Peace Corps Volunteers are being deployed as a COVID-19 response. NBC News released a commemorative Peace Corps video. And there's a full list of events coming up in April, including our Refugee Panel Discussion on April 6th. Mark your calendars. And the question lingers, who is responsible for vaccinating foreign aid workers? A discussion further in the newsletter.

The sun and spring warmth has begun to peek out every now and then around Western New York and we’re hoping that we can resume social events outside on a monthly basis. Zoom is great but let’s face it, in-person socialization just has a more genuine feel to it. Stay tuned to our social media channels for updates and event postings. Have an idea for a safe-yet-social gathering? Let us know.

Congratulations to our Board Member, Jeri Titus, on her retirement! From all of the RPCVs in Buffalo & Western New York, we wish you the best and look forward to seeing you embrace your new freedom. Just remember to invite us out to lunch so we all can take half days at work.

Have a wonderful Easter and for the teachers out there, a well deserved Spring Break. We all know it’s been too long since Winter Break. Any happenings, updates, social events, recipes or items of interest can be sent to buffalorpcv@yahoo.com to be included in the newsletter. Thank you for reading and enjoy.

- Brett Claydon
Hey, Buffalo RPCVS: Memberships are due.

Another newsletter, another reminder.

Membership is $25 and can be done online or via the membership form found at the end of this newsletter. Payments can be made via check, Venmo, or PayPal. Thank you in advance. Visit our website to sign up online (it's incredibly easy). Paper applications are available at the end of this newsletter.

Venmo: @Buffalo-RPCV

PayPal: buffalorpcv@yahoo.com

Upcoming Events & Save the Dates

March – April: National Days of Advocacy in Support of Peace Corps

April 2nd: First Fridays Speaker Series - Book Discussion: James Baldwin, “A Letter to my Nephew”

April 5th: Dyngus Day

April 6th: Buffalo RPCV & Albany RPCV Refugee Panel Discussion at 7 PM (Details Below)

April 8th: CSIS: The Perilous State of Freedom & Democracy in Africa

April 11th: Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemoration

April 22nd: BABEL: Ta-Nehisi Coates

April 30th: COVID-19: Human Rights & International Cooperation (Details Below)
Refugee Panel Discussion

Brought to you by
RPCVs of Buffalo & NENY

Guest Speakers:

Don Drach, Director of Community Engagement
Peace Corps Community for Refugees

Lauren Maguire, Director of Development & Communications
International Institute of Buffalo

Francis Sengabo, Operations Director
Refugee & Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus (RISSE)

Cheryl Lasher, Development Director
Refugee & Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus (RISSE)

TUESDAY, APRIL 6TH AT 7 PM

Zoom Information for April 6th Event:

https://caboces-org.zoom.us/j/99067315172

Meeting ID: 990 6731 5172
Passcode: 273841
COVID-19 first appeared in China and soon became a global pandemic, but the polities of East Asia have been relatively successful in containing it. Some African states adopted harsh measures to suppress the pathogen while others drew on experience with AIDS and Ebola to mount effective responses. Although a wealthy and technologically developed country, the U.S. has been notably ineffective in responding to the pandemic. This symposium will explore these contradictions and complexities. It will also discuss the decline in positive international cooperation, which puts all of humanity at risk, and will expose ways states are cooperating to exploit the pandemic to do harm.

FREE EVENT ON FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2021
8:30 AM - 3 PM
REGISTER FOR THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
EMAIL DUSSOURD@BUFFALO.EDU

Find more event information at www.alisondesforges.org
This symposium honors the life and work of human rights activist Alison Des Forges (1942-2009).
The Peace Corps Turns 60: Continuing the mission of peace VIDEO by NBC News

New Roundtable Seeks to Shine Spotlight on Buffalo's Refugee Community

By Brandon Lewis
Mar 26, 2021

Making sure people are informed about the refugee community - that’s the hope of a roundtable discussion hosted by the Burchfield Penney Art Center.

Denise Phillips Beehag, the director of new American integration at the International Institute, said, “Our mission statement is making Western New York a better place for and because of refugees and immigrants.”

Since 2002, 16,000 refugees have moved to the City of Good Neighbors. On Thursday evening, the Burchfield Penney Art Center presented a virtual roundtable discussion with various organizations, like Jericho Road and the Anne Frank Project, to talk about the refugee community in Buffalo.

