

PEACE CORPS



ANNIVERSARY



1961-2011

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Peace Corps . Armenia

TO LEAN MORE ABOUT PEACE CORPS ARMENIA VISIT OUR WEBSITE: <http://armenia.peacecorps.gov>



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.

U.S. President John F. Kennedy
March 1, 1961

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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 200,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 139 host countries.

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 over 730 Volunteers have served in villages, towns, and cities around Armenia. Currently 97 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.

PEACE CORPS ARMENIA PROJECTS

Community and Business Development

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

English Education

- 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 Education and Science
Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
Ministry of Economy
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

A LETTER FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR



Dear Ministers and Staff of the Republic of Armenia, staff of Non-Government Organizations, stakeholders 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. Currently 97 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,

David Lillie
Country Director
United States Peace Corps, Armenia

INTERNATIONAL WRITING OLYMPICS PROMOTES ENGLISH & CREATIVITY ACROSS THE GLOBE



God, robots, volunteerism, birds, gender swapping, time machines, globalization, aliens, laughter, marriage, technology, death. It may sound like the contents of an email spam filter but this motley assortment of topics embodies one of the U.S. Peace Corps' most ecumenical and fast-growing projects.

Writing Olympics began in Georgia in 2003. Faced with curricula that focused on repetition and rote memorization, a collective of Peace Corps Volunteers decided some creative curveballs were needed to awake students from their post-Soviet slumber. The solution: a creative writing contest that pushed pupils' language abilities and lured their imaginations into strange and difficult terrain. Children who typically spent classes reviewing grammar now used their English to expound on everything from politics and religion to super-powers and waterfalls.

Within a few years, Peace Corps neighbors Armenia and Azerbaijan joined the fray, creating the Transcaucasia Writing Olympics. Moldova joined in 2009 and, thanks to outreach efforts by Volunteers and Peace Corps staff, the number of participating countries more than doubled this year with the addition of Albania, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, and Ukraine. Six additional countries - Cape Verde, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Philippines, Romania, and Tonga - faced logistical challenges in coordinating the national contest for 2010-2011 but hope to participate next year.

The procedures of the contest are simple. Students have one hour to respond to surprise writing prompts in sessions monitored by volunteer proctors - typically Peace Corps Volunteers or teachers. Students are not allowed to receive any assistance writing their responses, and they cannot reference dictionaries or other books. Because the skills and concepts engendered by creative writing may be daunting to participants, lesson plans to help students develop creative writing are disseminated to all countries several weeks before writing sessions begin.

Each country has two national organizers who publicize the contest, disseminate materials, coordinate judging, and arrange prizes for winners. The top essay from each grade level (6-12 and University 1-4) goes on to international judging, which is conducted by international organizers in Tbilisi. This year's international judging was held on April 18 with first place winners hailing from Ukraine, Bulgaria, Georgia, Mongolia, and Azerbaijan.

Winning aside, Volunteers and staff members feel the primary goal of the contest is reached by simply encouraging students to express themselves and use English in a spontaneous, free-form manner.

"Perhaps no other international Peace Corps project so directly solicits creativity, humor, and cogitation from the students we're so fortunate to work with," says international organizer Chris Edling, who worked as a Hollywood writer/producer before joining Peace Corps.

Support for this year's International Writing Olympics came from several organizations including American Councils, British Council, KyivPost, the U.S. Embassy, and PH International, who is hosting the competition's new website (<http://icwo.ph-int.org>).

But the greatest contributions came from participants themselves, whose original thoughts entertained and delighted judges:

"I think nationality not important, as all men have equal rights, same thoughts and dreams." (7th form student)

"I was speaking to [a caged bird], when suddenly I heard a whisper, a melody... music of freedom... I couldn't stop my hand... It opened the door of cage... but the bird wasn't going to fly out... I put my hand into the cage and touch it... It was dead... I began crying... but later I wipe my face and run out the room. I was running very fast. I wanted to fly... fly... but I stopped and continued crying..." (10th form student)

"I think [God] was different from other children. Maybe some of children called him THE ODD ONE OUT." (11th form student)

"We are an independent country but our women are not so independent. They have to follow their husbands everywhere and always. They often don't have career, they are always taking care of someone... Men like to say that a good Armenian girl must devote herself to her family to have children. But why can't we do both of them!... We have to change many points in our mental thinking as they are causing many troubles to us." (3rd year university student)



"We... need to be taught what it is to volunteer, at least the idea, as most people are just not aware of this wonderful idea that fills one's life with so many positive emotions... I think that just one person taking an action can inspire the others to do the same. I am so ready to be that first one taking the first step." (4th year university student)

Continuation on the next page

Indeed, by participating in International Writing Olympics these students are taking a first step towards better understanding themselves and the world in which they live. International organizer Tom Gagnon, who also helped organize last year's contest, considers it one of his most cherished Peace Corps endeavors.

