

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

WINTER-SPRING

2010



peace corps **Armenia**

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## Glossary

<b>A16</b>	16th group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia (arrived June 2008)
<b>A17</b>	17th group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia (arrived June 2009)
<b>PCV</b>	Peace Corps Volunteer
<b>PCT</b>	Peace Corps Trainee, pre-Volunteer status
<b>PST</b>	Pre-service training, 3-month period of language, cultural, and sector training
<b>RPCV</b>	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, a Volunteer who has completed service
<b>CD</b>	Country Director
<b>SECTOR</b>	Type of technical expertise including of CBD, CHE, EE, and TEFL
<b>TEFL</b>	Teaching English as a Foreign Language, a sector
<b>CBD</b>	Community and Business Development, a sector
<b>CHE</b>	Community Health Education, a sector
<b>EE</b>	Environmental Education, a sector
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>SPA</b>	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 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 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

### 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
- Resource 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.

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. 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

## GAVAR STATE UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT FAIR

Working with a counterpart from Gavar State University, Papin Muradyan, PCV Nicole Cashin organized a development fair for NGOs and clubs focused on volunteering in Gavar. Eight organizations attended with great enthusiasm: Gavar State University's newspaper, Gavar State Public Relations department, Jinishian Foundation, Caritas, Gegharkunik Chamber of Commerce and Industry/Advocacy and Assistance Center, Peace Corps, Sevan Youth Club, and Shah Women's Center. In my invitation, I told the organizations:



These organizations were invited to a market-place style event for students and faculty of Gavar State University, in which each organization had a table set up with brochures and representatives who spoke to visitors about work that their organizations do in Gavar. This was a great opportunity for them to advertise their organization's development work in the community, to network and to inform students about ways to volunteer for NGOs in Gavar."

The rector of the university, various NGOs, Nicole Cashin and her counterpart Papin Muradyan, all gave speeches about the importance of community development to the students and Kyavar TV covered the on the local news.

Approximately 150 students visited the various booths and listened to the speeches.

As a result, the university became motivated by the success of the event and will

## GAVAR PARK AND PLAYGROUND

The SPA-funded Gavar Park and Playground was officially opened on May 12, 2010. The park is in a central location of Gavar, next to School Number Four and across from the Gavar Orphanage.

The playground equipment was installed over the course of three weeks by several community members, with the support of the Gavar local government. Equipment was purchased from MAGNON. Trash cans were donated by the local government.

Many events took place to help beautify and encourage community members to protect the area. There were two trash cleanups, a planting of 60 cherry trees donated by a local community member, and a birdhouse building contest. The best bird houses were hung in the park trees.

Community members are very appreciative of the space, as there is a lack of playgrounds in Gavar. At all hours of the day, community members can be seen enjoying the area - children, parents, grandparents, and neighbors.

A special thank you goes to the organizations Jinishian Foundation, Aarhus Environmental Organization, and Gegharkunik Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who were most actively involved in this beautification effort. These organizations plan to continue further activities within the park area to raise environmental awareness.



-Nicole Cashin (A16 CBD Volunteer)

# Community Health Education Program

## HIV/AIDS EDUCATION IN ARMENIA

On March 29 and 30, 2010, PCV Brent Hines, counterpart Arman Hakobian from World Vision, and three peer educators from the Stepanavan region visited the villages of Nerkin Getashen (Nick Hutchings, CHE) and Vardenik (Vanessa Bowie, CHE) to give HIV/AIDS lessons. The two three-hour lessons were given to groups of 20 students in the 8<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> forms and were administered by the

teenaged peer educators. Activities included an information session followed by a "Jeopardy"-style quiz game; a "clinking glasses" game to simulate transmission of disease; and a "hat game" where everyone was given a secret title and organized themselves according to group. The activities were followed by discussion and each student was given an information packet to share with their families.

Peer educators honed their skills by presenting preliminary lessons in the Stepanavan-area villages of Gargar, Hobardzi, Vardablur, and Blagodarnoye. In early March the National Institute of Education in Ijevan, including PCVs Andy and Nicole Smith, hosted the peer educators for two forums. Davit Asilbekyan was recently recognized for his HIV/AIDS education efforts with a plaque from Peace Corps Washington.

HIV/AIDS forums also took place in Kapan and Goris at the end of April.



