

peace corps Armenia

Quarterly Newsletter
Spring-Summer 2009



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3. Kennedy's Promise

part of President John F. Kennedy's statement upon signing the Executive Order creating Peace Corps

5. Letter from the Director

a statement about the mission and activities of Peace Corps Armenia

6. Project accomplishments

descriptions of projects completed by Volunteers in collaboration with counterparts, other NGOs, and/or community members throughout Armenia

10. In The News

reports of significant meetings and events that occurred in Spring



Peace Corps Armenia is published by:
US Peace Corps | 33 Charents Street | Yerevan 0025 | Republic of Armenia
Phone [37410]524.450, [3741]562.565
Fax [37410]557.991
e-mail pcarmenia@am.peacecorps.gov
Websites www.peacecorps.gov, www.usa.am/peacecorps.php

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Graphic design services provided by Mariam Arzumanyan, PR Coordinator

Some of the photos are provide by Emily Hass, A 17

Glossary

A15	15th group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia (arrived June 2007)
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
SECTOR	Type of technical expertise comprising 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) and Peace Corps



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 more than 80 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 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

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.

English Education [TEFL]

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

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, and contributed to the design of the Arlington Campus.

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 year to improve schools, non-government organizations, and businesses. I hope you will enjoy reading this report which highlights some stories of their successes. More than eighty 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

Community and Business Development Program

2009 Highlights

COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEER WORKS TO SET UP CAREER CENTER FOR GAVAR STATE UNIVERSITY



Nicole Cashin, CBD volunteer in Gavar, is working to formally organize a career center in Gavar State University (GSU) to help guide Armenian youth

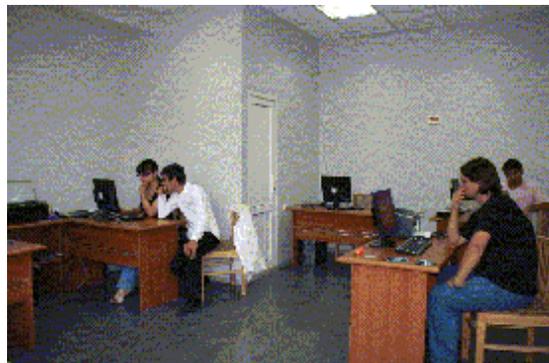
into a preferred career track. Nicole began her work by identifying a local problem – a lack of opportunities for youth to get engaged professionally. Through speaking with local youth, she determined, in tandem with her counterpart at the Gavar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI), a need to begin gathering materials to help educate local university students on a variety of career-oriented subjects: resume writing, volunteering for experience, interviewing, etc., but it wasn't enough to meet the demand she was encountering. Nicole decided to provide a more sustainable, systemic solution by working with GSU to formalize a resource center where students and local youth could go for career information and resources.

Nicole first contacted the Students for Free Enterprise (students association) from the University of Georgia in the United States to access more career materials, and has begun the arduous task of translating the materials from English into Armenian. The Gavar University, working with GCCI, is also setting up a website for students to access information. After materials are finalized, Nicole, her counterpart organization GCCI, and GSU will begin to offer career counseling and advocate for volunteerism as a way to gain professional experience. They are hoping to begin a formal series of informational seminars beginning this fall, having the center's resources completely translated and a process put into place for guiding interested parties on to starting a career.

Nicole hopes that they are able to collaborate with business and organizations in Yerevan and Gavar, sharing information, resources, and opportunities for career center participants.

OPENING OF IT AND BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER IN VAYK

Peace Corps Volunteer Elliot Roper and his local counterpart Aram Hovsepyan were SPA Grant recipients for the opening of Vayk's IT and Business Resource Center. The center opened in June 2009, and will be a place for young adults and business professionals to learn and develop their professional computer skills. The SPA funds were used to purchase 5 new computers, printers, and overall professional office equipment. Classes are being conducted Monday through Friday 2 hours a day for young adults in the community to learn business English and computer skills. So far the center has proved to be a big success, and has already seen 35 community members using the new facilities. Plans for the upcoming year include using the center to host a computer camp, to continue offering business English classes and interactive computer development classes.



