

peace corps **Armenia**



Quarterly Newsletter

Fall- 2009

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ARTS EXPO**

**KAPAN'S GIRL SCOUTS'
LEADERSHIP SEMINAR**

**RENOVATION OF THE CENTER FOR
DISABLED CHILDREN AT BERD**

2009 HIV/AIDS POSTER CONTEST

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Peace Corps . Armenia

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Glossary

A16	16th group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia (arrived June 2008)
A17	17th group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia (arrived June 2009)
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PCT	Peace Corps Trainee, pre-Volunteer status
PST	Pre-service training, 3-month period of language, cultural, and sector training
RPCV	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, a Volunteer who has completed service
CD	Country Director
SEC-TOR	Type of technical expertise including of CBD, CHE, EE, and TEFL
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language, a sector
CBD	Community and Business Development, a sector
CHE	Community Health Education, a sector
EE	Environmental Education, a sector
IT	Information Technology
SPA	A grant for Small Project Assistance funded by USAID (United States Agency for International Development)

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Kennedy's Promise

We will only send abroad Americans who are wanted by the host country, who have a real job to do, and who are qualified to do that job. Programs will be developed with care, and after full negotiation, in order to make sure that the Peace Corps is wanted and will contribute to the welfare of the other people. Our Peace Corps is not designed as an instrument of diplomacy or propaganda or ideological conflict. It is designed to permit our people to exercise more fully their responsibilities in the great common cause of world development.

JOHN F. KENNEDY
MARCH 1, 1961



ABOUT PEACE CORPS

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship by challenging students to live and

work in developing countries. Since then more than 195,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have been invited into and served in 139 countries all over the globe.

No longer limited to students, today, almost 7,876 Volunteers and Trainees are serving abroad. Representing every demographic group, they reflect the extraordinary diversity of America. Volunteers serve for 27 months in their host countries, learning language and culture and living at the same level as the people they serve.

The Peace Corps Armenia program was established in 1992. Since that time 644 Volunteers have served in villages, towns, and cities around Armenia. Currently 78 Volunteers work in:

- Community and Business Development
- Teaching English as Foreign Language
- Community Health Education
- Environmental Education

Peace Corps is an independent agency of the United States government. The Country Director for Armenia is Lee Lacy, a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Samoa.

PEACE CORPS ARMENIA PROJECTS

Community and Business Development [CBD]

- NGO capacity building
- Small and medium enterprise development
- Business and IT training for students of local colleges and other community members

English Education [TEFL]

- Teaching English
- Teacher professional development
- Resource development
- Community development projects

The Peace Corps Mission

- Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
- Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the Armenian peoples served.
- Helping promote a better understanding of Armenians on the part of Americans.

Community Health Education [CHE]

- Preventive health education
- Nutrition training
- HIV/AIDS awareness
- Health resources development

Environmental education [EE]

- Environmental agencies development
- Creation of resource centers
- Environmental educational camps

Peace Corps Ministry Partners are:

Ministry of Economy
Ministry of Education and Science
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Nature Protection
Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs

Lee Lacy was appointed Peace Corps Country Director for Armenia in May 2007. She began her long time Peace Corps connection as a Volunteer English teacher in Samoa (1971–73). Following her service, she worked for Peace Corps in its Program Evaluation Office in Washington DC. In the early 1980s, while her husband served as Peace Corps Country Director in Nepal, she worked as the Community Liaison Coordinator for the US Embassy in Katmandu.

In the 1990s, Ms. Lacy returned to Peace Corps and served first as the Director of the Office of Special Services and later as Chief of Operations for the Asia Pacific Region. In 2002, she began work as Chief of the Field Assistance Division.

Ms. Lacy has also worked for the Corporation for National Service, where she served as Senior Program Officer; Volunteers in Service to America as acting director; and for Overseas Briefing Center at the Foreign Service Institute where she designed and managed the Department of State's Security Overseas Seminar, expanded the Post Information Center and Training.

Ms. Lacy received a BA Degree from Georgia State University; an MA in Education from Stanford University; and an MS degree in Organizational Development and Knowledge Management from George Mason University. She also holds a certificate in Organizational Development from Georgetown University.

Ms. Lacy has two children, Lillian and Henry.

A LETTER FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR



Dear Ministers and Staff of the Republic of Armenia, staff of Non-Government Organizations and Volunteers:

I am pleased to report that Peace Corps Volunteers and their Armenian counterparts have been working very hard over the last quarter to improve schools, non-government organizations, and businesses. I hope you will enjoy reading this report which highlights some stories of their successes. Currently 78 Volunteers serve across the country, largely in rural communities where they work with schools teaching English, leading environmental and health clubs, and working with local NGOs and businesses. They strengthen nongovernmental organizations and help to expand the range of community services.