"In my two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer, the International Writing Olympics is one of the most successful projects I have been involved with. I am proud to have participated and I hope this competition continues to be successful and rewarding."

The celebration continued at the National Institute of Education in Yerevan.-check their website.

-PCV Chris Edling

NATIONAL POETRY CONTEST IN HRAZDAN

For the past three years, volunteers from the United States Peace Corps and Armenian English teachers have worked together to organize poetry recitation contests. In these events, English students in grades 6-11 recite a previously-memorized English poem for an audience. Their recitations are judged on three aspects: memorization, diction, and interpretation (how well they convey the meaning of the poem through their speech). In previous years, these contests have been held locally around Armenia in Hrazdan, Martuni, Goris, Dilijan, Ijevan, Berd, and Noyemberyan.



This year, 14 different communities around Armenia have held individual poetry recitation contests. The top-placing students from each of these contests were invited to participate in the first-ever National Poetry Recitation contest, to be held in Hrazdan on May 8th.

Eighty-four students from sites throughout the country, from Noyemberian and Berd all the way to Kapan and Meghri, came to celebrate their hard work and perform for the rest of the country.

-Katrina Lefrancois-Hans

PC VOLUNTEERS USE INNOVATIVE METHODS TO TEACH ENGLISH AT BRITISH COUNCIL'S ENGLISH CAMP

Peace Corps Volunteers Katie McKillin (Community Health Education) and Samuel Dolgin-Gardner (Teacher of English as a Foreign Language), taught English to 30 high school students from across Armenia at the British Council's English Language Camp, located at the Pambak YMCA. The students had to pass an English language exam to attend the camp, and were excited to get the chance to talk with native English speakers. Over the course of the five-day camp, students practiced and performed English songs; watched English movies; learned conversational leadership and job interview language skills, and had a chance to meet with Charles Lonsdale, the British Ambassador to Armenia.

The students got the chance to demonstrate their English language skills by asking Ambassador Lonsdale questions they wrote themselves, ranging from "What is your favorite Armenian food?" (Khorovats) to "What is the difference between the constitutions of Armenia and Britain?" (Britain doesn't have a formal constitution; instead it has a tradition of civil law) to "What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?" ("I feel like I'm at a job interview," quipped Ambassador Lonsdale.)

"I appreciated having the Peace Corps Volunteers," said Lilit Karantaryan, the Programs Officer at British Councils who organized the camp, "The kids became much more comfortable speaking and understanding English with native speakers over the course of the camp. It was also great to see classes where the students participated and were exposed to English-language multimedia."

PCV Katie McKillin agreed that the students became much more comfortable expressing themselves in English over the course of the camp. "It wasn't just the classes," she said, "it was also getting the chance to spend time with the kids, eating meals with them, doing morning exercises and going on hikes. At first they were very nervous about making mistakes, but by the end they were excited to talk with us in English even outside of class."

-PCV Samuel Dolgin-Gardner

ESTABLISHING THE DILIJAN COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER



Dilijan, in the northern Armenian region of Tavush Marz, known for its lush forests, has a proud creative tradition. There is an artistic spirit alive there in the community, despite the lack of resources and cohesion.

US Peace Corps Volunteer, Katie Peckham (A 17) was placed in Dilijan in 2009 to serve as an Environmental Educator. During her time posted at the local Children's Art School she quickly became friends with many tal-

ented and aspiring artists. She made a powerful connection between art and environmental awareness efforts. To develop a carefully planned space for artists of all ages, Katie and her counterparts saw the Small Project Assistance grant as an opportunity to create the Dilijan Community Art Center.

In October 2010 the project was awarded 3600 USD to bring the space to life with a white board, art supplies, a projector, a desktop computer, a laptop computer, and a copier/printer.

Director, Hrehgen Gasparyan and Activities Coordinator, Aida Atabekyan at the Center, both worked closely with Katie in the process of applying for the grant. When funds arrived they were prepared to proudly take the reins and independently execute the agreed upon project timeline.

