



Think Global, Act Local: RPCV News

Volume 43, Issue 4
December 2008

How MPCA's Grants Benefit Girls around the World by Allegra Troiano

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This past spring, MPCA decided to fund Amina Yabis and the Golden Buttons Association in Sefrou, Morocco. With the \$500.00 that we granted the Women's Association, Amina was able to purchase a laptop computer that she will use to keep track of the cooperative's business, which trains young women in weaving and other fiber crafts, which are strictly done by women, many of whom are illiterate.



Arts and Crafts Festival

At the GLOW Camp (Girl's empowerment camp) Amina and fellow association members received computer training each evening. young women realize their potential by focusing on broadening their vision and improving their self-esteem. 31 girls aged 16-20 who dropped out of school came to the GLOW Camp for a week, where they analyzed cultural and gender stereotypes and values and their talents and dreams for the future. They also learned about business, the environment, and health issues and met successful professional women who helped the girls set career and personal goals for themselves.



Group photo with Nancy Riley the Ambassador's wife, and Nezha Bidouane, Olympic Gold Medalist in Track

Madeleine Meeks, the PCV who works with Amina and who wrote the grant proposal, was able to send 2 girls from her village (Ben Smin). These girls said that the experience was eye-opening and they formed many friendships and that they hoped to return next year with stories of how the camp had impacted their lives.

Both the American Ambassador's wife, Nancy Riley and Nezha Bidouane, the Moroccan female Olympic gold medalist in track attended the conference and inspired the girls with encouraging words. The girls were thrilled to meet them and were proud to show off their handicrafts from their villages.

Renewal: Going Back

by Mary Mueller, Interim President



It's that time of year for MPCA membership renewal, annual reflections, and the best ethnic potluck in Milwaukee! Please send in your renewal promptly along with our interest survey. We'd like to know what you want from your local Peace Corps organization (additional comments are welcome). Together we have the opportunity for Continuation of Service in multiple ways. In 2008 we were very proud to support 3 local and 9 international projects through our Partnership Dinners and mini-grant cycle. Read about the most recent projects in this newsletter and help us support more projects in 2009 and buy calendars and/or sell them at \$10 each to maximize our profits. Please suggest other fundraising ideas and consider leading the effort. Our More Peace Corps house party in September was

a big success in prompting Governor Doyle to get on board with the campaign. These are exciting times to work toward a better Peace Corps as well as an increase in numbers.

This October was a personal time for renewal as I went back to Guatemala a decade after finishing service. Although I had been a trainer in 1999 and went back briefly in 2002, this trip afforded more time to reconnect with host families, counterparts, Peace Corps staff, and even a few PCVs. Going back was an incredible experience to see how the country had made gains in infrastructure and technology: cell phones, internet readily accessible, more transportation options, even 24-hour pharmacies and restaurants outside of the capital city. The 4 rural schools I worked with had more classrooms and teachers, two had new basketball courts, one had new flush toilets, and one had a computer lab (16 units) as part of a national program: Escuelas del Futuro. More kids are graduating from 6th grade and going on for higher education.

People were so interested in the November Presidential election and Obama's potential victory. It's wonderful to be warmly remembered and feel a small part of local community history and development. But in spite of the gains, great needs continue that make Peace Corps Volunteers as valuable now as they were in the 60's. The new technologies assist volunteers to better meet the challenges and provide an opportunity to train others how to use them effectively.

Have you been back recently? Take a look at your photos and step back in time to renew yourself and your commitment to the third goal of Peace Corps. I've appreciated my time as Interim President and thank our hardworking board for their enthusiasm and commitment. We welcome Katie Decker as our new Website Coordinator and look forward to working with Bethany Neubauer in her leadership role as President of MPCA.

Thanks to Ryan Kattner and the Minneapolis PC Recruiting Office

As part of a nationwide recruitment consolidation effort by Peace Corps, the Minneapolis and Denver regional recruiting offices will close by January 1, 2009. Wisconsin will now be served by the Chicago office; Ryan Kattner, will continue as a field recruiter based in Minnesota. We have enjoyed a great working relationship with the Minneapolis Office over the years. Our many thanks go to Ryan, his fellow recruiters, and Regional Manager, Allen Gerber. Best wishes to Allen on his retirement and upcoming service in Peace Corps, a second time around!

Messages Home: Thank you from Panama, Thoughts on Obama from Mali



In November, MPCA voted to support a Community IT Center in Panama with a \$500 grant (see page 4 for details). Fred De Worken, the Janesville-native PCV who requested the grant sent MPCA the following message and photos in response. Best of luck on your project, Fred!