Continue article here...
A message from Acting Peace Corps Director Carol Spahn on the Contributions of the Peace Corps to the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic in the U.S.

President Biden has pledged to combat the COVID-19 pandemic with a whole-of-government effort, mobilizing all available resources. What does this mean for the Peace Corps as we prepare to return vaccinated volunteers to service?

First, our staff at posts have been hard at work developing plans for future programming through the lens of COVID-19, including looking at Volunteer assignments and host country needs. The communities that Volunteers will return to have been changed, as we have, by the experience of the pandemic. Peace Corps service will look different, with increased mitigation measures being put into place to protect the health and safety of our Volunteers, host country staff, and host communities. Our overseas staff are working to support the agency mission in a changed world, consulting with host country governments, and reimagining what future Volunteer service will look like.

Second, while we continue to plan for our overseas return, I am excited to announce that the agency is prepared to meet this global moment starting right now, by fielding the second-ever domestic deployment of Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs). We have been asked by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance with its massive undertaking of vaccine distribution across the United States. The PCRVs, members of a cohort that will be comprised of evacuated Volunteers who completed service in 2020, will serve in Community Vaccination Centers (CVCs) and will provide crucial administrative, logistical, and language support for a period of three months. FEMA’s vaccination plan calls for equity to inform all aspects of the federal vaccination effort. The PCRVs who contribute to this effort will bring valuable cross-cultural experience, language abilities, and adaptability garnered during their time overseas as they contribute at home. Volunteers will be vaccinated at the CVCs as a condition of their service, which will reduce risk to themselves and those with whom they come into contact.

Our larger Peace Corps family, including thousands of RPCVs, have been meeting the needs of the COVID-19 era throughout their communities for the past year. By launching this historic input of Peace Corps Response Volunteers, we honor their spirit of service and further engage the Peace Corps community for the common good.

Thank you to each one of you for the service you give to one another, at home and abroad.

Carol Spahn
Acting Director
Peace Corps Volunteers to Aid U.S. COVID-19 Response by Deploying to FEMA-supported Community Vaccination Centers

March 31, 2021

The partnership marks second time in Peace Corps’ 60-year history that the agency has deployed volunteers in U.S., the first following Hurricane Katrina.

WASHINGTON – Today, the Peace Corps and FEMA announced they have struck a historic partnership to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. For the second time in the agency’s history, Peace Corps volunteers will serve a domestic deployment, at FEMA’s request – the first following Hurricane Katrina and now at federally supported Community Vaccination Centers (CVCs) across the country.

“The Peace Corps works hand-in-hand with communities on their most pressing challenges, and right now the U.S. faces some of the biggest challenges in our country’s history,” said Peace Corps Acting Director Carol Spahn. “The volunteers who contribute to this effort will bring valuable cross-cultural experience, language skills and adaptability fostered during their time overseas as they contribute to an equitable vaccination campaign here at home.”

“Working closely with our federal partners, state and local leaders, community-based organizations, and the private sector, is critical in getting as many vaccines to the public as possible,” said Acting FEMA Administrator Bob Fenton. “Our partnership with the Peace Corps is an example of our commitment to reaching under-served and historically marginalized communities, to ensure equal access to vaccines. FEMA’s employees are excited to work alongside the Peace Corps in this ongoing battle against COVID-19.”

The Peace Corps will soon begin recruiting for this special domestic deployment. Those eligible to serve include returned volunteers evacuated from their overseas posts in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Assignments will focus on urgent needs as identified by FEMA, and on communities that have been traditionally under-served. Volunteers will be assigned to language support, administrative, logistical, and other work that supports vaccination centers’ operations. It is anticipated that Peace Corps volunteers will be deployed into the field by mid-May.

The Peace Corps is implementing the COVID-19 domestic deployment through Peace Corps Response, a Peace Corps program that sends individuals with specialized experiences to short-term service assignments of up to 12 months. When the agency activated more than 270 volunteers to respond to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Peace Corps Response, then called Crisis Corps, also managed the agency’s deployment to aid FEMA’s relief operation in the gulf coast region.

This week, federal pilot community vaccination centers are opening in Boston; Essex, New Jersey; Norfolk, Virginia and Yakima, Washington.
FEMA, in partnership with CDC, is using the social vulnerability index to look at demographic data and provide the best advice to ensure that we reach under-served and historically marginalized communities so that anyone who wants a vaccine can get one.