There has been a very positive response in the artisan community. The Center and its enthusiastic art teachers have already seen 500 eager participants benefit from trainings and exhibits. The Picasa trainings in particular have been popular. Skills acquired in these classes are being successfully used in organizations in Dilijan and the surrounding area. All offerings have seen steady attendance; participants are excited and grateful to expand their skills.

Even though the grant period ended in May 2011, the Dilijan Community Art Center has a promising future. It exists within the Children's Art School, which is partially funded by the municipality, so there will be space and basic operating expenses covered for years to come.

-PCV Zoe Armstrong

FIRST FILM FESTIVAL HELD IN KAPAN

From August 4th to the 6th of 2011, the first Kapan Film Festival was held in the park named after Vazgen Sargsyan. In an effort to raise the involvement of youth in the community, Peace Corps Volunteer, Jay Lewis, with the Kapan Area Development Foundation, thought of this fun way to get youth excited about being involved in the community. They trained a group of kids from the local Youth NGO in Kapan on how to organize the event. In addition, they worked with the Mayor's office and his son for community support and contribution.

The youth were trained on Project Design and Management to help them to work with the community to organize, publicize and coordinate the event. The majority of the festival was funded by the community; the projector and speakers were donated by the Mayor's son and the community contributed to publicizing the event. The event was publicized through posters and signs in addition to social networking methods. The goal of the event was to get youth involved in the community and it was a success. The youth learned that if they want to see change in the community that they can work with citizens and the government to make it happen.

Through the great efforts of everyone involved, there was an excellent turnout each night at the festival; there were over 100 people who attended the first night (70-100 attended the following two nights). Each night there was a different international film shown (two Russian and one French film). The audience really seemed to enjoy the festival, in fact many peo-



ple came to the festival every night. It turned out to be a great, family-friendly event that offered something new for Kapan residences to do at night. Many of the audience members commented that they would like to see this event happen again.

There was a fourth day planned for the film festival where approximately 100 soldiers from the local military base were expected to attend, but the last day was canceled due to rain. There are plans to make up for this day in the near future and show a film for the soldiers, the date is still to be determined.

-PCV Erin Malewicky

BORDER2BORDER THE FIRST ARMENIAN MARATHON FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH



In June of 2011, twelve Peace Corps Volunteers embarked on an unforgettable journey across Armenia to bring health education to the country's rural youth. According to the World Health Organization, non-communicable diseases account for over 80% of deaths in Armenia. Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause, accounting for 54% of total deaths, and tobacco consumption is still on the rise, varying between 64.2% and 69.4% among men in the 24 – 65 years age group. After observing firsthand the health conditions of Armenia's population and how certain trends were being picked up by the youth, Peace Corps Volunteers from across the country came together to take an innovative approach towards raising awareness about health education. The project, known as Border2Border or "B2B", was a pan-Armenian walk that coupled health education with leading by example. Spearheaded by the volunteers, the project team worked alongside the Armenian Red Cross Society to develop informational materials and interactive learning methods focused on proper nutrition, exercise, and the avoidance of cigarettes and alcohol. Peace Corps Volunteers raised the funds for the project and mobilized both communities and their youth, all the while preparing mentally and physically for the challenges that awaited them.

On June 4th, six volunteers started walking south from the Armenian-Georgian border while six others started north from the Armenian-Iranian border. Over the following 17 days, the teams traversed five of Armenia's ten 'Marzes' (states) towards the midpoint of Yeghegnadzor, each team walking its own 290 kilometers over mountains and through communities. While ten of these days were primarily hiking, the other days were devoted to organizing seminars and teaching Armenian youth about the health



principles they were promoting. In total, 11 seminars were organized in villages and towns along the groups' route, with nearly 500 children attending over the course of the project. The two teams also trained 30 community members about the B2B curriculum so that it could be carried on those areas, distributed thousands of informational pamphlets and posters to youth, and took 4,310,820 steps over a span of 142 hiking hours.

Border2Border was the first event of its kind in Armenia, where many resources never make it outside of the country's capital city. Those involved will remember it as a great success and hope that it becomes an annual event not only in Armenia, but also in other countries where Peace Corps Volunteers are working for children's health.

