This newsletter is coming out a bit later than usual. I was on a working vacation in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Despite being on a Caribbean Island, I didn’t find much island time for myself to sit down and incorporate all news, events, and more that are coming up this month and into mid-September.

First thing is first, RPCVs of Buffalo & Western New York is changing the email address being used for this group. We are shifting to Gmail for professional and security purposes! Additionally, with the ability to implement and use Google Drive, this will help us share materials, resources, information, and much more. The new email address to use is RPCVofBuffaloWNY@gmail.com. It has been bolded for a reason. Please don’t forget to add it to your contact list, book, etc.

Secondly, the film premiere of the Peace Corps Documentary ‘A Towering Task’ at the North Park Theatre is scheduled for Saturday, September 11th at 11:30 AM. We are expecting a special guest pending any changes to new COVID-19 restrictions stemming from the Delta variant. We were almost in the clear but it appears there may be a few last hurdles to make it over. Please be safe out there and we’ll hopefully have a wide open holiday season for all to enjoy without worry. After the movie premiere, there will be food and drink at Bob & John’s La Hacienda on Hertel Ave (right down the street from the North Park Theatre!). We look forward to a full crowd and engaging discussion afterward.

This newsletter is full of event recommendations, updates from inside Peace Corps, and a lovely, insightful interview with one of board members, Lisa Ried, who served in Lesotho from 2015-2017. Enjoy and please reach out if you’d like to be interviewed about your service. We’re always looking to share stories from our members.

Any happenings, updates, social events, recipes or items of interest can be sent to RPCVofBuffaloWNY@gmail.com to be included in the newsletter. Thank you for reading and hope to see you soon.

- Brett Claydon
Attention Buffalo RPCVS! Some IMPORTANT UPDATES

As mentioned on the first page of the newsletter, the new email address that the Buffalo RPCV Group will be using is RPCVofBuffaloWNY@gmail.com.

Please use this email address for all correspondence, updates, events, and more. Thank you in advance!

It’s only $25. Online (fastest and easiest!) or via the membership form found at the end of this newsletter. Payments can be made via check, Venmo, or PayPal.

Venmo: @Buffalo-RPCV
PayPal: buffalorpcv@yahoo.com

Also, please renew your membership!

Upcoming Events & Save the Dates

Aug 1st - 31st: Virtual Walk-A-Thon Ramaha Event

August 14th: Say Yes Buffalo’s Everything Buffalo Mentor Race

August 19th: Peaceprints of WNY Annual Awards Reception and Fundraiser

Sept 11th: A Towering Task Movie Premiere at North Park Theater (Details Below)

Sept 23rd: Cinema for Safe Haven to Benefit VIVE

Sept 23-25th: 60th Anniversary Peace Corps Connect Conference
Tell us your name, your country of service, length of service, and the program that you were involved with in Peace Corps.


During your time in Lesotho, what was your 'typical' day like?

My typical day started with reporting to school at 7am for assembly. From there I would co-teach grade 5 English with my counterpart. I would then go work in the school library where classes would come to listen to stories or to check-out books. In the afternoon I would teach life skills to the grade 7 students. Afterschool, I would co-facilitate Grassroots Soccer for students in grade 5-7.

When work was finished, I would walk home through the village, often stopping to talk to many friends and students along the way. When I got home, my husband Ryan and I would make dinner together, usually some kind of homemade bread, eggs, and beans. Our evening would end with watching a TV show or movie on our laptop or listening to a podcast.

What was the most rewarding part of your service?

The most rewarding part of service for me was absolutely the relationships that I built. I made so many friends that quickly became family and connected with my students and loved watching them learn and engage with reading and writing. In particular, I became close with a grade 5 student who was 17 years old and had a vision impairment. He had been held back many times in school as a result of the school/country’s lack of special education services. Along with his family, I advocated for him to get the services he needed and we were able to enroll him in a residential school for students with visual impairments. He is now thriving and loving school!

What was the most challenging part of your service?

The most challenging part of service was missing out on many monumental events back in the US such as my sister and best friend having babies, weddings, and family gatherings.

What was your favorite project? And why?

My favorite project was one I completed in collaboration with my principal, Mme Manti Tsehlana. On the school property was an abandoned building that had been the original school house when she was a student at the school.