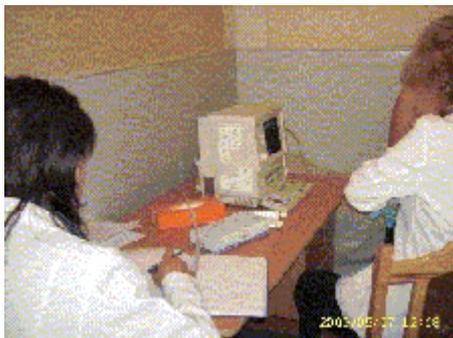
Community Health Education Program

2009 Highlights

HEALTH EDUCATION VOLUNTEER REBECCA TANTAMA IS WORKING TO SAVE LIVES IN BERD

Rebecca has worked with her local counterpart, Dr. Asya Mardayan, to raise breast cancer awareness through seminars and screenings in Berd. In November, Rebecca met with Khachanush Hakobyan, Director of the Armenian American Wellness Center NGO in Yerevan, to better understand how women in her community of Berd could benefit from mammogram screening. In Berd, Rebecca had encountered little to almost no awareness about breast cancer, and saw a real need for education and screening to help women catch any issues early, address them through medical care, and go on to live their lives. Breast cancer, when caught in the early stages, can be easily treated and – when caught early – women who undergo treatment have about a 90% survival rate. This number drops dramatically in later stages.

Rebecca began by addressing the lack of awareness through a series of educational seminars on breast cancer in ten locations in five villages. Over the course of 3 months, Rebecca and Dr. Asya Mardayan engaged over 400 women, educating them about all aspects of breast cancer, and the importance of getting screened (mammogram).



At the end of that period of time, Rebecca and Dr. Mardayan were able to get the AAWC to visit Berd and do a series of free breast cancer screenings for women in the area. Over 209 women signed up for the screening, and out of that 112 came to be tested.

From those screenings, over a dozen women were referred for follow-up medical care.

Rebecca plans to continue her work, and continue to raise awareness and conduct screenings for women in her region.

HEALTH EDUCATION VOLUNTEERS ADDRESSING THE REALITIES OF HIV/AIDS IN ARMENIA

For International World Aids Day, Ben Callaway-a Health Educator Volunteer – held a series of seminars, a poster contest/essay for students, a film screening and distributed informational pamphlets on HIV/AIDS.

Over 3,750 people were engaged in activities, with ten Peace Corps Volunteers participating. Volunteers coordinated their activities with Aids Prevention and Education Care (APEC) NGO, the national AIDS education and prevention center in Yerevan. Ben began by coordinating a series of informational events through schools with other volunteers to raise awareness of how HIV is transmitted, and preventative measures to stop the spread. Later, Ben coordinated the publishing and printing of informational pamphlets with APEC in Yerevan, and worked with 10 other volunteers to distribute these around the city. The series of events culminated in the screening of a film depicting the realities of how HIV is transmitted (at the Moscow theatre).

Teaching English as a Foreign Language Program

2009 Highlights

36 STUDENTS RECITE ENGLISH POETRY AT COMPETITION IN HRAZDAN

On April 19, 2009, 36 students from 11 Hrazdan Schools 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 Batsvogh Ayg, and the European Regional College registered to

recite poems in English at the Poetry Recitation Contest 2009 at School #12 in Hrazdan.

The Poetry Recitation Contest 2009 was co-sponsored by United States Peace Corps Armenia and the Hrazdan Association of English Language Teachers of Armenia. The competition was an opportunity for teachers of English and their students to explore the world of English-language poetry. The Poetry Recitation Contest grew out of the success of the Poetry Recitation Festival 2008, a non-juried event, which was conducted on December 21 at Schools #12 and #13. Ninety-three students from twelve Hrazdan-area schools participated in the Festival.

In preparation for the April 19 Poetry Recitation Contest, English teachers held competitions within their own schools to select the top-performing student from each grade to represent their school. At the contest each student recited a poem in English before a panel of judges who scored for quality of memorization, diction, and interpretation.



Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 recited poems no shorter than 10 lines and no longer than 20. Students in grades 9, 10, and 11 recited poems no shorter than 14 lines and no longer than 30. The selected poems poets from the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia.

Each student entrant received a certificate of participation. The top three students for each grade received special citations. British Councils generously donated book prizes for the first-place student for each grade and his or her teacher.

ENGLISH CLUBS IN THE AMERICAN CORNERS

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Volunteers Lindee and Dustin Johnson have found

English clubs can be about more than just English.

Every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, Dustin and Lindee held English clubs for local youth. The clubs centered around providing interested participants with practical experience in writing and speaking English, and also in providing a forum for discussion on cultural issues and local subjects. The clubs began with just a few participants, but grew to over 35 individuals, who met every week. They began to form their own civil society group, and engaged the local community through volunteerism.

Dustin and Lindee mentored two youth from their clubs, who, in 2009, will head out to America on UGRAD scholarships. Another group of participants started their own English clubs to benefit other local youth in primary schools. Some participants are volunteering at local NGOs.