Peace Corps wants to thank our partners and other stakeholders especially the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Nature Protection, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Ministry of Economy, and the Ministry of Sport and Youth. Thank you for your support of our programs. We would also like to thank the many teachers, school directors, community leaders, and host families that give so generously of their time to make these Americans feel welcomed and at home in Armenia.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lee Lacy".

Lee Lacy
Country Director
United States Peace Corps, Armenia

SUCCESS OF WOMEN'S ARTS EXPO PREDICTS PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR SYUNIK MARZ

This year the Women's Development Resource Centre Foundations (WDRCF) of Goris, Kapan and Meghri combined efforts to create the region's first annual Zangezur Arts Expo. Zangezur is the historical name for the Marz now known as Syunik. The event supported the arts and creative efforts of craftswomen in the region. The months preceding the event were spent interviewing businesswomen in surrounding villages to see what products they were hoping to promote.



The Goris WDRCF interviewed women from Goris, Halidzor, Harjis, Khndzoresk, Qarahunj, Shinuhayr, and Tegh to expand their involvement in the Expo and discuss future business opportunities in the region. These meetings also aided in networking and alliance building for the professional women in our area. Tatev Monastery, Tatevi Anapat, and the Vorotan Valley were recently declared national historic sites by the Armenian government, as they have tentatively made the World Heritage List with the probability of being inscribed in the near future. With this new status, the region anticipates an increase in tourist traffic as people visiting Armenia will make their way through to stunning Tatev. This continued growth in the region's already strong tourism creates a renewed sense of inspiration for the crafts and business women of Syunik Marz.

On Saturday, October 17, the lush gardens and walkways of Hotel Mirhav in Goris bustled with activity from morning until night. Approximately 150 people came to peruse the displayed wares. There were 30 booths filled with jams, jellies, honey, and tasty baked goods. Delightful paintings, ceramics, carvings, and handicrafts of all kinds were represented. There were gorgeous time-honored weavings with inspired patterns and colors. Attendees were blessed with graceful performances of traditional Zangezur Dance and Yeghnik (animal) Dance and talented duduk, dhol (drum) and clarinet musicians. The quality of work presented by all participants was impressive. Proceeds of the event were donated to local handicapped artisans to help purchase materials for their continued work.

The three Women's Development Resource Centre Foundations intend to make the Expo a twice-annual event. This successful celebration of creative works is necessary for a thriving and holistic tourist economy in the region. The value of the regional and national pride that is cultivated by the creation and presence of these beautiful works cannot be overstated. Armenia has a rich tradition founded in the arts and cultivation of goods from local natural resources, but they are often hidden and seldom the focus in public markets. Creating a tradition of Zangezur Arts Expos will help build a palpable arts legacy for the future of this scenic district; from the plain of the Vararakh River in Goris, through the winding snake mountains to Kapan, and across the lush expanse of Meghri.

The Women's Resource Centres of Goris, Kapan, and Meghri would like to once again thank the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia for their presentation concerning tourism in Syunik Marz at the Expo; Sven Holdar and Tsovinar Harutyunyan from the OSCE office in Yerevan for their speeches of support; Goris Mayor Nelson Voskanyan for his continued enthusiasm about our activities; and the Goris Young Leaders Club for their logistical assistance.

- Zoë Armstrong (A17 CBD Volunteer)

KAPAN'S GIRL SCOUTS' LEADERSHIP

On November 28, twenty girls from the Kapan region attended a Girl Scout Leadership and Team Building Seminar. Scouts had the opportunity to build their leadership skills through teamwork and cooperation with one another. Peace Corps volunteers Mari Chiba and Brian Luke attended the event as visiting leaders. Their experience with Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) Camp was a valuable asset to the seminar, and the girls enjoyed meeting new Volunteers from Syunik Marz.

The girls completed several activities in this two-and-a-half hour session. One was to see if they could get every teammate into a lifeboat which was only built for 10. At first only about half of the girls fit, but after many trials and tribulations they came up with the idea of putting just one foot on the sheet and holding onto each other to keep their boat afloat. The boat rocked but no one fell off.

Another activity to promote teamwork began with girls forming a single line, side by side. A balloon was positioned between each girl at waist level. The goal was for the whole line to walk forward with no balloons falling to the ground.

In the end the girls decided to take baby steps and remain close to one another, and the line did eventually move a few feet.

