Peace Corps just celebrated its diamond anniversary. 60 years of Peace Corps. The echoes from its beginnings in a country in the midst of a Cold War, a civil rights movement, and a changing word, are louder now than ever before. We find ourselves in, hopefully, the recovery period of a global pandemic, a new administration in the US, and the crux of potential and possibility when it comes to re-establishing geopolitical ties and relationships. Peace Corps Volunteers are slowly heading back to their countries of service; perhaps with a novel view of what their service should entail. 2020 and the beginning of 2021 forced America to self-reflect and in some regard, become self-aware of who we really are versus who we say we are. Volunteers will carry this notion with them as they re-enter and begin service. The opportunity to move forward and engage in an empathetic, respectful, and humble way is there - both at home and abroad.

A monumental thank you to Don Drach (Peace Corps Community for Refugees), Kathy Spillman (Journey’s End), and Sierra Johnson (Jewish Family Services) for providing us a spectacular panel discussion on refugee and immigration on Sunday, February 28th. Insightful and inspiring only describe the tip of the discussion.

Any happenings, updates, 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
If you missed the Refugees & Immigration Panel Discussion on Sunday, Feb. 28th, you can still watch the recorded version!

The RPCVs of Buffalo & Western New York have a newly created YouTube Channel where we will post any videos that we produce or record. The Panel Discussion is in five parts, each one being roughly 15 minutes in length.

Click here to watch!

Attention all 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
VIRTUAL EVENT SERIES

Deaf History Month

The Office of Accessibility Resources at D’Youville in collaboration with Deaf Access Services proudly presents a series of events to coincide with Deaf History Month. Join us for 3 unique, inspiring, and informative events. All events will be virtual, free of charge, and open to the public. Contact Lisa Rafelson, rafelson@dyec.edu or 716.829.8489.

Panel Discussion
Deaf and hard of hearing culture and diversity.

Lecture
Pamela Conley, BA, MA, MS in Deaf Education at Rochester Institute of Technology
The Beginnings of American Sign Language in the United States
March 30th at 5 PM virtual | http://bit.ly/beginningofASL

Film showing and Q & A: Movie
Lake Windfall
April 8th at 6:30 PM | http://bit.ly/LakeWindfall
Peace Corps Community for Refugees is partnering with Lutheran Immigrant & Refugee Service on their series “Kitchen Culture”!

The special episode will feature three RPCVs who themselves were refugees. It will occur on Tuesday, March 16th at 6 PM ET.

Check out more on the series here!

Upcoming Events & Save the Dates

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

March 16th: Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service’s “Culture Kitchen"

March 18th: WNY Deaf Access Services Virtual Event - Panel Discussion


March 30th: Buffalo State Civic and Community Engagement Office: Presentation – What AmeriCorps and National Service Can Do for You

March 31st: Buffalo State Civic and Community Engagement Office: Presentation- Education Access for Multi-Lingual Learners

April 6th: Buffalo RPCV & Albany RPCV Refugee Panel Discussion at 7 PM - Details TBA

Discover Virtual Volunteer Opportunities in Western New York Here!
Points of Interest

Our friends over at Journey’s End Refugee Services need our help. Cellino Plumbing & HVAC are running their Non-Profit Truck Wrap Voting Contest and JERS is in the running. With our help, they can win up to $20,000 and a Cellino Plumbing & HVAC Truck wrapped with their logo on it.

Helping them is incredibly easy. All that has to be done is vote for JERS during the rounds and dates that are listed below. Through our votes, we can help JERS welcome new families to our community.

Click here to vote!
60 years ago, March 1st, 1960, marked the establishment of the Peace Corps.

It was 60 years ago today that President John F. Kennedy signed the executive order establishing the Peace Corps. He staked out the great common cause of working to build peace and friendship.

Over six decades, nearly a quarter million women and men from the United States have served as Volunteers. We know that service continues in the communities we call home. And as we look toward the future, we know that it is a sense of solidarity, not charity, that must be the compass by which we steer the Peace Corps.

Thank you to all who have served. Thank you to the people and communities around the world who have undertaken this audacious mission together. As if we needed reminding, the great common cause of building peace and friendship is far from finished. But the world has changed since the Peace Corps was founded. And it has changed profoundly since all Volunteers were evacuated in March 2020.

This week in communities around the world, people are honoring the shared work and accomplishments of the Peace Corps. Take time to recognize what the Peace Corps community has done. Listen. Learn. And raise your voice in advocacy, to help us transform Peace Corps for a changed world.

In service,

Glenn Blumhorst
NPCA President & CEO
John Garamendi introduces the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act

On March 1 Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) reintroduced the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act. The legislation would provide additional federal funding and resources to advance the Peace Corps’ mission around the world and better support current, returning, and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. “This bipartisan legislation would also provide the resources necessary for the redeployment of Peace Corps volunteers once it is safe to do so after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides,” Garamendi said in a release, “with the goal of reaching 10,000 Volunteers serving annually around the world.”

A BILL

To amend the Peace Corps Act to reauthorize the Peace Corps, better support current and returned volunteers, and for other purposes.

The bill’s original co-sponsors include Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA) — co-chair of the Congressional Peace Corps Caucus with Congressman Garamendi — and Representatives Grace Meng (D-NY), former Peace Corps staffer Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-AS), Dean Phillips (D-MN), Ed Case (D-HI), and Albio Sires (D-NJ).