Ms. Mueller,

Thank you so very much for donating to the project. Just yesterday the group had their general assembly. They are very excited about the prospect of this cultural center and I am feeling more confident that this will be supported by the government. I am attaching a couple of photos for you to pass on to the group. The first is the group at a meeting they had about a month ago. The second is myself with the President of Panama, Martin Torrijos just after I handed him the group's project. My service ends on Dec 22, but I will be passing this on to my follow up volunteer, Jodianna Ringle. The PSPP will stay on until May, when we will take off the accumulated funds and begin construction of the center. I will pass your email on to her so that she can send you photos of the completed project.

Thank you so very much for your donation and advocacy.

Best Regards,
Fred



Letter home from Emily Janoch, 3rd year PCV in Mali

Hey Folks,

So if you ever want to have a surreal, but largely entertaining week, I recommend taking a seven day, 2500 km (about 1500 mile) road trip with four of your colleagues from work. For added excitement, make sure that amongst the five of you, you have one language in common, but about five languages that any one of you might be speaking at any given time. Also, put yourself in the middle space of the backseat of a pickup truck between two coworkers who take up rather more than their allotted seat space. That is what I have been up to for the last week; it was a blast although I could cheerfully go for another month without getting into a car. We were traveling to Gao, a city on the Niger river right at the edge of the Sahara. My normal car trip pursuits are reading and sleeping, but my coworkers took those as a sign that I needed to be entertained, so I spent a lot of time listening to off-color jokes in languages I only half understand (mostly I was grateful that the details escaped me), and looking out the windows. I should take a moment to tell my uncle Eric that he was right all the times he has hassled me to put down my book in the car and look at the scenery instead.

Arriving in Gao was pretty amazing. Suddenly, the main modes of transportation are the camel and the "iron camel" (motorcycle), everyone wears a turban, and half of the houses are nomad huts called 'bougougs' that look like nothing so much as wigwams. The city goes from green rice paddies down by the river to the Rose Dune, which is the first real sweeping, treeless desert that you can see. One night, we had dinner at someone's house, sitting under the stars on Moroccan-style cushions and eating pigeons out of a communal bowl (note: pigeons are way better than the chicken feet they served me for breakfast, but there's not much meat on them).

In the background was satellite TV playing Barack Obama's speech about what kind of White House dog they were going to get. I cannot tell you how excited Malians are about Obama; most of them didn't sleep the night of the election, and people have hardly talked about anything else all week. But the dog speech was a bit much for them. There was a moment of dead silence, and then everyone turned to look at me. Finally, someone asked "Is he required to have a dog? Is that in the Constitution?" When I answered no, they said, "Well, then why would anyone ask such a dumb question? Don't Americans have anything else to worry about?" I tried to explain about little kids writing letters to the White House pets, and Nixon's Checkers speech, and how pets make politicians seem more normal, but none of these things went over very well. The final verdict among the group was that American politics are simply too complicated for anyone to understand...and they may have a point there.

So that's the news from Lake Woebegone. I hope you are all well, happy, and excited about whatever is going on for you. I hope to hear from you all soon.

Love,
Emily

Grant Awards Support Wisconsin Volunteers

MPCA is pleased to announce the selection of three projects to receive funding in our second round of mini-grants. All three recipients are volunteers in service from Wisconsin. We wish them the best success in their work and look forward to reading their progress reports and seeing photos from the field. The deadline for our next round of mini-grant proposals is April 30, 2009.

Project Title/Brief Description	Amount	Recipient/ Organization
<p>Secondary School Library in Malawi: A new rural school for 8 teachers and over 300 students has less than 50 books. The grant will help in the purchase and/or shipping of donated reference materials and classic English literature needed to pass graduation exams.</p>	\$500	Jenna Mitchler, PCV Kaukana, Wisconsin
<p>School Library Expansion in Malawi: A high school library has been started with donated books and materials and is expanding to include preschool and elementary age books. The grant will help with shipping costs for more donated resources and/or the purchase of additional multi-age books.</p>	\$500	Jessica Orlando, PCV Milwaukee, Wisconsin
<p>Community IT Center in Panama: The Community Info-center will be a 20-computer IT Center providing basic office services and a conference center meeting room to the local community and wider rural district. They now travel 1 to 4 hours by bus to access basic services. It will foster entrepreneurship in the district.</p>	\$300	Frederick De Worken-Eley PCV, Wisconsin Note: This Peace Corps Partnership Project has 28% community support and the original request was \$17,054. Additional support is still needed



Would you like to submit an article for the newsletter? Would you like to tell your Peace Corps story?