The final activity of the seminar was to build a tower using teamwork and creativity. This activity had the girls utilizing strategic planning methods as a large group. The girls were divided into two teams and each team was given a box with similar items. The teams then had to decide how much time they would need to complete the project, draw a model of their tower (including measurements), and construct the tower within the allotted amount of time. Despite being in separate rooms and using different amounts of time (10 minutes vs. 20 minutes), the two final towers were amazingly about the same height.

The Kapan Girl Scouts have been meeting weekly with Peace Corps volunteers Andrea Trowbridge and Barbara Colson since September 2009. The girls come from different schools all over Kapan. The Volunteers hope the girls will make lasting friendships and become strong leaders in their communities.



-Barbra Colson (A-16 TEFL Volunteer)

RENOVATION OF THE CENTER FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AT BERD BRIDGE OF HOPE



Rebecca Tantama (A-16 CHE Volunteer) assisted Bridge of Hope NGO through the Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) program.

This SPA project renovated Berd Bridge of Hope NGO to provide adequate space for disabled and disadvantaged children and adults. Bridge of Hope, Berd branch, was established to provide rehabilitation and treatment for the needs of disabled children and

adults ages 4 to 25, as well as their families in Berd and surrounding villages. This center focuses on assisting and integrating disabled children into the community. It also serves healthy children from the lowest income families. It provides physical, psychological, music and art therapies, as well as counseling and social assistance for their families.

The center opened its doors in May 2004 and since then has grown dramatically. For the last two years, children have been sharing the room for music therapy, art therapy, and younger children's language therapy. The physical therapy room is also used for psychological evaluation, treatment, and older children's language therapy. Today, the center serves over 300 children, adults, and their families.

The Berd city mayor and its council voted to donate an old unused area directly above present Bridge of Hope. With the eager support from Bridge of Hope staff and community leaders, this SPA project was initiated, planned, and written; at the end of September, it was approved.

The enthusiastic efforts of staff, community workers and leaders started the renovation immediately. Workers began by tearing down walls of old bathroom stalls, broken gas and water lines, and outdated electrical wires. Holes in the floor and ceiling were filled and evened out. New walls were built, new windows and doors added, and a new bathroom with reservoir water and wash basin were installed. New flooring space, several coats of paint, new window shades and lighting were also put in. With the help of community volunteers and staff from the center, the renovation was completed faster than expected.



The project provides three new rooms and a bathroom. Children will be able to learn without disturbance of other work going on in the same room, while staff will be able to provide higher quality therapy without distraction. It has been such a pleasure and so rewarding to assist in getting this project completed.

- Rebecca Tantama (A-16 CHE Volunteer)

Berd Poetry Festival October 2009



October proved to be a busy month in the Shamshadin Region of Tavush Marz. Heather Mailander (A-16 TEFL) organized the October 2009 Poetry Festival for Berd and its surrounding communities. October 26th was the day students from Berd, Chin-Chin, Choraton, Artsvaberd and Verin Karmir gathered to participate with their recitations that they had spent the last month working on and preparing.

The festival was inspired by fellow volunteer Marilyn Matt's (A-16 TEFL) poetry festival that she organized in her site of Hrazdan. Students were given poetry specific in length to their abilities and grade level. Interaction was encouraged between teachers and the students in

preparation for the event. Students were expected to have their pieces memorized and be able to present it with poetic flow, individual interpretation, and expression. The goal of the Poetry Festival was to encourage a sense of community and sharing as all the students gathered from the local towns and villages to share what they had prepared.

The festival started bright and early on Monday the 26th at 10:00 am. Students started showing up by Marshutni and Taxi at 9:30 with their teachers, family and friends in tow. In the end there were about 50 students – a greater than expected turn out for the day. Local Volunteers Beth O'Neil, Megan Christy, Rosa Hensley and David Boggs accompanied their students, and Marilyn Matt herself was invited as a guest judge.

The students were very nervous and anxious as they were ushered into the dimly auditorium. They were all apprehensive about speaking in front of all these new people and strangers, but this experience would prove to be irreplaceable. One by one, grade by grade, the students took the stage to recite their poems for the audience. Results and remarks were gathered from the judges, and certificates were signed by Heather and David and presented to the students. The closing ceremony started with the presentation of certificates as each participant came up on stage to receive their award. The final surprise was 7 trophies awarded to the top students who had shown exceptional work in presentation, expression and interpretation.