-PCV Austin Sherwindt

AIDS CONFERENCE

An AIDS project was undertaken with funds from the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) grant. Receiving roughly 9000 US Dollars, this grant allowed twenty interested Armenian volunteers of various ages to come to Yerevan for a three day, very intensive AIDS training of trainers. The Armenian volunteers were paired up with one of ten Peace Corps Volunteers.



They were given information covering topics of AIDS transmission, prevention, pathology, the prevalence of this disease in Armenia, stigma, and awareness. The training also covered different methods of information transfer such as the use of games, viewing films and facilitating discussion.

Each of the ten teams of two Armenians and one PCV was required to give a minimum of six presentations in the regions, each lasting between 90 and 120 minutes with two target groups of 13-15 year olds and 16-24 year olds. In addition, each presentation was required to have a minimum of 25 participants. The overall goal is to spread AIDS awareness and information to over 1600 Armenians in the regions. All presentations were conducted by a team of two Armenians, in Armenian, with the PCV acting solely in the support role. After the training of trainers, each team was given an "AIDS packet" of pre and post tests, AIDS information brochures from the Armenian Red Cross and UNICEF, and a AIDS guide for the teaching teams.

This effort was a corroborative effort between the Armenian Red Cross and the US Peace Corps.

-PCV Dannie Lovell

**“KICK THE HABIT”
ANTI-SMOKING FOOTBALL
TOURNAMENT ORGANIZED IN
SISIAN COMMUNITY**



In order to promote the importance of exercise and the dangers of smoking, from April 30th – May 1st, the Sport and Culture Progress of Sisian NGO organized the first “Kick The Habit” Mini-Football Tournament in Sisian. Peace Corps Volunteer, Alex Lord, organized this tournament with the help of Davit Hambarzumyan, Director of the NGO and Alex's counterpart. Designed for both boys and girls, the children were divided into two age groups: 9 – 12 years old and 13 – 15 years. The tournament was held on the field constructed by the Armenian Football Federation in 2007 for the Sisian community.

This field is a mini-football field, which allows each team to have four players on the field at a time, with three substitutes eagerly waiting on the sidelines. The event was advertised to all Sisian schools, as well as over a dozen Villages surrounding Sisian. As a result, there was an excellent turnout, with 22 teams participating (19 boys teams and 3 girls teams) representing over 154 Sisian youth from more than a dozen different schools. Also in attendance were Sisian’s mayor, the Sisian City football coach, teachers from various schools, and over 150 other spectators. During the competition, the participants received informational materials on the importance of exercise and not smoking.

At the end of the tournament, there was a friendly Armenia vs. America match where local PCVs competed against an Armenian team. The final score was a tie: 11 – 11. All PCVs in attendance helped with the overall management of the event. Additionally, the winners of each division received certificates of participation and a team trophy. Due to the success of the event, local residents have asked that the tournament be repeated every year.



“I think the best part for me was when I saw the girls teams playing. I think this was the first time in these girls' lives they have ever played an organized, real game of football with a referee, and most importantly without any boys on the field. They looked so happy,” commented organizer, Alex Lord. “Next time, we are going to organize a tournament especially for girls and educate them on the effects of secondhand smoke.”

-PCV Austin Sherwindt

**PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER AND
NOYEMBERYAN COMMUNITY
BRING A GREENHOUSE TO
NOYEMBERYAN HIGH SCHOOL**

The Noyemberyan High School is constructing an educational greenhouse that will serve as a scientific and practical -skills educational center for students. Specific curriculum is being developed to engage students in the 4th through 12th grades in agricultural science as well business development. Peace Corps Volunteer Susan Linden a TEFL in Noyemberyan worked closely with her community to assess its needs and applied for grants to fund this project, working as project manager of sorts.

The greenhouse will be used both to teach students academically, and to teach business skills that will provide students with much-needed vocational training. The vegetables and flowers raised in the greenhouse will be sold in the community, and funds will be used to provide educational supplies (pens, copy books, books, etc.) to underprivileged students and sustain continued use of the greenhouse. The greenhouse will be heated using waste heat from the existing boiler system, thereby increasing its efficiency and saving money for the school.

Construction of the greenhouse project, which is being funded with both a Small Project Assistance (SPA) Grant and community contributions, began in May 2011. Students will begin working in the greenhouse in September, and the first harvest of vegetables and flowers is planned for December 2011. The whole community of Noyemberyan is excited to see what the students will produce and the students are prepared to meet their expectations!