“Advocating for volunteerism has been very rewarding,” said Dustin regarding this work with the club. “We found that by opening up a forum for developing English skills for local youth, we opened a door for general development by nurturing our participants’ passions for personal and professional growth, and their communities and civil society in general.”

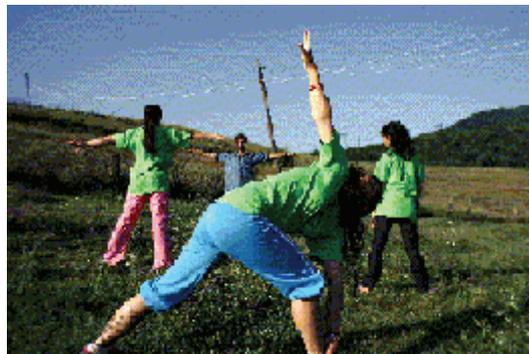
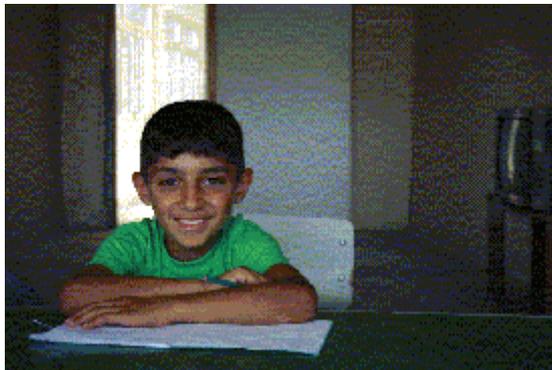
“Seeing these youth take an interest in their community, overcoming stereotypes and many local political, social and economic challenges, has inspired me. It’s funny when you enter into a situation thinking you’ll just be teaching, and end up learning.”

Environmental Education Program

2009 Highlights

GREEN CAMP

Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia worked with Green Tavush NGO this summer to host another successful year of Green Camps. There were a total of 5 camps with each camp hosting 40 children ages 11-15. Three camps were held in Ijevan, and 2 were held in local villages of Artik and Bagratashen. The camps focused on bringing attention to environmental issues as well as learning about nature through active games and activities. Each camp, a week in length, gave the campers a chance to bond with their peers, come together, learn about the wonder and power of the natural environment, how important it is to protect and respect it, and ways they could make a difference in their own communities. As Peace Corps Volunteers, we were encouraged to bring a motivated group of kids from our communities to participate in one of the camps. Each camp, hosting 40 children, had approximately 4-5 groups of kids from different areas in Armenia to help enhance the diversity and experience the campers had. In addition, each PCV was asked to bring an Armenian counterpart to the camps to help maximize the sustainability of the education, as well as help teach the lessons in Armenian. We saw excellent results this year, and hope to work alongside Green Tavush NGO and with some of the very dedicated and enthusiastic young Armenians for next summer's camps.



JULY 4TH CELEBRATION IN THE VILLAGES OF CHARENTSAVN

A little slice of America with Armenian host families

The A-17 Peace Corps trainees gave their Armenian host families a taste of American culture with the meals and activities they planned to celebrate Independence Day on July 4th, 2009. Trainees from Karenis, Solak, Karashab, Alapars, Arzakan and Teghenik planned their menus and activities weeks before the big day, and made several trips into Charentsavan and Hrazdan gathering supplies. Many spent hours the day before and the day of their parties putting on the finishing touches, barbequing, baking, and decorating.



In Karenis, Donald Addu, master chef, prepared 16 kilos of hamburgers, fried zucchini and a lovely mushroom and pepper tapenade. Bryan Hall made a traditional potato salad, Raneve West-Singh made an enormous batch of home-made macaroni and cheese, Katie Peckham prepared a tangy pasta salad, and I, Emily Haas, spent the entire day before the party baking 18 tiny peach/raspberry, cherry and lemon meringue pies. Janet Best's mother had sent a package of patriotic decorations, including tablecloths, napkins and American flags, which we used to embellish the schoolroom where we held our feast. The American flags especially were a hit with the village children, who chased us around asking constantly if they could have our flags.