The ultimate goal of the Berd Poetry Festival was to give students practice in a participatory and individual competition setting. The hope is to hold more competitions like this one and eventually branch out to a Marz-wide regional festival. The October 26th event was a way to give students experience and an idea of what to expect in the future. Hopefully there will be more events like this to come.

-David Boggs (A-17 TEFL Volunteer)

VARDENIS STATE COLLEGE RENOVATION

On Wednesday, December 9, Vardenis State College saw a project come to fruition aided by the Peace Corps and USAID. The project originated with Connie Speake (A14 TEFL Volunteer) and her counterpart, Anna Mkrtychyan, an English teacher at the college. After Speake ended her service in Armenia on September, volunteers Wayne Burt (A-16 CHE) and Lora Davis (A-17 CBD) joined Mkrtychyan to lead the effort. Alongside wide-ranging and general renovation on the third floor of the college, the project involved obtaining new materials for the library, a Dewey Decimal System, vocational learning materials for beauticians and fashion designers, and creating space for a student cafeteria.



The project required much forethought and concerted energy. On her first day at Vardenis State College, Speake asked to see the college library, planning for future improvements. It seemed daunting at the onset, but motivation was plentiful. "I knew that it would take much effort, much work, but I knew we had to do it," said Mkrtychyan.

Indeed, the hard work paid off. College librarian Margarita Madoya was clearly happy with the project. "Everything is great about this library," she said.

The hard work was shouldered by several organizations. Funding was provided by the Peace Corps Partnership Program, which connects donors in the U.S. with projects in Armenia, and the USAID CHF Bridge Program, which teaches unskilled workers a trade while working on a project such as the Vardenis State College renovation. College employees and students also played an invaluable role in the renovation, supplying guidance, input, and effort.

This most recent project only adds to the hard work that the College and Peace Corps have put into improving the facilities. Recently-completed projects include a modern computer & language learning lab and an inventive English language classroom. These facilities benefit a large number of students and community members.

While Speake was unable to physically see the final results of this project, her presence was still felt. When asked what project will be next, Mkrtychyan and Madoya turned to the library and indicated that they will remain committed to hosting a sustainable and efficient center. "There is no way, seeing [Connie's] passion, to not continue this project," said Mkrtychyan.

Vardenis State College is in the city of Vardenis, Gegharkunik Marz. It has an enrollment of 350 students studying vocational trades, languages, business, and education.

-Kyle Doran (A -17 TEFL Volunteer)

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER FOR HALIDZOR SCHOOL

In spring 2009, Halidzor Secondary School and I (their Volunteer) began looking at options for expanding our ability to educate students in geography and environmental science. Unfortunately, the school's facilities were inadequately equipped to use many modern teaching techniques such as electronic maps and environmental movies. In addition to these problems, many of the school's geography materials were outdated or in severe disrepair.

With this in mind, we began looking at Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) funding to meet some or all of the school's needs. We concluded that the best possible solution was to outfit a new geography room with the latest in maps, atlases, and electronic learning materials. Over summer break, research was conducted on what materials might be available and what the school could afford to donate. The vision of the project was to create a unique learning environment where students could work in an interactive and engaging learning environment.



The SPA project was approved in September 2009. To begin the project, a simple renovation of the room was completed which repaired and painted the walls and floors and saw the addition of carpeting. Four new tables and sixteen chairs were purchased from the nearby town of Goris along with a new whiteboard as a visual aid. Once the renovation was completed, ten new and up-to-date maps, a globe and a full-size Atlas of Armenian Geography were purchased and put on display for student use. Finally, a new computer complete with 56-centimeter monitor was added for the use of electronic materials.

Since completion of the room, geographic learning at the school has significantly improved. Most importantly, teachers have been able to incorporate the new materials into their lesson plans, including the Armenian Tree Project environmental documentaries and the recently-translated "Planet Earth" series. Arguably the greatest improvement is attendance for the school's geography and environmental clubs, which have increased 25% in the two weeks since the room's completion.

The current project has sparked interest in creating other learning laboratories and subject-specific classrooms as they help facilitate the learning project. Currently underway are plans to create Chemistry, Physics and Technology rooms in addition to the English and Geography rooms already established by SPA projects in the school. Although Halidzor's school teaches only 95 students, its faculty and staff strive to provide the best educational environment for the community it serves.

-Sean Reynolds (A-16 EE Volunteer)



This journal is not intended to cover all volunteer activities, and merely represents a snapshot of Peace Corps Armenia's in-country programs and activities.

For more information about Peace Corps Armenia, its activities, its volunteers, its programs or related information, please contact Mariam Arzumanyan at 010-524-450.

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