-Vanessa Bowie (A16 CHE Volunteer)

## SURENAVAN SECONDARY SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER



January 19th, 2010 the Surenavan Secondary School opened a new center devoted to increasing environmental awareness and improving natural science education in Surenavan village. The school was awarded a USAID Small Project Assistance (SPA) grant with the assistance of PCV, Willa Brenowitz, to fund the creation of an Environmental Learning Center. It features 6 microscope kits, 10 binoculars, an illuminating globe, nature encyclopedias, books about Armenia's natural world, maps, science posters, general school materials, and art supplies. 20 new chairs were also bought using SPA funds while the school donated 5 laboratory tables, shelves, chemistry supplies, and the newly renovated laboratory room. This center is unique for Armenia and is a great asset to the school.

Surenavan village has many environmental issues. Due to Surenavan's location in the semi desert, bad piping, and pollution there is no potable water in the village; instead villagers must buy their drinking water. There is no trash collection system in the village; many people litter and are unaware of safe disposal methods and so they burn their trash in the street, dump it near the irrigation channel outside the village, or dump it in a pit near apartment buildings and the soccer field. Air quality is generally poor due to dust, smoke, and pollution.

The goal of the Surenavan Secondary School's new environmental learning center is to increase environmental awareness in order to solve the pollution problems and to protect the biodiversity in and near Surenavan. Students in the school's Bird Identification club will use the center's binoculars to go on bird watching excursions and participate in national/ international bird counts. Students working on a service learning project related to pollution are currently creating a seminar on trash using the educational resources in the center. This seminar will be the completion of a service learning project where students interviewed villagers about their attitudes and knowledge of pollution and then used the results to identify seminar topics that would increase villagers understanding of the main pollution issues in Surenavan.

In order to truly understand environmental issues and possible solutions, students must have a solid comprehension of natural sciences. This center gives natural science teachers an opportunity to teach practical application, experimentation, and critical thinking. Without hands on activities that demonstrate basic scientific principals students can't fully understand the material they learn in their textbooks. The center now has laboratory supplies for the different science classes so that students can get more practical experience to better understand the natural world.

The Surenavan Secondary School believes that the Environmental Learning Center will continue to improve environmental and natural science education for years to come.



-Willa Brenowitz (A16 EE Volunteer)

## NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POSTER CONTEST

On April 22, 2010 in the Goris Theatre in Syunik Marz a National Environmental Poster Contest took place. This year the theme was "Trash in the Garbage Can, Not in the Street." The theme is to promote better trash management throughout the regions of Armenia. The contest was open to all children in forms 5 through 11; and submissions were made to the Aarhus Centre.

The judges for the contest included an artist from the local community, and representatives of the Goris mayor's office, the United States Peace Corps and RTI International. The judges had difficulty deciding the winners since there were so many great entries.

An awards ceremony was held after the judging for the winners. RTI International sponsored the prizes for the first place winners of the event.

-Sean Reynolds (A16 EE Volunteer)

# Environmental Education Program

## STUDENTS IN ARMENIA TAKE SCIENCE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS

As in many countries, schools in Armenia are undergoing dramatic changes. The educational system is moving to a 12-year plan, requiring re-writes of textbooks and curricula. Larger schools are absorbing the top grades from smaller schools, and many schools will be closing entirely. On top of this, the grading scale has moved from a 5- to a 10-point system, and the natural sciences are expected to incorporate environmental and health curricula. Somehow lost among these major changes was a very important addition to the grading standards – the inclusion of hands-on activities in science lessons.

Even disregarding the national requirements, hands-on learning is critical to science education. Without actually experiencing the subject matter, students do not learn the most important aspect of scientific study – the ability to repeat an experiment and make their own discoveries. In most schools, students do not have the opportunity to learn practical skills and thus do not reinforce their theoretical knowledge. Many teachers don't have experience leading or evaluating hands-on activities, and though they are now required to include a laboratory component in their grading, there is no grading rubric on which to assess students' work.

In their small corner of Armenia, the "Kapan Teachers" NGO and Peace Corps volunteer Joe Heffron have been working to realize a more active science education by holding the first science fair in Armenia. The process involved seven teacher-training seminars, numerous school visits and nearly a year of preparing Armenian-language materials, but in the end, 37 students from 15 schools in southern Armenia took part in the Kapan Science fair on May 10. Projects included the effect of alkaline soil on earthworms, the composition of two brands of potato chip, methods for collecting bee venom, different ways to grow a kiwi tree from a shoot, the effect of magnetism on plant growth, the cleanliness of local rivers, and many others.