A few takeaways:

• **Expedites re-enrollment** of Volunteers whose service ended involuntarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, in the future, will bolster health insurance coverage for returning Volunteers

• Includes the Menstrual Equity in the Peace Corps Act sponsored by Rep. Grace Meng

• Extends whistleblower and anti-retaliatory protections to Peace Corps Volunteers

• Includes the **Respect for Peace Corps Volunteers Act** sponsored by Rep. Albio Sires to enable the use of the Peace Corps logo at gravesites

• **Extends RPCVs’ hiring preference** for most federal job openings during any federal hiring freeze, government shutdown, or public health emergency.
Peace Corps HQ Leadership Updates

March 1 brought news of a new appointment at Peace Corps HQ: **Faith Oltman has been named director of communications.** She comes to the agency with experience helming communications for the Columbus City Attorney and with the Ohio State Senate and House of Representatives. Acting Director of the Peace Corps Carol Spahn took part in a host of panels and events this week.

**Mary Bruce has been named Associate Director for Volunteer Recruitment and Selection.** As she notes in her LinkedIn profile, that work includes “rebuilding the pipeline of 7,000 Volunteers in 60+ countries annually, as Peace Corps relaunches its work after evacuating all Volunteers in 2020 due to COVID.” For more than seven years she directed AmeriCorps Alums, a national organization focused on social impact to leverage the experience of those who had served in AmeriCorps. She served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco 2004–06 and, prior to that, served as a teacher’s aide and tutor with AmeriCorps in Washington, D.C.

**Jacklyn Dao Dinneen has been named deputy chief of staff for Peace Corps.** Under the Obama administration, she directed gifts and grants management for the Peace Corps and served as White House liaison; she also served within the White House as assistant policy director, and with the Department of Homeland Security. Previous roles include work with Sen. Lincoln Chaffee and Teach for America. For the past four years she served in senior roles with The Partnership, Inc., an organization that was established to focus on the advancement of African Americans in corporate Boston and over the past three decades has grown into an organization that supports multicultural professionals at all levels in an increasingly diverse and global workforce.

Here’s the full list of publicly-announced appointments.
Opinion: “This moment demands thinking how Americans reengage with the world.”

On March 5th, The Washington Post: Grounded in a sense of history with an eye on the future, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Lacy Feigh makes the case for Peace Corps leading the way in helping the United States reengage with the world: “Just as it did 60 years ago, the Peace Corps offers us a way forward: By investing in engagement and exchange, we create a better American community, and, in turn, a better world.”

Here’s an excerpt from the article:

In his inaugural address, President Biden called on Americans to not draw inward to their own political camps at home, and internationally to “repair our alliances and engage with the world once again.” It was both a call for healing and a recognition of our brokenness in this moment.

It also echoes a call made 60 years ago when political and social pushback threatened to block the civil rights movement domestically, and the Cold War divided the world. Then President John F. Kennedy offered Americans his own inaugural challenge: “Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country.” Only two months later, in March 1961, Kennedy signed Executive Order 10924, making real his campaign promise to establish a national Peace Corps with the mission to promote world peace and friendship.
As the coronavirus pandemic has re-erected geographical borders and the era of President Donald Trump made devastatingly clear long-simmering racial and social conflicts, our country is longing for bold ideas rooted in cross-cultural understanding and radical empathy.

One path forward is looking to our past: a new commitment to and reorientation of the United States Peace Corps that could work with a renewed focus, not as a tool of foreign aid, but as a way for all Americans to engage, listen to and learn from the rest of the world.

As a candidate for U.S. president in 1960, Kennedy talked about the global importance of Americans committing to public service. He asked a crowd of students at the University of Michigan how many of them would be willing to commit to years of service abroad to better their own country.

It was not just an altruistic idea. It was strategic — domestically and internationally. A corps of citizen ambassadors could counter popular narratives of American diplomatic ignorance and help fill a growing State Department in need of bureaucrats familiar with other cultures and languages. Additionally, it could help the United States establish allies in newly independent African states that were understandably wary of continued external intervention.

Later, as the war devastating Vietnam grew more unpopular, the United States needed to rebuild its image abroad. Better than any major foreign policy agenda, these citizen diplomats would supposedly espouse values of “freedom” and “capitalism” across the globe by circumventing governments and forging individual relationships with people.

Sargent Shriver, Kennedy’s brother-in-law, took on the task of bringing the new Peace Corps to life. He visited foreign leaders to discuss new sites and checked on recently-placed volunteers in the field. Together with early Peace Corps staffers like Harris Wofford and Program Officer Charles Nelson, Shriver coordinated with leaders from Colombia to Thailand to establish programs. Within a year, over 2,800 volunteers served in 28 host countries across the globe.

Early detractors of the Peace Corps, such as Richard Nixon, saw it as a way for young American men to avoid the draft. Though this accusation aligned with the antiwar sentiments of many early volunteers, the Peace Corps only offered these volunteers a deferral, not exemption from their local draft board. Until 1967, volunteers could be, and sometimes were, recalled from service with the Peace Corps and sent to fight in Vietnam.

Read the rest of the article here at The Washington Post.
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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Follow Us!

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:

________________________________________________________________