



Quarterly Newsletter

W I N T E R 2011

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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.

U.S. President
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 over 700 Volunteers have served in villages, towns, and cities around Armenia. Currently 98 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 Economy
Ministry of Education and Science
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Nature Protection
Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs

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 99 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 "David Lillie".

David Lillie
Country Director
United States Peace Corps, Armenia

FILM ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN GEGHARKUNIK MARZ

Gegharkunik marz, like the other areas in Armenia, have environmental problems at the local and marz level. These problems affect every individual residing in the marz, yet most do not understand the impact of these issues on daily life or the future of the habitable land for future generations. Some of these issues are: overall environmental issues for Lake Sevan, health concerns for people based on safe environments, trash management issues, deforestation/lack of previous forests, over fishing of Lake Sevan, leeching problems from mining operations, business proximity to Lake Sevan versus rising water level, and public access to lake to increase tourism to the area. All of these quantify to hinder the future productivity of the region; specifically the people residing in Gegharkunik marz.

The BLEJAN NGO and Gavar Aarhus Center worked together through 2010 to put together a film to educate the regional communities about these issues facing the marz. Once the film was finished, the organizations screened the film in 5 towns and over 25 villages in the region to educate teachers, youth, local leaders, NGOs, and the general public. The outcome was there is now a resource for people of the region to start discussing how the region and Armenia can better address the environmental problems facing the Gegharkunik region. The films are now on YouTube (with English Subtitles):

- Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIOTRNV8SAg>
- Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOBm97LtcOQ>
- Part 3: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmxJhbDrkvw>
- Part 4: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cet10XqOG2Y>
- Part 5: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uy6L9hMC2zO>
- Part 6.1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27VrQrS7JN4>
- Part 6.2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrFoAPFsm_s
- Part 7: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WV7nANgkr8>
- Part 8: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITP3WMPcSv4>
- Part 9: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR5RuAKKhZc>
- Part 10: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIPa96inAso>
- Part 11: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs8QRvuc2k8>

-Bryan Hall

ARMENIA - MAINE CONNECTION



As a Peace Corps Volunteer I teamed up with fourth grade teacher Debby Jones of Boothbay Harbor, Maine. Through the World Wise Schools program I stay connected with my home state. I am sharing a new corner of the world with these coastal Maine students. The fourth grade class has been introduced to Armenia's history, current news, language, weather patterns, food, customs, and society. We have enjoyed being pen pals and have shared letters, art, articles, and photographs. The wall that is shown here is inside the Boothbay Region Elementary School. It was created by Ms. Jones fourth grade class as a reflection on their virtual journey to Armenia and to show other students in the school what they have learned. I have been delighted how interested they are in Armenian language; they have been practicing a new alphabet which is very rare for American students! On the horizon in March we have a Skype date planned with A17 PCV Chris Edling's fourth form class in Khot village. After my Close of Service date I look forward to visiting the students back in Maine!

-Zoe Armstrong

MY HEALTHY COMMUNITY PROJECT

My Healthy Community (“MHC”) is both a health- and environmental-targeted education project developed by Liana Sahakyan of the Goris Aarhus Environmental Information Center (in collaboration with Sose Women’s Issues NGO). Under the framework of the project, teachers traveled to all of the 24 villages in the Goris area to teach children in the 3rd – 6th forms. The lesson topics included personal hygiene, nutrition, the dangers of smoking, and the effects of pollution on the environment. The students were very responsive to the interactive, hands-on lesson style and participated enthusiastically. The teachers and volunteers were also proud of the connection they made with the children in a classroom setting that was unfamiliar to many of them. To reinforce the activity, toothbrushes and toothpaste were given to the children thanks to charitable donations from American contacts of two local PCVs, Hedley Bond and Katie McKillen. Peace Corps Volunteers Stephen Babish and Patrick Findler traveled with the NGO to assist teachers and photograph the lessons. Stephen Babish created a Facebook page for Sose Women’s Issues NGO to spread awareness of the organization and the project to people throughout and outside of Armenia.

My Healthy Community not only educates children in isolated areas of the region, but also stimulates the economy by employing local women, who otherwise might not have an opportunity for employment, to teach the lessons. This spring, My Healthy Community will once again travel to all of the Goris villages, teaching



students in the 6th – 11th forms. This time, two separate lessons will be taught: the first will focus more in-depth about the effects of tobacco on the body and the second on environmental preservation. Peace Corps Volunteers Patrick Findler, Stephen Babish, Katie McKillen, and Hedley Bond have worked with the NGO on lesson planning, which is nearly complete. For more information about My Healthy Community and updates on the future of the project, please visit the “Sose Women’s Issues NGO” page on Facebook