-PCV Alyssa Schlange

“WE ARE OUR FUTURE” SUMMER CAMP HELD IN GORIS

In August 2011, Partnership and Teaching NGO implemented a five-day leadership camp entitled “We Are Our Future” in the town of Goris of Armenia’s Syunik marz. Designed by the organization’s Peace Corps Volunteer, Austin Sherwindt, the goal of the camp was to increase the level of understanding and mutual respect between students of the Goris community, irrespective of physical, mental, or socioeconomic differences, while simultaneously promoting the ideas of cooperation and leadership. Held in Goris’ School No. 6, 36 children (ages 11 – 14) participated in the weeklong camp, of which 12 of the children were disabled and/or disadvantaged. The theme of the camp was relating our own structure to that of the earth, working from the inside out.



Using interactive lessons and informational seminars, the first two days of the camp focused on our personal health (knowledge, ideas, and physical health) and the next

two on our roles as citizens, both in our communities and the world. Each day, the children participated in a variety of leadership and teambuilding exercises, arts and crafts, and informational seminars presented by guest speakers from local organizations such as the Goris Women’s Resource Center and Goris’ Human Rights NGO. Topics covered included Leadership, Group Dynamics, Healthy Lifestyles (Nutrition, Exercise, Anti-Smoking, Anti-Drinking), HIV / AIDS Awareness, Civil Society, Project Design and Management, Environmental Problems in Armenia, Diplomacy, and Human Rights and Discrimination.

On the final day of the camp, the three teams of participants implemented the civil service projects that had designed throughout the camp. Team “Sphinx” went on an anti-smoking campaign throughout Goris, talking to local shop owners and community members about the dangers of smoking cigarettes. Team “Eagles” cleaned up a local tourist attraction and posted anti-littering information. Team “Smilers” traveled to two kindergartens to teach 85 children about basic hand washing and tooth brushing.

Heghineh Hovsepian, one of the camp counselors, stated, “I am very happy for this experience. In the five-day period, the children learned to love and respect one another and how to work as a team in different situations. Most importantly, the children learned that they are responsible for building their future and, in doing so, that each one of them can be a leader.”

In May 2011, Partnership and Teaching NGO (P&T NGO) with the cooperation of World Vision’s Sisian ADP concluded their “Building DPO Outreach for Greater Disability Inclusiveness” project, which was designed to promote inclusive education in the Goris and Sisian regions. Coming off the heels of this initiative, the We Are Our Future summer camp was intended to foster an opportunity for disabled and disadvantaged children to work alongside student council representatives

from those schools practicing inclusive education. This camp was done with the support of many different organizations, including representatives of P&T NGO, World Vision’s Sisian ADP, PC Volunteers, and Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States.

About Partnership and Teaching NGO

Partnership and Teaching NGO was established in September 2000 to form a collective organization for developing civil society and promoting change within the Armenian educational sphere. Since 2005, P&T NGO has been one of three Intermediate Service Organizations of the Counterpart International Armenian office, serving Southern Armenia (Syunik and VayotsDzor regions). For more information, please visit their website at <http://www.gumiso.am>.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH SUMMER CAMPS

From July 21st – August 4th, 2011, Peace Corps Volunteer Chris Sherwood helped facilitate a two-week long summer camp for 30 children ages 8-14 with developmental disorders. Sponsored by the Arabkir Medical Center, the camp was an opportunity for the children – whose disorders range from simple motor control problems to cerebral palsy – to participate in group activities, drawing, swimming, hiking, dancing, music and intellectual games and exercises, offering opportunities to socialize and develop skills for interacting in everyday life.

On the last day of the camp, the children put on a theatrical play about a monster that stole all the emotions from one of the campers. The children then explained what each emotion represented and the positive and negative aspects of that particular emotion. An example was ‘anger.’ According to the children, sometimes it is fine to be angry in a situation, but other times anger can be misplaced on people who love and care for you.

Since August 2010, Sherwood has been working with over 100 children in a rehabilitation clinic as a physical therapist’s assistant. Sherwood writes,



“The camp was the most amazing experience so far in my Peace Corps experience. To watch children include each other without regard to the other’s disability was incredible. In some cases, socialization and integration of the children with disabilities into their community is not always an easy task for a family in Armenia.”

However, the children were not the only beneficiaries of the camp. Sherwood continues, “Not only was the camp for the children with many types of disabilities, but seven mothers of the children with autism also attended the camp. To watch this hard working group of women relax and be with other mothers facing some of the same issues is something I will never forget.”