After our meal, we showed the children how to do the limbo. Most impressive of our guests however, was Brent Hines, a fellow trainee visiting from Teghenik, who beat out even the smallest children. We then moved the activities outdoors and played pin the tail on the donkey, though the children were curiously good at placing the tail exactly in the right spot. Next we had a piñata, and almost every child had at least one try at breaking it open. Eventually it was pulled out of the tree and torn open, a frantic gathering of candy and toys only made the children hungrier for sugar. After that, we headed to the soccer field behind the school where Vincent Cleveland and Donald Addu had started a fire for marshmallow roasting. Beth O'Neil and Vincent Cleveland took charge over dispersing chocolate and marshmallows, but were accosted by sugar hungry children. We all had a good laugh later about Beth O'Neil yelling, "mi rope, mi rope!" and the children hounding her for more marshmallows.

We later tried to teach the children how to play kickball, however many important aspects of the game were somehow lost in translation or confused, so the village children suggested that they teach us an Armenian game, gorts-a-gorts. Little did we know the gorts-a-gorts world champion lives in Karenis. Gorts-a-gorts is similar to dodge ball, but in this version one team stands in the middle and the other splits in two and forms a wall on either side and throws the ball at their opponents. If you are hit by the ball you are out, but if you catch the ball you can bring back a teammate. After every one of us was quickly eliminated from the middle (it was Americans versus Armenians or 8 versus 40), it was our turn to throw the ball. One long lanky girl, no matter where she was, seemed to be right where the ball was and she caught it with amazing agility. We didn't stand a chance. After about 15 minutes our bodies and egos couldn't take the beating so we surrendered.

We all agreed the party went off without a hitch and we were so happy that we had a chance to share a little slice of America with our host families. For as much time as they had spent trying to share with us the intricacies of Armenian culture, it was nice to give them an opportunity to experience a little of ours.

-Emily Haas, A 17





IN THE NEWS



3rd Annual Earth Day Photo Competition of Armenia

The annual Earth Day Photo Contest was held on May 10th 2009, from 11:00am to 12:00pm, at the Vanadzor YMCA, Sayat Nova Street. Earth Day is an internationally recognized day to raise environmental awareness and create action. It is celebrated every year on April 22nd.

Last year over 150 students from 18 villages participated in the event. This year, the competition involved over 200 students.

This year about 15 local environmental clubs from across Armenia submitted photos for the competition. The theme for the contest was **Shining a Light on Armenia's Nature**. Both photos and artwork were submitted and judged by a panel who work in the environmental and photography fields. Photos were judged based on six categories and winners were selected by school form.

The winning submissions have been put on public display in the Vanadzor YMCA.

Contact:
Peace Corps Volunteers: Sean Reynolds

2009 Syunik Regional Spelling Bee

Peace Corps volunteers, in association with their Syunik region Armenian colleagues, held the first annual Syunik Regional Spelling Bee in March and April in Kapan, Sisian and Goris. The spelling bee model was based on the Scripps National Spelling Bee in America that began in 1941 and is now regarded as the nation's premier academic proving ground for school age students. The competition provided the region's brightest English language learners an opportunity to interact with other motivated students and it provided the students an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a competitive field.

The participants were all regional students of the 7th through 11th forms. The contest prompted them to correctly spell English words selected from their English text book glossaries. Competitors were eliminated upon the incorrect spelling of a word. First, second and third place finishers from each form, were advanced to the Regional event which was to involve 45 finalist students.

Finalist participants enjoyed a day of competition as well as a banquet and awards ceremony. Spelling bee champions were given various prizes, including English language resources and trophies. Invited guests included representatives from the American Councils, British Council, Peace Corps as well as local community leaders. Over three hundred students participated, region-wide.

Following the footsteps of two previous National Spelling Bees, the Syunik Marz community was able to fund its first annual Regional event with contributions from the Mayors of Kapan, Sisian and Goris as well as World Vision, American Councils, British Council and all participating city schools. This community funding demonstrated a strong desire for the sustainability of academic pursuits in the Syunik region.

Please contact Kristine Aleksanyan, Director, 2009 Syunik Regional Spelling Bee, at **094 44 75 00** for more information.



IN THE NEWS

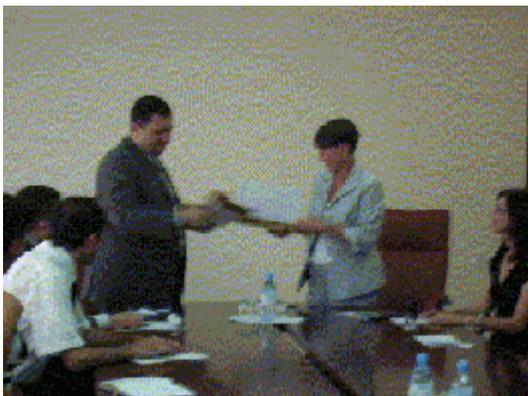
Meeting with the Minister of Education

On July 27, 2009, Peace Corps Country Director Lee Lacy, Programming and Training Officer Nicholas Bruno and English Education Program Manager Gayane Zargaryan had a business meeting with Armen Ashotyan, the Minister of Education of the Republic of Armenia .