SYUNIK MARZ SPELLING BEE

In December 2010, students from across Syunik marz traveled to the city of Goris for the Regional Spelling Bee Competition. During the autumn months, children from the 7th – 11th forms competed in three local competitions held in Sisian, Goris, and Kapan to test their knowledge of the English language. There were students representing not only these larger towns, but also many from the surrounding rural communities. In aggregate, 180 children competed in the local bees, with the three winners from each form traveling to Goris’ Culture House for the final event. Volunteer Jocelyn Siuta organized the events. Local PCVs and Armenians came together to help manage each event, serving as registrars, judges, and logistics representatives. Over the course of the afternoon, 45 students spelled their way through many difficult lists of words, from “zebra” to “pneumonia”. After all was said and done (literally!) the three winners from each form were awarded English materials including books from British Councils, classroom supplies from American Councils, and posters and folders from McMillan Book Store. With funding from the American Embassy, all the students celebrated the event with a pizza party at a local café. “The competition was a great success. The students learned a lot and had a great time competing. The English teachers were also impressed by the organization and fairness. Hopefully we can keep the competition going for many years,” reported Jocelyn Siuta after the event.

-Jocelyn Siuta (TEFL Volunteer)

TEACHER TRAINING IN ARARAT MARZ

The Ararat Branch of the National Institute of Education (NIE) took the marz by storm this fall. Bela Kurghinyan, NIE English Specialist, and Pat Fecher, A-18 TEFL PCV, visited ten schools in the Artashat area and observed 16 teachers as they taught their English lessons on the 3rd through 11th form.

The Director of our NIE branch called the individual school directors and arranged for the visitations. It was decided to intentionally avoid the first and last classes of the day. We arrived shortly before the start of the second hour of classes and visited with the Director of the school for introductions and discussion of our intentions. At least three of the school directors had previously been English teachers; therefore our goals were familiar to them. The other Directors were very supportive of our aim to provide constructive feedback in an attempt to encourage the highest quality English instruction in the schools.

We were then escorted to the classroom where our observation would take place. The observations yielded interesting results. Most of the teachers were happy to have us in their classrooms; others were a bit nervous to be watched as they taught their lessons. But one result was consistent; the teachers accepted our comments graciously.

Pat used a slightly modified version of the Observation Form used during the 2010 Model School. The modification was primarily to have the information fit on one side of one sheet of paper. Bela used a form provided by the Ministry of Education (in Armenian). Her form included some additional factors, not used on the Model School Form. One difference was that the English form included factors related to pronunciation, volume, enunciation, etc., while the NIE form evaluated the integration of different subject areas in each lesson and an area where the teachers could indicate if they felt the observers arrived on time complete lesson, if the observers disturbed their and stayed for the lesson, and if they felt the post-observation consultation was helpful.

As we observed the classes, we did not confer about our impressions. Once the class was over and we returned to the Director's office we briefly discussed our findings with each

other. We then spoke with the teacher who was observed. Pat was asked to give her feedback first. She focused most often on: the amount and quality of English used during the class, if the teacher allowed the students time to respond and self-correct errors, and inclusion of all students in the lesson. Bela most often focused on the use of lesson plans, pair or group work, the use of visual aids vs. dependence upon the textbook, and adherence to Ministry of Education regulations and paperwork. This was particularly important to Bela, as she had been the one to do the teacher trainings related to methodology in recent years.

The next step was to invite these same teachers to our NIE Office for seminars focusing on specific areas of weakness. We scheduled a series of workshops over a three-day period during which we presented information, activities, materials, and most importantly, time to practice using this new (or reviewed) information. Teachers arrived at two pm and stayed until five pm each of these days.



Pat presented information on Error Correction, Listening Skills, and the use of Visual Aids and Materials. Bela reviewed New Methods, Lesson Plan Format, and Pair and Group work.

The teachers were engaged in the process, interested in learning new ideas and anxious to put them to work in their classrooms. The next step will be for Bela and Pat to return to these same classes during the spring term to see the payoff!

-Patricia Fecher

LIBRARY PROJECTS IN ARMENIA

Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) are supporting libraries in many regions of Armenia. They work in public and academic libraries, in regional resource centers and with collections small and large, ranging from a few thousand books to several million volumes. PCVs provide libraries and librarians with project management and day-to-day support.

Over the past 10 years Armenian libraries have succeeded in creating a unified catalog and developing various digitization projects. But for most communities outside Yerevan these developments are slow in coming, when they arrive at all. This is where Peace Corps Volunteers have been able to make a difference. PCVs work in cities and towns and in rural and remote areas of the country. They teach, hold conversation clubs, write grants and conduct reading contests. They provide advice and training on remodeling projects; assist with new acquisitions, install electronic catalogs, teach basic computer skills and work with library patrons doing internet research.