If so, please contact me, Amy Olen, MPCA's Newsletter Editor for more information on how to submit or suggest articles. You can contact me with any thoughts and ideas you have about MPCA's newsletter at amytolen@gmail.com. Thank you for your interest and I hope to hear from you!



MPCA Interest Survey - We would love to know your opinion.

Please complete this survey to assist MPCA in understanding the needs and interests of members. Return it with your annual renewal. Thank you!!!

1. Why do you belong to MPCA? Check all that apply.

- Network with other RPCVs/PCV families
- Support the MPCA mission
- Help support the funding of local and international projects
- Opportunities for community service
- Advocacy for relevant issues
- Stay informed about relevant issues/activities
- Participate in social activities
- Other _____ please list
- Not Applicable. I don't belong to MPCA because _____

2. Social activities/events are planned by the MPCA board. The greater MPCA community is also invited to plan activities and provide notice through the listserv.

- I have an interest in leading a social activity?
 No Maybe Yes _____ indicate what activity/ contact info
- I have an interest in attending social events sponsored by MPCA?
 No Yes

Please check all activities/events you would have an interest in attending if the date/time fit with your schedule.

- Holiday ethnic potluck
- Summer picnic
- Annual Send-off of volunteers
- PCPP Dinners (donate and vote on projects)
- Movie nights
- Winter sports (Cross country skiing, Snow shoeing, Skating)
- Concerts in the park
- Hiking Biking Camping
- Game nights
- Ethnic Dining
- Sporting events (e.g. Brewers)
- Other _____ please list

Continued on page 6



Panel Discussion, Parent Brunch

3. Community service activities are sponsored by MPCA and we welcome suggestions.

- I have an interest in participating in community service projects/events?

___ No ___ Yes

Please check all those you have an interest in:

- ___ River Clean up
- ___ Cultural education (schools or civic organizations)
- ___ Hunger related (meal programs, shelters, food drives)
- ___ Book collections
- ___ Other _____ please list



4. The MPCA board is made up of volunteers who serve a 2-year term (with renewal option).

- I have an interest in serving on the board now or in the future.

___ No ___ Maybe ___ Yes, contact me _____

MPCA Membership/Renewal Form

Name _____

Country and Years of Service _____ Assignment _____

Address _____ City _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

___ I would like the MPCA newsletter sent to me via email at the above address. (This saves the organization on printing and postage costs.)

Milwaukee Peace Corps Association membership is not restricted to RPCVs, but is also open to prospective volunteers, PCV parents or anyone whose goals are the same as those of the Peace Corps. Anyone interested in being added to the mailing list can contact Peter Lee at lee@uwm.edu. Unfortunately, due to production costs, if we do not receive your dues after 3 months, we'll have to remove your name from the mailing list. Paid members will receive an MPCA Directory. If you pay dues to the National Peace Corps Association and list yourself as being affiliated with the Milwaukee group, your dues are paid with your national membership.

All renewals are due on January 1.

\$15.00 Minimum MPCA Dues (New members \$7.50 after July 1)

\$22.50 Common Household (New members \$11.25 after July 1)

\$ _____ Other donations

___ If you do NOT wish to have your information published in the annual Milwaukee Peace Corps Association (MPCA) Directory, please check here.

___ MPCA currently shares contact data with the National Peace Corps Association. If you do NOT wish to have your information shared in this way, please check here.

Please fill in this form and send it with a check made out to Milwaukee Peace Corps Association to:

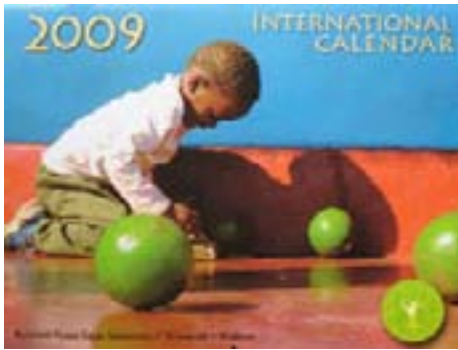
Milwaukee Peace Corps Association

P.O. Box 511322

Milwaukee, WI 53203-0221

Comments?

Peace Corps Calendars for Sale!



NPCA calendars are still available! Help us raise funds through their sales:

1. You can purchase calendars for yourself for \$6 being a member of MPCA.
2. You can sell them to family, friends and colleagues for \$10. You can come and get the amount you think you can sell from me.
3. You can find a merchant who will buy them from us for \$8. They can sell them in their store for the

suggested price of \$12.95.

