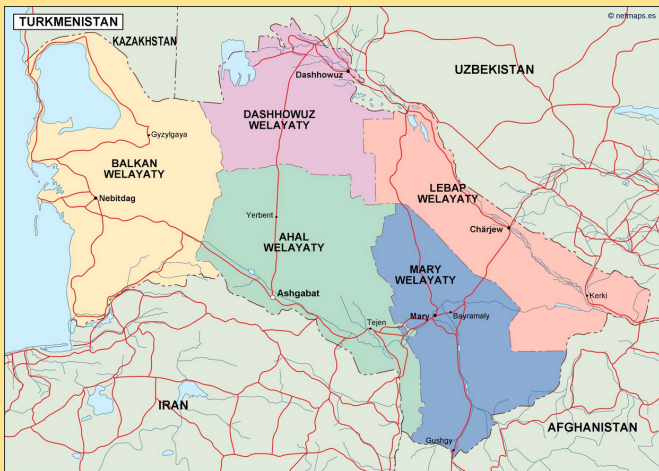
RPCV SPOTLIGHT

Jeremy Winter & Ginny Ramseyer Winter Turkmenistan, 2005-2006



Jeremy and Ginny served in Dashoguz, Turkmenistan from 2005-2006. Jeremy served as a teacher, and Ginny served as a health educator. In this photo, they are standing near the site of the ancient town of Ürgenç, which contains the ruins of the capital of Khwarazm, a part of the Achaemenid Empire. When asked to describe their service, Jeremy and Ginny responded:

"During our service in Turkmenistan, we had wonderful opportunities working with students! Through teaching English at a local elementary school, dispelling health myths at The American Corner, interactions with locals, and exploring this former Soviet state, we were able to provide and gain a richer understanding of our respective cultures. We provided resources for international scholarships, standardized testing preparation, and learned so much about resourcefulness and patriotism!"



RPCV SPOTLIGHT

Whitney Cravens Ukraine, 2018-2020



Q: What is one of your most memorable Peace Corps experiences? One of my most memorable Peace Corps experiences is when I first went to the "banya", or sauna, with my host family! My fellow PCV and I were terrified at not knowing the cultural expectations, but it ended up being a really fun experience and now I love the banya and laugh about it with my host family every time we remember. Also, riding my first train to site with my counterpart and not knowing what lay ahead - there was so much uncertainty and yet it grew me tremendously.

Q: How did the Peace Corps evacuation affect your life and service?

It changed my life and service completely! I used to watch the videos of other PCVs in Ukraine getting evacuated in 2014 because of Euromaidan, and I just thought "wow that's so sad and horrible" and then it happened to me over a period of just a couple of days that my life got completely turned upside down - I lost my job, moved countries and apartments, and left my community, church, and colleagues behind overnight. Now I understand that God had a plan through it all and it was the right timing for my service to end and for me to come back home for the time being. Nonetheless, it was a really challenging transition and it will always have an impact on my life.

Q: How has Peace Corps influenced your post-service life?

Serving in the Peace Corps affirmed that I wanted to spend my life serving others, especially in the cross-cultural context, and I realized when I was serving in Ukraine that God had called me to be a missionary there. I continue to work towards going back to live and serve in Ukraine long-term with the local church, and I am grateful to Peace Corps for helping to prepare me and lead me down the path that I am on now.

Q: What's a distinctive tradition from your host country?

Ukrainians love to eat salo at holidays, which is cured pork fat, and also holodetz - essentially gelatin with meat bones in them. I could enjoy salo if prepared properly, but I wouldn't go near holodetz!

Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteers



Local Roots, Global Connections.

Website: www.morpcv.org
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