-PCV Austin Sherwindt

SUMMER CAMPS

GIRLS LEADING OUR WORLD

This summer, Peace Corps Armenia Volunteers Amanda Pascal from Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and Maggie Woznicki from Woodstock, IL along with representatives from Stepanavan Youth Center organized another GLOW Summer School success. The camp had 44 girls from all around Armenia. The camp was 7 days long held in Stepanavan with an excursion to the Botanical Gardens for our Environmental day.

Each day the camp presented lessons on important topics; On the first day the girls discussed self-discovery and learned about character building, and self-esteem. The next day focused on gender roles and human rights. The third day built leadership skills as the girls participated in a challenging ropes course and various team-building activities. The campers also met with representatives from IREX, and American Councils who spoke about FLEX and UGRAD. They spoke about programs that allow students to study for a year in America. Day four taught them about problem solving and we had an environmental excursion. Our fifth Day focused on Health and the girls were given classes on sexual education and HIV/AIDS. Although the girls were exhausted by the end of camp, they were proud with what they had accomplished.

During the camp the sessions were led by 5 PCV counselors and their Armenian counterparts. Each group also worked with a junior counselor to create and facilitate group sessions. The PCV counselors Jocelyn Siuta, Julianne Shelton, Robyn Burrows, Shayna Schlosberg were a big part of the reason GLOW 2011 was a success. Chad Erickson was our male counselor who helped share some male perspective and was a positive male role model.

Camp administrators, Amanda Pascal and Maggie Woznicki would like to thank Stepanavan Youth Center, led by Lilit Simonyan. Without the help of this NGO, GLOW would not have been this successful. Stepanavan Youth center has helped PCVs organize GLOW for the past 4 years and we hope that this partnership continues.

-PCV Amanda Pascal

PC VOLUNTEERS TEACH LEADERSHIP, TOLERANCE AT THE BOYS REACHING OUT (BRO) SUMMER CAMPS

This summer, PCVs helped organize and a run three week-long leadership camp for teenage Armenian boys from across Armenia. The camp was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and run by New Generations, a Gyumri-based NGO where PCV Marisa Valdez (Community and Business Development) works. The camps taught valuable skills in leadership, teamwork, public speaking, management and personal development as well as human rights, HIV/AIDS, drug/alcohol awareness, tolerance, and human trafficking awareness.

Each camp consisted of 20-25 boys led by Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Armenian counselors. The selection standards for the camp were high, and the boys were excited to get the chance to meet with other boys from across Armenia and with counselors from America. "I was very impressed by the maturity level and seriousness of the students," said PCV Scott Gaynor (Teacher of English as a Foreign Language) "We talked about a lot of controversial and sensitive topics, but the boys took the discussions seriously and respected each other's opinions.

But I think I most enjoyed getting the chance to just hang out and play outside with the guys." Indeed, Mr. Gaynor had brought his baseball gloves and a ball from home and was enjoying introducing baseball to the boys almost as much as they enjoyed playing.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM_wbkV9Gw4

-PCV Samuel Dolgin-Gardner

"ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP CAMPS"

This summer, five Environmental Leadership Camps were held throughout Armenia. Peace Corps Volunteers, Margaux Granat and Robyn Burrows, were the administrators of the camps with the help of Peace Corps Volunteers and local organizations in the five sites. The goals of the camp were to increase youth involvement in the conservation of the environment in Armenia and provide leadership training opportunities for Armenian youth. The camp was funded by a Peace Corps Partnership (PCPP) grant written by Peace Corps Volunteer, Katie Peckham.

The camps were held in Kapan (June 27-July 1), Gavar (July 6-10), Gyumri (July 15-19), Sevan (July 28-August 1) and Dsegh (August 13-15). Peace Corps Volunteers, Margaux Granat,



Genya Cole, Marisa Valdez, Hayley Brandt and Mary Ann Harty, acted as site coordinators for their respective towns. In addition they partnered with local organizations to support the event: World Vision (Kapan), Gavar Orphanage (Gavar), New Generation NGO

(Gyumri), Sevan Youth Center (Sevan) and Dsegh Village. Nineteen other Peace Corps Volunteers also participated as camp counselors or cooks for the camps.