Calendars will be available at the holiday potluck dinner, or you can contact Tennie Bickham at 414-507-4032 or TBick1943@hotmail.com

Salam dostler we joramlar! (Hello friends!)

I am very anxious to begin my work as the MPCA Website Manager. It has been a pleasure being involved in MPCA activities for the last couple of years since my return after service, and it is an honor to be able to lend a hand in such a capacity.

I was a Teacher Enhancement and English Education Volunteer in Balkanabat (Nebitdag), Balkan, Turkmenistan from September 2003-November 2005. My main focus was the English teachers themselves. About half had only two years of education past high school and did not have the confidence to speak English in the classroom. We started an English Teacher's Club, which met twice a week and had fifteen teachers from six different schools in the city of 100,000 people. We learned idiomatic expressions, discussed US politics, and learned new interactive methodologies for them to use in the classroom. I also adopted another counterpart and we, along with my original counterpart, did lesson planning together. I then went into their classrooms and co-taught their 5th and 6th grade English classes with them.



In addition to working with English teachers to improve their confidence and skills, I also had a lot of fun working with the kids in my community. We had numerous English clubs, a dancing club, a book club, a girls' basketball club, a girls' health club, a music club, a Scrabble club, and vacation activities.

I have my parents and older sister to thank for sparking my interest in everything international. We hosted a few AFS exchange students when I was at Lomira High School. I then decided to become an exchange student myself and studied in Costa Rica for the summer between my junior and senior years of high school. I graduated from UW-Oshkosh with Spanish and International Business majors and a Business Administration minor. While attending UW-O, I was an active member of Model United Nations.

Again, I am looking forward to maintaining and improving the MPCA website. If you have any suggestions/corrections, please email me at katiejdecker@gmail.com.

-Katie Decker

MPCA Calendar of Events: Winter 2008-2009

December

Saturday, December 13

Annual Ethnic Potluck
Gordon Lodge, 2828 N. Humboldt Ave.
6:00-10:00 p.m.
(See article for details)

Monday, December 15

MPCA Board Meeting, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Eastside Library, 1910 E. North Ave.
414-286-3058

January

Monday, January 26
MPCA Board Meeting, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Eastside Library, 1910 E. North Ave.
414-286-3058

February

Monday, February 16
MPCA Board Meeting, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Eastside Library, 1910 E. North Ave.
414-286-3058



What Would YOU like to do? Plan and Host a Social Event

Want to meet other members of the MPCA community? Have a longing for your favorite ethnic food, some winter fun, conversation in another language? Get a group together. Pick a date, time, place and put the details on our listserv: MPCA@yahoo.com

Wanted: MPCA Events Coordinator

Work with helpful RPCVs on the MPCA board to plan our major MPCA sponsored events (December Potluck, Parent Brunch, Summer Picnic and the New Volunteer Send-Off). Contact Mary mjm7156@sbcglobal.net.

Annual Ethnic Potluck Saturday, December 13 Gordon Park Lodge 6:00- 10:00 p.m.



Plan to attend our MPCA holiday party. Enjoy great ethnic food and warm conversation with old and new friends.

Gordon Park Lodge, 2828 N. Humboldt Ave. (corner of Humboldt and Locust) is our venue again this year.

Bring a favorite ethnic dish to share. Tableware and nonalcoholic beverages will be provided. You are welcome to bring wine and spirits to share. Cost is \$3 for members and \$4 for non-members. The remaining 2009 calendars will be for sale.

Our Giving Tree is for Hope House. The Hope House is a Southside shelter, pantry, and community center for families, single men and women. Thanks for supporting their mission by bringing an item to share. Their wish list includes:

- Twin sheets and blankets
- New pillows and pillow cases
- Towels
- Underwear (adult men)
- Socks (heavy)
- Deodorant, adult shampoo
- Baby shampoo, soap, lotion
- Toothpaste/toothbrushes
- CD Walkmans
- Umbrellas
- Winter gloves/hats/scarves (adult)
- Children's books
- Children's board games
- Plain t-shirts (men)
- Sweatshirts/Flannel shirts (men)
- Gift cards (\$5-\$20) Target, Wal-Mart,
- Payless shoes, Pick n' Save

Questions: contact Mary at (414) 961-2271 or mjm7156@sbcglobal.net.

Annual Parent Brunch Brings together Milwaukee Peace Corps Community

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV's), Potential Volunteers and their families traveled from all over Southeastern Wisconsin to attend MPCA's Annual Parent and Family Brunch on November 8th at the Mayfair Radisson in Milwaukee.

