Happy New Year. Welcome to 2021. I hope that it is significantly better than 2020 was. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its heart-wrenching impact on the U.S. and countless countries across the globe, humans rose to the occasion - healthcare workers, nurses, and doctors in hospitals, small businesses serving their communities, and every being that donated time, supplies, or their own money to food banks or nonprofits that provided necessary services to severely affected communities. Moreover, the fight against racial injustice has grown stronger and demands more attention. No longer is it a controversial conversation among friends and family members, it is a conversation that is required so that there is learning, empathy, and love. 2020 will always be a dark cloud in many’s imaginations, but lest we forget the progress that we’ve made.

If there is any news, updates, happy hours, recommended recipes, awe-inspiring stories or happenings that you would like to be published in this newsletter, please send them to buffalorpcv@yahoo.com. They are greatly appreciated and always welcome. Thank you and enjoy.

- Brett Claydon

Attention all Buffalo RPCVS! January is when membership is due! The Buffalo RPCV Board has made the decision to increase dues from $15 to $25. The reason for the increase is due to the amount of fees the Board has to put toward the use of Silkstart (our website) with the National Peace Corps Association. Additionally, the increase will help with our donations to local refugee organizations, such as Journey’s End, IIB and the Buffalo Peace House.

Visit our website to sign up online! If you prefer to send in your membership application through a printed form, please see the end of this newsletter for the 2021 membership application.
Martin Luther King Day is approaching quickly and is a National Day of Service. Due to COVID-19, opportunities to volunteer in person are non-existent. However, let's choose to support the Buckets of Love program from the International Institute of Buffalo this Martin Luther King Day!

If you want to schedule a drop-off, please email elizabethoddy@gmail.com. If you would like to donate in place of creating a bucket, please donate $25 to the RPCV Buffalo Venmo account (@Buffalo-RPCV). Thank you in advance!
Join us for a Special Guest Speaker Event on Sunday, January 17th at 7:00 PM with Randolph W. Hobler (RPCV Libya 1968-69). Hobler’s book is a collective memoir of 102 (including himself) Libya PCV’s and their stories. A herculean effort that has culminated in a conversational style read with stories that are humorous as well as heart-wrenching. Please join us virtually to speak with Randy about his experience and more about 101 Arabian Tales: How We All Persevered in Peace Corps Libya.

Zoom Meeting Info Below:

https://caboces-org.zoom.us/j/97751415576

Meeting ID: 977 5141 5576
Passcode: 881288
Upcoming Events & Save the Dates

January 6th: Kiss the Ground Screening

January 17th: 101 Arabian Tales: How We All Persevered in Peace Corps Libya

January 25th: Virtual Movie Club

Date: Monday, January 25th at 7PM

Come join Buffalo RPCV Members every month to discuss films and get recommendations for the North Park Theatre Virtual Cinema list! Through North Park Theatre’s Virtual Cinema, individuals are able to rent new movies for 3-5 days.

Join here: https://caboces-org.zoom.us/j/91739437446

Meeting ID: 917 3943 7556
Passcode: 177014
Thank you to all of those who donated to the Peace House!

The operation of the Peace House is dependent on the generous contributions from individuals and organizations like RPCVs of Buffalo and Western New York. Established in 2009, the Buffalo Peace House provides a safe and clean haven for U.S. asylum seekers.

In addition to supporting through donations, the Peace House has always been an incredible place to volunteer. From teaching to yard work or even joining a committee, volunteering at the Peace House helps the organization achieve their long-term goals.

The Peace House strives to create a community for individuals and their families who are rendered homeless or detained while they are waiting for their claims to U.S. residency to be resolved, while also providing access to legal and human services.

The residents of the Peace House is made up of over 20 nationalities. When you enter the Peace House, you can sense happiness, hope, peace, and joy.

Buffalo Peace House is located in Hamburg, NY in the St. Francis of Assisi Church complex.
Read the Peace Corps 2019 Annual Report

If you’d like to dive deeper into the last couple years with the Peace Corps community, check out this recap of 2019. 2019 was the year when the National Peace Corps Association celebrated its 40th anniversary, held its 15th annual National Days of Action, hosted the premier of A Towering Task: The Story of the Peace Corps, and embarked on partnerships to provide micro-loans and to provide communities in Togo and The Gambia with access to clean water. A fascinating report full of insight and much more. Click here to read.