Buffalo RPCV is going to be presenting interviews with our Board Members and Members of our RPCV community across Western New York. These interviews will provide insight into their service, their country of service’s culture, and much more.
She always dreamed of renovating the building and turning it into a gathering hall for the school to use as well as to rent out to the community. We were able to work together with the community and contributors from the US to make her dream a reality. This is my favorite project because it was so meaningful to Mme Tsehlana and she was such a special person to me.

And what was the WNY food you wish you could have shared with the people of Lesotho? And why that food?

We actually were able to share pizza and wings with our Basotho friends often! We would host dinners at our house regularly and we were able to get all of the ingredients needed in the capital city, Maseru. The only thing we needed to have sent over to us was Franks for the wings. Our pizzas were such a hit that people would order them from us!

Describe one of the most comedic instances during your service:

We had two cats, a male and female bonded pair. Before we could have them spayed and neutered they had MANY litters of kittens. In an attempt to find them good homes, we asked for students from our schools to write us letters of application explaining why they would be a good caregiver for the cats. One eager student wrote about how she would feed the cat, she would protect the cat, and very specifically that she would never eat a cat. Needless to say, we accepted the application!

Last one, what is one thing that you wish Americans knew about Lesotho?

I wish that Americans knew Lesotho exists. My experiences in Lesotho have changed me and shaped the person that I am, and so many people couldn’t find it on a map. It is an absolutely breathtaking country full of beautiful people who are exceedingly kind. Everyone should visit at least once in their lives!
Photos taken during Lisa’s service in Lesotho
More than 70,000 Afghan Lives are at Risk

As the United States withdraws from Afghanistan, 18,000+ Afghan allies and their families are at risk of retaliation by the Taliban, which as we have seen, is taking over major cities and regions.

SEND A LETTER TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVE NOW!

For the past 20 years, local Afghan interpreters, translators, engineers, and more have assisted the United States military forces, diplomatic missions, and other US programs in Afghanistan. As the US withdraws without a comprehensive plan to evacuate our allies, the Afghans who support us for decades are now at risk.

Urge the Biden Administration to act NOW to evacuate and resettle ALL of our Afghan allies. Urge the administration to keep our promises.

SEND A PRE-WRITTEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT BIDEN

Read more:
The Taliban Appears to Have Strategic Momentum - Military Times
Afghan Interpreter for US Military Beheaded by Taliban - CNN

FoA's fundraising effort is designed to assist Afghan SIV holders and their families relocate to safety in America. Click here to support our Afghan SIV initiative.
Virtual Walk-a-thon Rahama Event

Register today and join us for the 2021 RAHAMA Walk-A-Thon! From August 1 to August 31 we will be virtually walking together in honor of women experiencing domestic violence in WNY. Post your experience online with the hashtag #RAHAMAwalks

Click Here to Register Today!
A TOWERING TASK MOVIE PREMIERE at

SUNDAY, SEPT 11TH AT 11:30 AM
Q&A Panel Discussion After with Drinks & Food at Bob & John's La Hacienda

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE!
All proceeds from this event will benefit the work of Vive Shelter, which welcomes and supports over 1,000 asylum seekers from across the world every year.

**Ticket sales are now open!** [CLICK HERE.]

**Where:** Transit Drive-in, 6655 S. Transit Road, Lockport 14094

**When:** Thursday, September 23 at 6:30 p.m.

**Cost:** $30

**Featuring:** *ET the Extra-Terrestrial*

Join us for dinner and a movie under the stars! Your ticket includes admission to the movie, a boxed Chiavetta’s dinner, popcorn, and a drink.
Developments

The Peace Corps Takes Steps to Return to Service Overseas Beginning with Belize. At the request of the Government of Belize, we plan to return Volunteers to Belize to engage in literacy work, helping schools recover following disruptions to the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the global evacuation in March 2020, the Peace Corps developed robust health, safety, and security standards that must be met prior to returning to countries of service, and Belize has met these criteria. Conditions are being continuously monitored. In addition, our global programming is being adapted, as necessary, to respond to local conditions and priorities of the countries where our Volunteers are invited to serve. Read more about the return to service in Belize and our reentry criteria here.