The meeting was aimed to give a picture of what Peace Corps Armenia does, what its mission stands for, what programs it has, where the volunteers are assigned and in what activities the volunteers are involved especially in the sphere of Education.

Mr. A. Ashotyan mentioned that the international organizations often give the priority to the issues related to Education, which plays as a foundation of an efficient collaboration and at the end of the meeting, for expanding the cooperation, both sided agreed to make suggestions, which will be implemented followed by discussions.

Memorandum of Understanding Signed with the Ministry of Economy



On August 7, 2009, Lee Lacy, US Peace Corps (PC) Armenia Country Director , Stepan Shoyan, Community and Business Development Program Manager and several PC Volunteers met Nerses Yeritsyan, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia .

During the meeting a three-year Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Economy and US Peace Corps Armenia.

The memorandum defined the framework of collaboration between Ministry of Economy and US Peace Corps aiming at fulfilling Community and Business Development programs of Peace Corps Armenian office, improving the business circles training in Armenia, as well as business and community development. After signing the Memorandum Nerses Yeritsyan presented to the guests the infrastructural programs (particularly, Gyumri techno city construction, Jermuk resort centre establishment and other programs) developed by RoA Government where Peace Corps volunteers support would be appreciative and useful.

In her turn Ms. Lee Lacy assured the Minister of Peace Corps Armenia's readiness to provide support to these Ministry initiatives.



IN THE NEWS

Peace Corps Armenia Swears in the A 17 Group of Volunteers

On August 13, 2009, U.S. Peace Corps Armenia conducted the Swearing In Ceremony held in Charentsevan for the 17th group of Volunteers serving Armenia. This year 44 new Peace Corps Volunteers were sworn in by Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch. In her address to the audience Ambassador Yovanovitch stated, "Peace Corps Volunteers significantly contribute to the good will between the United States and Armenia."

Director Lee Lacy recognized the 44 Trainees and acknowledged the excellent support provided by the Pre-Service Training staff, the core Staff, and the many Volunteer host families that attended the event. During the event the Trainees demonstrated their knowledge of Armenian language by singing Armenian songs, giving speeches, and performing an Armenian theatre classic. Representatives of government ministries, the governor of Kotayk Marz, the city mayor of Charentsevan, and other representatives from international and local organizations were invited to the well attended ceremony. With the addition of this new group, there are a total of 79 volunteers working in schools, universities, NGOs, and health facilities throughout Armenia.



Peace Corps Participated in Fuller Legacy Build

On August 21, 2009, Peace Corps Armenia Country Director Lee Lacy and some Peace Corps Volunteers Sasha Levine, Brian Gilmer, Joshua Miller, Emily Loquidis, Cassie Warholm-Wohlenh and John Clinton participated in Fuller Legacy Activities in Haytagh, Armavir Marz.

The 100-house build all over the world is in celebration and honor of Millard Fuller's life and work. All his life Millard Fuller with his wife Linda served the idea of helping those in housing need, developing communities and giving opportunities to thousands of families all over the world to feel the happiness of being a homeowner.

In Armenia, Fuller Center Housing (FCH) began operations in 2008 and has already helped 50 families and hosted 10 Global Builders (GB) teams, from August 30 to September 3. GB team from USA, US Embassy employees, alumni's from Educational and Cultural Affairs and local community members joined the Fuller Legacy Build with FCH Armenia staff to help build for those in housing need in Armavir and Ararat regions.



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.

STAFF Lee Lacy, Country Director
 Nicholas Bruno, Program and Training Officer
 Amy Larsen, Administrative Officer
 Stepan Shoyan, Community and Business Development
 Gayane Zargaryan, English Education
 Susanna Yeghiazaryan, Community Health Education
 Armen Tiraturyan, Environmental Education
 Liana Amirbekyan, Training Manager
 Mariam Arzumanyan, Executive Assistant/PR Coordinator

ADDRESS: Peace Corps Armenia 33 Charents Street, Yerevan 0025 Republic of Armenia
 Phone (374-10) 52-44-50; 55-13-65; 56-25-65
 Fax (374-10) 55-79-91
 E-mail pcarmenia@am.peacecorps.gov
 Websites <http://www.peacecorps.gov>
 <http://www.usa.am/peacecorps>