Community Achievements

Danielle Nierenberg (pictured) received the Smithsonian Institution’s Julia Child Award in October 2020. Founder of the nonprofit Food Tank, she is a thought leader, activist, and advocate who works behind the scenes to find ways of making the world’s food system more equitable. Learn more about other RPCVs working on food security and making profound impacts. Read more from the Peace Corps community.
Apply to be a contact tracer through the NPCA Emergency Response Network

NPCA is looking for RPCVs to fill ten contact tracing positions with the NPCA Emergency Response Network in coordination with the Seattle and King County Department of Health in Washington State. While applicants from Washington are especially welcome, applicants from all states will be considered. Work includes conducting interviews with individuals who were potentially exposed to COVID-19 and offering them referrals to services such as testing and community support resources.

The first cohort of RPCVs with the Emergency Response Network began work earlier this fall. To be considered, sign into your NPCA account and update the information at the bottom of the “Basic Info” tab. Qualified candidates will be contacted if their profile matches the needs that our partners identify. Questions? Email NPCA’s Emergency Response Network.

In Memoriam — December 2020

Among the members of the Peace Corps community we lost recently: a great athlete and a remarkable human being, Rafer Johnson, who won the 1960 Olympic Decathlon. On the heels of Olympic victory, he lent his prestige and renown to launch the Peace Corps. “I really believed that it wasn’t what my country could do for me,” he said years later.

“It was what could I do for my country?” In 1968, he was at Robert F. Kennedy’s side when the senator was killed. Only months later, he was at Eunice Kennedy Shriver’s side to help launch the first Special Olympics. We honor his legacy of service, thank him for the countless lives he touched, and send our deepest condolences to his family. In December’s In Memoriam, NPCA honor all the members of the community we’ve lost recently.
The Peace Corps Increases Medical Reimbursements for Applicants

Monday, December 21, 2020

WASHINGTON – The Peace Corps today announced it will increase the cost coverage of medical reimbursements provided to applicants invited to serve as volunteers. The increase is part of an agency effort to lower the barriers to service for Americans who wish to become Peace Corps volunteers and will help pay for physical exams, lab work, diagnostic tests, and other medical services needed prior to departure.

The Peace Corps approved a reimbursement increase of three times the current amount for medical expenses to between $375 and $870, depending on the invitee’s age and gender. Dental expenses will now be reimbursed to a maximum of $180. Vision reimbursements have been increased by five times, to a total of $60.

“This development is exciting,” said Peace Corps Director Jody K. Olsen. “We want to make the opportunity of Peace Corps service available to every qualified American, regardless of their socioeconomic status. This is a significant step forward in achieving that goal.”

Medical clearance requirements for applicants vary significantly based on their medical history and requirements from host countries. Yellow fever and polio booster vaccinations remain fully reimbursable if required for a volunteer’s country of service. The Peace Corps will also continue to provide all other necessary vaccinations upon volunteer arrival to their host country.

For more details on how the Peace Corps is protecting the health of trainees and volunteers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit the medical information for applicants section of the Peace Corps website.
If any RPCVs are local Rotary members or can connect with any local Rotarians, the Buffalo RPCV group is looking to partner with Rotary Clubs in the Western New York area to form a committee to help carry out community service projects for both organizations. An example being the Peace House in Hamburg.

Please reach out to a Board Member if you are a Rotary Club member or know of any members of local Rotary clubs that the Buffalo RPCV Group can connect with.

We still have a few Calendars and Note Cards left! Calendars are $10 and Note Cards are $8 for 10. If you would like to place your order, please email jerititus@yahoo.com with your order specifics. Pickup or Shipping is available. Please note that an additional $2.50 is added if you are shipping calendars.

Want to pay via Venmo? Our name is @Buffalo-RPCV Thanks and we look forward to your orders!
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:
________________________________________________________________________
**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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**RPCV Buffalo Board of Directors**

Andy Smith (Costa Rica), Chairperson

Jeri Titus (Morocco), Treasurer

Tony Agnello (Afghanistan), Secretary

Brett Claydon (Namibia), Newsletter Editor & Membership Webmaster

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Ginna Coon (Ethiopia), Programming

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