John F. Kennedy Service Awards Nomination Period Now Open. We are soliciting nominations of returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), returned Peace Corps Response Volunteers, and current or former Peace Corps staff for the 2021 John F. Kennedy Service Awards. Established in 2006, these awards will honor six members of the Peace Corps community who have made exceptional contributions toward realizing our mission and three goals. Read more about the 2021 awards or submit a nomination here. All nominations are due by August 13.

Staff Participate in Grassroot Soccer’s “Leveling the Playing Field” Training of Trainers. This month, 40 “Master Coach” staff members from 12 African Peace Corps posts completed a virtual “Leveling the Playing Field” workshop organized in partnership with Grassroot Soccer (GRS). An adolescent health organization that leverages the power of soccer to deliver critical information around HIV/AIDS, malaria, and, now, COVID-19, GRS offers health education curricula that Volunteers and Peace Corps Counterparts often implement in their host communities. In addition to the comprehensive Training of Trainer sessions, staff were also oriented on GRS’ new COVID-19 Response curriculum. Through the workshop, our staff gained the knowledge and certification necessary to train future “coaches” in these curricula, which will include other Peace Corps staff and, ultimately, Volunteers and community members. To learn about our partnership with GRS, read the 5-year report here.
After First-Ever Consultation, Peace Corps Develops Tribal Nations Action Plan

In light of the Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships, the Peace Corps, in coordination with eight other federal agencies, hosted our first ever Tribal Nation Consultation. Following an open dialogue with 61 participants representing 10 Tribal Nations from five states, we developed a Peace Corps Tribal Nations Action Plan that outlines our planned activities to increase engagement and strengthen relations with Tribal Nations over the coming years. Included among these activities is an analysis of Native Identifying potential applicants, Volunteers, and RPCVs to better understand their interests, needs, and potential barriers to their service with the Peace Corps. Read more about our strategic

CLICK HERE TO KEEP READING MORE FROM INSIDE PEACE CORPS

The House Votes a Boost in Peace Corps Funding. And Registration Is Opening Soon for Peace Corps Connect 2021.

We got some good news from Congress on July 28: The House of Representatives approved a $430.5 million Peace Corps budget for fiscal year 2022. That's an increase of $20 million — nearly 5 percent. It could point to the first meaningful increase in funding in six years.

We’ve also seen increasing bipartisan support for the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act of 2021, introduced by RPCV Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) and colleague Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA). The legislation would bring some much-needed reforms for a better and stronger Peace Corps. If you're meeting with your members of Congress in the weeks ahead, support for this legislation — and funding — are critical items to have on the agenda.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has not yet taken up the State Department/Foreign Operations bill, which would include funding for the Peace Corps. But 60 years ago, Senator William Fulbright chaired the Foreign Relations Committee. Originally skeptical of the value of the Peace Corps, he was won over — and in the first week of August 1961 he led the Senate committee to vote 14–0 in favor of full funding to launch the Peace Corps. In this anniversary year, the Senate could do its part to carry that legacy forward.

Here’s something to be sure to have on your calendar: Join us September 23–25 for Peace Corps Connect 2021: Mobilizing for a Lifetime of Service and Impact. For this special 60th anniversary virtual conference, we’ll bring together the global Peace Corps community for sessions and conversations central to the role of the Peace Corps in a changed world.
Registration Opens Next Week for Peace Corps Connect 2021: September 23–25

Registration opens later next week for Peace Corps Connect 2021, a special 60th anniversary conference for the Peace Corps community. The theme: Mobilizing for a Lifetime of Service and Impact. This virtual conference will tackle issues important to communities throughout the U.S. and across the globe when it comes to the work of building peace and friendship. And we’ll be looking at the future of what Peace Corps needs to be in a profoundly changed world.

Watch this page for updates and more information!

Get Your Summer Peace Corps Gear Here.

The NPCA Store is your one stop shop for Peace Corps gear: classic Peace Corps T-shirts, ball caps, water canteens, and more. Your purchases help bolster programs to support work by and for the Peace Corps community.
Vintage Peace Corps Poster of the Month
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

RPCV Buffalo Board of Directors

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Visit Our Website!
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:
________________________________________________________________________