The site coordinators chose the campers through an application process. Approximately 40 children participated in each camp, however approximately 20 children participated in the camp in Dsegh because it was a mini-camp. Each camp (with the exception of Dsegh) had four PCV counselors, four host country national (HCN) counselors, 2 administrators and 2 cooks.

The camp focused on a combination of environmental, leadership, and team building activities. Some examples for the environmental activities included water testing, film & discussion, debate over the fate of an imaginary rain forest, a tag game that mimics predator/prey relations and trash clean-ups. For leadership, some activities included scavenger hunts and activities where one person led all of the members of their team (who were blind folded) to a certain destination. Team building activities included human knot and trust fall among other team building activities. The children really enjoyed themselves while learning about the environment and leadership.

The camps were not only an educational experience for the campers, but also for some of the HCN counselors. Mary Saharyan, one of the camp counselors in Gyumri, stated, "I can't believe there are so many environmental activities for teaching!" In addition to the five camps, there were excursions to Dilijan and Norovank. There is also an excursion planned to Hoostop in Kapan once the weather improves.

-PCV Erin Malewicki

MEDIEVAL JEWISH CEMETERY SPREADS AWARENESS OF A JEWISH PAST IN ARMENIA

Shortly after Peace Corps Volunteer, Becky Miller, moved to her site in the town of Yeghegnadzor, she was approached by her supervisor, Bishop Abraham Mkrtychyan, to help with a project for a medieval Jewish cemetery in a nearby village. Although Becky is a TEFL volunteer at the local University and this was outside of her scope as an English teacher, she was fascinated by the project because of her background in medieval history. Since then, she has been working with the bishop and the Syunik NGO to increase awareness of this unique cemetery as well as future projects to prompt further research into the historical presence of the Jewish Diaspora in Armenia.

With the help of others in the community, they worked to create a website for the cemetery project. They are also currently developing a project which aims to preserve the cemetery; their plan is to build a series of retaining walls to protect the cemetery from landslides, stabilize the stones to prevent them from sinking into the earth and cracking, and laying a series of gravel paths that will ensure ease of maintenance and prevent vegetation from making the site inaccessible. Future projects will be geared towards educating people about the site and about Jews in Armenia and include an exhibit at the Vayots Dzor Regional Museum in Yeghegnadzor. They also hope to work with other archeologists to help with more excavations in the area.

About the Yeghegis Jewish Cemetery



In 1996, Bishop Abraham Mkrtychyan discovered gravestones that bore unusual inscriptions near the village of Yeghegis in the Vayots Dzor region, two hours south of the capital of Yerevan. At first, the bishop thought they might be Arabic or Farsi; they were not in Armenian and they were clearly quite old. He decided to ask for advice on the matter from some dentists who were working in a nearby camp, one of whom happened to be Jewish. Upon inspection, they informed him that the inscriptions on the tombstone were indeed Hebrew. The bishop's first reaction was disbelief. Although there were historical records of Jews in Armenia dating back to ancient times, to date (except for a reference in an obscure Russian academic journal in 1912) there was no physical proof of such a community and certainly none during medieval times. Bishop Abraham took pictures of the site and sent them to Professor Michael Stone of Hebrew University of Jerusalem who confirmed that this was indeed an unusual find.

Since then, a survey of the area was made in 2000 followed by

archaeological expeditions in 2001 and 2002. At the site, 64 gravestones, twenty of which bear inscriptions in either Hebrew or Aramaic, or are decorated with motifs similar to the nearby gravestones of the Orbelian kings, have been excavated. The stones were examined by archaeologist David Amit and Professor Stone, who concluded that the gravestones originate from the 13th and 14th centuries. While there is agreement that the Jewish community of Yeghegis likely came to Armenia from Persia, there is little information to indicate what became of them.

The site itself has been renovated. Gravestones found during excavations of outlying buildings were replaced at the cemetery. A perimeter wall was erected and stairs were added to make the site more accessible to visitors.

The bishop hopes, with a little help from his friends, that they can discover more about the medieval community in Yeghegis and explore the ties that bind these two great diasporas. For more information about the Yeghegis Jewish Cemetery please visit their website at yeghegis.syunikngo.am.

About Syunik NGO

Syunik NGO was founded in 1995 by the local Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church. It is one of the biggest non-governmental organizations in southern Armenia. They implement various projects that aim to develop and strengthen local communities. While their projects are mainly in the Vayots Dzor and Syunik Provinces, some projects are Armenia-wide. They also implement cross-border projects in collaboration with their Southern Caucasus partners. For more information, please visit their website at www.syunikngo.am.