Perhaps, more than anything, the brunch served as a chance for people to share and connect. Potential volunteers were connected with a wide variety of RPCVs who could give insight about Peace Corps. Parents were able to connect with other parents and newly returned volunteers were able to meet and network with other RPCVs in the area. Current MPCA members were able to catch up with old friends.

One of the features of the yearly event was the RPCV panel. This year's panelists served around the globe: Erica Giljohan in the Dominican Republic, Jarrod Meyer in Georgia and Chris Wilson in Burkina Faso. Kathryn O'Connor, who is a recruiting coordinator in Peace Corps' Chicago office, was a volunteer in Nicaragua. The panel talked about their staging, training, first year and second year as volunteers before fielding questions from the audience. Tom Brown, whose daughter Katie is a current volunteer in Namibia, offered a parent's perspective.



MPCA Board Members



During the discussion one parent inquired about how he could help with his child's readjustment to the US culture when their service is completed. MPCA board member Allegra Troiano, pointed out how as a community of returned volunteers, MPCA can help with this adjustment. Whether we (MPCA) are gathering to clean up a river, share an ethnic meal or raise funds for a Peace Corps Partnership Project, you'll always find someone interested in hearing your stories.

Forty-eight people attended this important event. Thanks to all who participated! The MPCA board would like to extend a special thanks to our panelists Erica, Jarrod, and Chris for sharing their Peace Corps experiences with others. We are also grateful for Peace Corps parent Tom Brown as well as Katie O'Connor. Additional thanks are owed to Dzidra Benish, Paul Kinsley, Allegra Troiano, Alex Foundos, Tennie Bickham and Mary Mueller.

!Mil Gracias!

October Partnership Dinner at the Mekong Café Selects Sustainable Farming Project in the Philippines

By Mary Mueller

Our third Peace Corps Partnership Dinner at the Mekong Café, 5930 W. North Ave., on October 10th featured a delicious Asian buffet and a menu of 7 projects from Asia and Central Asia. While enjoying Crab Rangoon, Veggie Spring Rolls, Pud Prik Khing Beef, Deep Fried Bananas and other delectable dishes, dinner guests selected a sustainable farming project in the Philippines to receive \$430 of support. MPCA matched the \$10 donation from each of 17 attendees plus additional donations from those unable to attend.

The project selected has a community contribution of 42% of the total budget and the Partnership Program request was \$2864. Farmers will be assisted with composting organic materials through new shredders and the construction of greenhouses will protect crops from continuous rains and typhoons. This is part of a shift from chemical methods back to organic farming. The farmers and the environment will benefit as well as consumers, who will be assured of a steady supply of produce at affordable prices.



We extend thanks to the Mekong Café for working with us to offer an excellent dinner and great service. Plan on attending our Spring Partnership Dinner and feel free to suggest ethnic restaurants that you would enjoy with a space to accommodate a large group. Together we can have a fun evening and provide financial support to volunteers in the field.

Milwaukee Peace Corps
Association
P.O. Box 511322
Milwaukee, WI 53203-0221

Email:
mpca@yahoo.com

*On the Web at
milwaukeepeacecorps.org*

Year Founded: 1968

Paid Members: 70

Interim President:

Mary Mueller
(Guatemala '96-'98)

Present-elect:

Bethany Neubauer
(Bolivia '03-'05)

Treasurer:

Alex Foundos
(Ukraine '04-'06)

Newsletter Editor:

Amy Olen
(Guatemala '02-'04)

Social Events Coordinator:

VACANT

Membership Coordinator:

Peter Lee
(Thailand '65-'67)

Website Manager:

Katie Decker
(Turkmenistan '03-'05)

Advocacy Coordinator:

Cheryl Nenn
(Ecuador '95-'97)
(Crisis Corps-Honduras '99)

Calendar Project Coordinator:

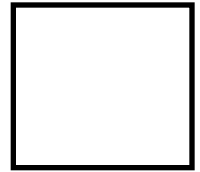
Tennie Bickham
(Liberia '66-'68)

MPCA Historian:

Paul Kinsley
(Turkey '65-'67)

NPCA Liasion:

Allegra Troiano
(Senegal '80-'82)



MPCA is a community of former and future PC volunteers and families who continue to promote Peace Corps ideals through cultural education and the support of both local and international development organizations. It also provides social activities and emotional support for RPCVs and for those returning from abroad.

Save a Tree! Save a Stamp! Ask for the Newsletter Online!

If you would like to receive the MPCA newsletter via e-mail, please contact me at amytolen@gmail.com. The newsletter would come to your inbox in a pdf format.

Thanks!