FEMA is providing critical support to the COVID-19 efforts across the country via personnel, supplies and funding to help establish or expand more than 500 state led community vaccination centers and over 70 mobile vaccination centers.

The agency has now provided more than $4.47 billion for expenses related to COVID-19 vaccination at 100% federal cost share. These funds cover critical supplies, staffing, training and transportation needs that support increased vaccination efforts.

One year ago, Peace Corps temporarily suspended its global operations and evacuated nearly 7,000 volunteers from 61 countries due to the coronavirus pandemic. The agency’s short-term contribution to the domestic response to COVID-19 will not alter its commitment to overseas service once conditions permit. Preparations for returning to overseas posts continue in parallel to this special assignment.

Devex Newswire: Who is responsible for vaccinating foreign aid workers?
By Michael Igoe, Apr 1, 2021

The global equity gap in vaccine distribution is “grotesque,” says World Health Organization head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. What does that mean for development professionals deployed overseas?

As governments around the world undertake the largest vaccination effort in the history of public health, experts have urged them to prioritize high-risk groups — health care workers, the elderly, and those with underlying conditions. Many development professionals stationed abroad fall into those categories, but the question of who is responsible for their immunization varies from one country to another, Sara Jerving reports.

- **Criticism erupted in Kenya** in March after Reuters reported the country offered COVAX Facility-supplied COVID-19 vaccines to between 25,000 and 30,000 diplomats, United Nations workers, and their families living in the country. Government officials countered that doing so is part of their responsibility in hosting a large number of diplomats.

- In many countries, **foreigners and diplomats have been prioritized** for inoculation if they fit the priority group that the host government has set up — “which is indeed a very, very good thing,” says Dr. Richard Mihigo of WHO’s Regional Office for Africa.

- The U.S. State Department is shipping vaccines to its embassies in hopes of vaccinating all overseas personnel — including with USAID — as supplies become available. For its domestic workforce, USAID says there will be **no distinction** between direct hire and contractor staff.

Read Sara’s report on the vaccination puzzle for overseas officials.

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**For the 60th Anniversary of Peace Corps, show your colors**

The NPCA Store is your stop for Peace Corps gear: classic Peace Corps T-shirts, ball caps, mugs, and more — including high-quality Peace Corps face masks with adjustable ties, nose bridge, and filter pocket. And your purchases help bolster programs to support work by and for the Peace Corps community.
Vintage Peace Corps Poster of the Month

We need someone with the boldness of a pioneer, the resourcefulness of an inventor and the faith of a sword swaller.

We have a unique opportunity for someone very special. A chance to spend two years in another country. To live and work in another culture. To learn a new language and acquire new skills.

The person we're looking for might be a farmer, a forester, or a retired nurse. Or maybe a teacher, a mechanic, or a recent college graduate.

We need someone to join over 5,000 people already working in 60 developing countries around the world. To help people live better lives.

We need someone special. And we ask a lot. But only because so much is needed. If this sounds interesting to you, maybe you're the person we're looking for. A Peace Corps volunteer. Find out. Call us at 1-800-424-8580, Ext. 93.

Peace Corps.
The toughest job you'll ever love.
Do you have an announcement or item of interest to RPCVs?

All area RPCVs, Peace Corps supporters or interested persons are invited to submit event announcements, news items or other items which may be of interest to the Western New York RPCV community.

You may request for the information to be placed in the newsletter or as a separate email. Items submitted may be subject to editing and/or editorial discretion.

Submit to: buffalorpcv@yahoo.com

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RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS OF
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

2021 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

RPCV/Buffalo membership is open to all returned Peace Corps Volunteers, active and friends of Peace Corps. Please complete the following and return with your membership dues (25.00 annually) payable to RPCV/Buffalo:

RPCV/Buffalo
c/o Jeri Titus
P.O.Box 650
Buffalo, NY 14205

Please check

Renewing Member _____    New Member _____

Are you a member of the National Peace Corps Association?  Yes _____    No _____

I. Personal Information:

Name: (first) ____________________________  (last) ____________________________

Address: _________________________________________________________(apt)

City:_________________________________________________________________

State: __________________________________________    Zip: ____________________

Telephone: ___________________________ Cell: ____________________________

E-Mail: ______________________________

I. Peace Corps Service Information (if applicable):

Country(ies) of Service: _____________________________________________

Dates of Service: __________________________________________________

Primary Service Role: _______________________________________________