In order to participate, students had to design and conduct an experiment following the steps of the scientific process laid out in the science fair instructions. Each student had to register their experimental question and hypothesis as well as their procedure before receiving their project notebook and poster-board. They then recorded their process and results in the project notebook and made an informative poster. Each student then presented his or her experiment before a panel of judges. The judges graded the projects using a rubric developed by Joe Heffron and his counterpart, Lilit Babayan. Based on a 10-point system like the new Armenian grading standards, the rubric is appropriate for use in the classroom as well.

As the judges listened to students present their experiments, the remaining students were invited to get their hands dirty in a series of small activities. Peace Corps Volunteers Sierra Starner, Vincent Cleveland, Andrea Trowbridge, Danya Augustus, Barbara Colson, Shannon Priddy, Sam Rankin and Susan Fullam all assisted children in using pH indicator, writing invisible messages with lemon juice, discovering life in a drop of pond water, separating colors with chromatography, calculating the number of dolma (a stuffed cabbage- or grape-leaf) between the Earth and the Sun, and measuring the voltage created by a series of potatoes. "Above all, I wanted the science fair to be a celebration, and the other PCVs really made that happen. It's amazing that I can rely on so many talented people. I will always remember that a Peace Corps volunteer is someone who can explain a scientific experiment to forty Armenian children at a moment's notice."

Though the science fair only involved two cities this year, Heffron hopes that the effects will continue to build in the coming years. "Many teachers and parents have come up to me and said their student or child wants to be a doctor or a naturalist now," he said, "and people occasionally approach me and share something they've discovered – how sparrows always move around in small flocks, or what kinds of spiders they found in their garden. For me, that has been the most rewarding part of my service."

Joe Heffron closes his service this year, but he still hopes to help "Kapan Teachers" NGO write a manual in Armenian about the science fair and low-cost, low-preparation ideas for hands-on science in the classroom.



- Joseph Heffron (A16 EE Volunteer)

# Teaching English as a Foreign Language Program

## WRITING OLYMPICS

The Writing Olympics contest goes back five years through Peace Corps history when it began in the Republic of Georgia as a national writing contest designed to promote and bolster creative writing efforts. After two years of success, Azerbaijan was invited to join in the party, and soon realizing the equation wasn't quite complete Armenia was also invited, thus creating the Trans-Caucasian Writing Olympics. The contest continued for two more years until going on hiatus due to conflict in Georgia. Last year Armenia and Azerbaijan continued the tradition, albeit separately, in national creative writing contests and this year the contest was, with much fanfare, brought back to an international level with new participants from Eastern Europe, Moldova participation as well, marking the beginning of a new era in creative writing competitions of the eastern Europe and Caucasus regions: The Eurasian Creative Writing Olympics!

The Eurasian Creative Writing Olympics was established from a model that promotes creative thinking without getting tangled in the conventional foreign language learning facets of grammar and spelling. The beauty of the Eurasian Creativity Writing Olympics is that the entries are judged solely on creative content, that is to say, the idea of the essay. Although at a glance it may seem far too subjective, between varied judges of different national origins there is frequently a strong consensus in just what constitutes creative thought. The essays that demonstrate a different way of looking (for example the personification of coffee to explain why one cannot sleep, or flying, big-nosed robots as a solution to war) are often graded higher than essays that read like manifestos, or instruction manuals regardless of how well penmanship or grammar is executed.

Every year there are a number of essays submitted with incredibly interesting ideas but with no structure or organization to them. If an idea is not cogent, at least to some degree, it is usually bested by an essay that might be a little less, uh, off-beat, but shows more sound reasoning.

Real language is usually not explicitly grammatically correct. It's great to learn how to spell correctly and how to conjugate 'lay,' but we mustn't forget that the purpose of language communication, no one learns a language in a vacuum, it is to be used to convey ideas, not just to rattle off I am, you are, he/she/it is ect. So much of language teaching has been based on quantifiable results, such as correct spelling or the use of an 'S' at the end of a third person singular verb in the present simple tense. We, as teachers, too often check these things off as if they constitute the entire understanding of a language, when in fact there is much more. Like in Conrad for instance.