-PCV Erin Malewicky

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS BRING HIP HOP DANCE TO VANADZOR

Peace Corps Armenia volunteers Maggie Woznicki, Matthew Crowley-Miano and Alex Lord hosted a four day dance camp at the Vanadzor YMCA, from August 8th through the 11th. The camp, which focused on Hip-Hop and break dancing approaches, was ran by The YMCA and open to children aged 12 to 18.

The camp was designed to promote healthy lifestyles, individual self-expression, and confidence among the future leaders of Armenia, as well as increase the understanding of hip-hop culture, a widely misunderstood global phenomenon whose roots lie in America.

Peace Corps volunteers worked together to create and choreograph original dance routines solely for the purpose of this camp. They then taught these routines, as well as some basic dance and rhythm skills to camp participants. The 20 participants spent four hours a day learning the new dance moves and rehearsing their composition. At the end of the camp the children presented their new skills and put on a show unlike any other Vanadzor has ever seen.

“The community response was highly positive” explains Peace Corps Volunteer and creator of the camp, Matthew Crowley-Miano. “Everyone really enjoyed themselves and we hope to do more camps of this variety both in Vanadzor and other interested sites.”

-by Alyssa Schlange



PC 50 ANNIVERSARY

In honor of the Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Marie Yovanovitch hosted a celebration with Peace Corps Volunteers and staff, ministry officials, governors, and local and international partners at her residence on March 1, 2011.

The event commemorated the lasting legacy of Peace Corps' founder, President John F. Kennedy, as witnessed by the idealistic and inspirational work of the Peace Corps Volunteers serving in Armenia today.

March 1, 2011 marked the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's signing of the executive order creating the Peace Corps. Since its founding, over 200,000 American men and women have served as Peace Corps volunteers in 139 host countries. Since 1992, over 700 Americans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia.

The Peace Corps' goals are to provide grass-roots development assistance and build mutual understanding between people of the host country and Americans. Peace Corps Director Aaron Williams describes the agency as making a global difference. "Peace Corps Volunteers help people build better lives for themselves and their communities," he said in a statement honoring creation of the Peace Corps. "From AIDS education to emerging technologies to environmental preservation to income generating ideas, Peace Corps volunteers are making a difference in communities around the world."



PC 50th Anniversary was also celebrated in Tavush Marz; Shirak Marz and Gegharkunik Marz.

PC Volunteers organized recreational and educational activities for children, provided

food and drinks and gave an opportunity for community members to meet Peace Corps Volunteers living and working in Tavush Marz. The event organizers thanked all participants of the day's festivities and emphasize that they look forward to their continued work of providing quality services to the Tavush community with the support of their Armenian counterparts.

Shirak Marz PCVs invited about 40 people to the event. Among the guests were school and NGO directors from local or neighboring villages. At the event PC Volunteers presented what PC is around the world, Armenia and specifically in Gyumri. All Gyumri volunteers presented what they do/ have done in Gyumri.

Volunteers in Gegharkunik Marz invited representatives from different organizations to the event and presented in Armenian what they do/ have done in Gegharkunik Marz, showed a film about PC Volunteer life in Armenia, and served American food.

SWEARING-IN CEREMONY AND PEACE CORPS 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



On August 16, the U.S. Charge d'Affaires Bruce Donahue swore-in 40 new Peace Corps Volunteers who will serve in communities across Armenia for two years as English teachers and community and business developers. The ceremony also celebrates the completion of an 11-week training that included intensive Armenian language study and commemorates the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Peace Corps, currently partnering with over 70 countries worldwide.

The new Volunteers demonstrated their knowledge of the Armenian language by performing Armenian songs and sharing their observations of Armenia with the audience of over 250 people at the Music Theater, including representatives from government ministries, international and local organizations, and Regional Governors. With the addition of this new group, there will be a total of 95 Peace Corps

Volunteers working in schools, universities, NGOs, and health facilities throughout Armenia.

The Peace Corps was founded by President John Kennedy 1961 with over 200,000 Volunteers having served in more than 100 countries worldwide. At the invitation of the Armenian Government, Peace Corps began in Armenia in 1992, and over 750 Volunteers have served here since then.

Peace Corps' goals are threefold: 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 peoples served; helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.



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.