SYUNIK MARZ

Digital Catalog: In Goris, a volunteer, working with the library staff, is developing a project to create a digital catalog for the municipal library using Free Open Source Software (FOSS). Project funds will also pay for computers which will store catalog data and for an internet connection. When complete this hardware/software combination will be used to coordinate catalog activity in real time within the three branch library system. The municipal government will provide 25% of the costs of the project, and contributions from individual donors in the United States will cover the balance.

Book Restoration: In another Peace Corps-related project in Goris, local community volunteers restored three thousand damaged books and created dividers to help patrons more easily locate books.

Reading Challenge, Current: The village libraries in Khndzoresk and Nerkin Khndzoresk near Goris recently initiated a reading competition for school-age children with Peace Corps volunteer support. Students are being challenged to read as many leisure books as possible throughout the contest, writing a brief summary after completing each book. The competition was launched February 14th and represents a 2 month reading challenge.



As a result of the competition, libraries in the villages will receive 10 new books per participating form. Also, students who meet the requirement of reading over 3 books within the competition period will be invited to a party celebrating the students' accomplishments. The grant will supply over 300 new books to the participating schools. Funds for the purchase of books and for the party will be provided by Friends of Armenia (FOA). FOA is an organization founded by former Peace Corps Armenia Volunteers who have completed their service but continue to work with Armenian PCVs.

Reading Challenge, Summer 2010: In Sisian, a student reading contest was held over the last summer. School children from all over Sisian applied to take part in the contest. In the end over thirty students participated, reading and reporting on at least one book. The contest lasted from June 1st to August 31st. Book prizes were awarded to the students who read the most. Next summer's contest is expected to be larger and to have better prizes. A long term goal of this project is to develop and grow the contest. This activity has the potential to provide a way to fund new acquisitions, in the form of a seed grant or by charging students a nominal entrance fee. the library and find ways to increase student interest.

SHIRAK MARZ

English Language Book Acquisition: In Gyumri, a Peace Corps volunteer placed with the Armenian Apostolic Church Shirak Diocese Social Educational Center is providing additional English language books to supplement the existing collection. The PCV is helping the library acquire both physical and electronic texts and has assisted the staff in creating reading lists and in networking

Continuation on the next page

with other resources available in Armenia. The new books will be used by students studying English at the center.

American Corner Clubs: At the American Corner Library in Gyumri, PCVs have been holding conversation clubs, debate clubs, and film clubs with community members.

LORI MARZ

American Corner Discussion Clubs/Community Outreach: In Vanadzor's American Corner, a Peace Corps volunteer has been offering movie and discussion groups in English. The volunteer has also reached out to disadvantaged children from a Vanadzor orphanage, training them in the use of libraries and information technology and screening movies for them. Vanadzor youth have participated in discussion groups on different social issues, including comparison of gender relations and dating culture between Armenia and other countries, and comparing Armenia with the United States and Poland in a discussion co-hosted with Polish EVS volunteers. This volunteer explains her commitment to libraries, saying, "ever since I was a little girl I have been thrilled to take advantage of all the wonderful opportunities that a library offers. In my opinion, they are a real treasure."

Working with Electronic tools and the Internet: In Dsegh village near Vanadzor, a volunteer has been working closely with the village librarian. Together the volunteer and library staff have created detailed project proposals to competitive grant opportunities, created lists for new acquisitions, and networked with others involved in Armenian library



development. Currently the PCV is working with local school children on internet-based research and training library staff on the use of Excel and email. Together they have identified the most pressing technological needs for the organization and are developing strategies to meet these needs.

GEGHARKUNIK MARZ

In Vardenis a former PCV, who is well-remembered, worked with the Vardenis Pedagogical College to re-catalog its collection using the Dewey Decimal system. Together with college staff she created lists of books in all subject areas and helped the library acquire these and other resources. A representative group of teachers traveled to Yerevan to visit the American University in Armenia, where they learned about the library and developed their vision for Vardenis. The result of this volunteer's work is evident. Current staff report that they now can use recently published material that they were previously unaware of. Students use the library much more than they did before these improvements were made. In the past it would take hours to find books. Those books were often out of date. With the new catalog and new collection teachers and students say their ability to conduct research and to learn is greatly expended. Anna Mkrtchyan, who worked closely with this volunteer calls her an "example of a diligent caring person who could do things that seem incredible to accomplish."

KOTAYK MARZ

In Charentsavan a current volunteer has started an English club in the town's newly remodeled library. The volunteer's original intent was to meet with a group of boys and girls from 8th grade who would like to have a chance at participating in American Council's FLEX program, which sends students to America for a year to study during high school. The library expressed interest in adding an English club to the services they offer and by holding the club at the library, students become more familiar with this territory. Local news coverage at the first club gathering provided the library with publicity. The volunteer would like to organize a reading competition this summer based off of the model of Sisian's competition last summer and continue to work with the library and find ways to increase student interest.

-Patrick Finder



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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