Joseph Conrad. Great writer, right? Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and all that. As Conrad's first language was Polish and French was his second he occasionally made slips in his English such as "I did my possible" translating from the French j'ai fait mon possible. [vide Heart of Darkness] So? It

wasn't style. He wasn't mixing things up on purpose, he made a mistake and that mistake has been printed hundreds of thousands of times. The language has not ground to halt, and in fact is all the better for someone having aired the room of its study self-assurance.

-Jonathen Maiullo (A16 TEFL Volun-

## 2010 TAVUSH MARZ POETRY RECITATION COMPETITION

On Sunday, 2 May 2010, at 11:00am, the United States Peace Corps Armenia Volunteer Community, supported by the American Councils for International Education and the British Council conducted the First Annual Tavush Marz English Poetry Recitation Competition at the House of Culture in Ijevan, the Capital of the Tavush Region. Approximately 60 student competitors aged 10 to 16 from various towns, villages, and cities throughout Tavush Marz recited English Language Poems before a panel of judges who decided the top places for students in each of the six forms represented (forms 6 through 11). All competitors attending the event placed in the top three positions for their age group at one of four similar, regional competitions held earlier in the year, also organized by the Peace Corps Volunteer Community. The 4 regional competitions were held in Ijevan, Berd, Noyemberyan, and Dilijan and included students from the surrounding towns and villages.

The event provided a valuable opportunity for English students and their teachers to further their understanding of the English language through the exploration of English poetry. The success of the regional competitions held earlier in the year and the interest in the 2 May competition demonstrated that students and teachers throughout Tavush Marz are eager to strengthen their skills to the community.

## WOMEN'S DAY ESSAY AND POSTER CONTEST

This year two Peace Corps volunteers, Heather Mailander and Cassie Warholm-Wohlenh, organized a Women's Day essay and poster contest in conjunction with Armenian Young Women's Association. It was a great success as there were over 220 entries from both the regions and Yerevan. This year's topic was "Women in the Workforce" as essays and posters portrayed the opinion of a variety of young people all over Armenia in regards to gender equality at work. The 18 winners were invited to Yerevan for an awards ceremony at UN House with guest speaker from UNICEF. Prizes were distributed to the winners who also gave interviews to local media representatives. It was considered that this year's contest was a great success.

-Heather Mailander and Cassie Warholm-Wohlenh (A16 TEFL Volunteers)

## PEACE CORPS ARMENIA CELEBRATES VOLUNTEERISM DURING PEACE CORPS WEEK, MARCH 1 -7



Peace Corps Week commemorates the occasion when President John F. Kennedy, in a speech at the University of Michigan, outlined his idea for a program that would send thousands of young Americans overseas. It was a week to celebrate not just the accomplishments of Peace Corps Volunteers, but to recognize the efforts of all people who give their time and support to address community needs.

The third annual Volunteer Recognition ceremony was held in honor of Peace Corps week at the US Embassy.

Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch and Peace Corps Armenia Director Lee Lacy kicked off Peace Corps Week in Armenia by recognizing and presenting certificates of appreciation to exceptional Armenians who have exhibited excellence in volunteerism and service within their communities.

This year, once again, Peace Corps Armenia staff and volunteers will be promoting the Peace Corps and the value and merit of national service and volunteerism across Armenia through a variety of events and activities designed to raise public awareness.

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International women's day was given a special spotlight this year as U.S. Peace Corps volunteers Paige prince and Emily Haas photographed local women in the Vayots Dzor region to recognize their special role in society. The project was completed in collaboration with Syunik NGO in Yeghegnadzor as well as with a local German volunteer, Hendrikje Alpermann. The grand opening of the exhibit was held March 12<sup>th</sup>, and the ceremony honored the women photographed, the regional mayor, guests from the German embassy, U.S. Peace Corps country director Lee Lacy and many more guests from the international and local communities. The photographs were accompanied with short biographies and descriptions of each woman's life in Armenia. It was a special project for everyone involved that incorporated cross cultural understanding, a level of compassion held for the women photographed, and an exchange of personal information and stories. The exhibit was scheduled to travel on to the German embassy and has future plans of being displayed at the American embassy as well. The photographs were on display and open to the public at the Yeghegnadzor Social Center from March 12<sup>th</sup>- April 7<sup>th</sup>.

-Emily Hass (A17 EE Volunteer)  
-Paige Prince (A16 CHE 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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