

Northern California **PEACE CORPS** ASSOCIATION

Connecting Bay Area RPCVs since 1982



RESILIENCE

2020 Newsletter

Letter from the Board

Dear NorCalPCA Community,

Peace Corps Volunteers are used to adapting, but that doesn't mean it's easy. We adapted to a new language, a new culture. We adapted to going without first world comforts and to being isolated from friends and family. We adapted to times when rain stopped us from giving a training or when the driver of our pickup truck didn't show up that day. In the Peace Corps, that was what we signed up to do: adapt, integrate, serve.

2020 has seen significant and unexpected challenges, forcing NorCalPCA and the broader Peace Corps community to adapt again and again. From a global pandemic and the evacuation of all Peace Corps Volunteers from their posts, to nationwide mobilizations protesting systemic racism and the taking of black lives by white police, to an economic recession and massive job losses, to the climate crisis -- 2020 has no doubt brought disruption. But with that disruption, also comes opportunity.

Resilience is defined as the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change. It is the process of adapting well when faced with stress. As a community, NorCalPCA has rallied to adapt and demonstrate our resilience. We've adapted to hosting virtual events, mobilized advocacy efforts to support evacuated RPCVs, and found ways to continue serving each other and our local and global communities. We couldn't have done it without all of your support and participation. Peace Corps Volunteers are practiced in being resilient and that practice has proven to be vital this year.

While we sadly won't be hosting our annual picnic this summer, we hope you will continue to join and adapt with us as we find new ways to build community, support each other, and stay resilient.

Sincerely,
The NorCalPCA Board

LEADERSHIP 2019 – 2020 NorCalPCA Board of Directors

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Treasurer's Report

For the last two years, your Northern California Peace Corps Association has performed well financially. Our funds sit in two accounts. Our Beneficial bank account, used for operating expenses and grants, grew by \$12,855.10 since our last newsletter. We now have \$38,084.03 in the bank. Our Fidelity investment account, used for long term projects, has grown over \$2,000 since last year and now totals \$34,918.32.

NorCalPCA's fiscal year starts in October and ends in September. We are now in FY 2019-2020. Below is a recap of the previous 2018-2019 fiscal year.

For our general operations, we took in over \$4,100 in memberships and \$5,800 in donations to our general fund. With a few additional funding streams, like our store where we sold our last few shirts and mugs, we had over \$10,000 come into NorCalPCA. Our general operations use these funds (for example, supporting volunteer work and regional events), and during the last fiscal year, we spent just over \$8,000. This means we had a surplus of \$2,000 (just like last year) to be used to drive additional events to further our mission.

For our grants program over the last fiscal year, the purchase of calendars and funding of approved grants was just over \$12,000. We took in just under \$8,000, but we had \$11,000 remaining from the previous year, so we are still left with \$7,000 to push additional efforts forward.

We look forward to serving you, our growing community, and value your continued financial support.

2019-2020 Donors

These members have made a donation to NorCalPCA in the last year. Their generosity supports all Northern California RPCVs and the communities we continue to engage with following our service through the wide variety of programs organized and sponsored by NorCalPCA.

Please join us in thanking them.

Lifetime Platinum Membership

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THE MISSION OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION

To support Returned Peace
Corps Volunteers residing in
Northern California,



To promote a better
understanding of the people of
countries in which our RPCVs
have served, the Third Goal of
the Peace Corps,



To continue making the world a
better place through community
service and offering small grants
for community development
projects, and



To advocate for the needs and
goals of the Peace Corps and
Peace Corps community.

Advocacy in a Time of Resiliency

By Frank Price, NorCalPCA Board Member

By March 5th, when I landed in Washington D.C. to participate in the National Peace Corps Association's National Days of Action, PCVs had been evacuated from China due to COVID-19, but we were not yet aware of the extent to which the pandemic would change our advocacy work and almost every other aspect of our lives. The NPCA advocacy event exceeded all expectations by completing visits to every congressional office and convincing a record number of senators to sign the "Dear Colleague" letter encouraging support and increased funding for the Peace Corps. As a member of the Shriver Circle of the NPCA, I also attended a conference that week building support for advocacy and meeting with Peace Corps Director, Jody Olsen.

By the second week in March, Peace Corps was evacuating all 7,300 PCVs from their countries of service due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a government agency, Peace Corps could not release personal information about the evacuees, so NorCalPCA had no insight into where evacuees were returning to in our region, which extends from Monterey to the Oregon border.

Through social media, members of NorCalPCA quickly began reaching out to make connections and offer assistance to volunteers who had been evacuated, or ERPCVs. On March 28, the NorCalPCA Board of Directors met to develop a strategy to replace our typical monthly events with support that could be delivered online. The web site was reorganized to provide resources to address key issues facing ERPCVs such as lodging, healthcare, community services, employment and scholarships. Holly Uber organized a virtual job search workshop to highlight tools ERPCVs and everyone can use immediately. Traditional events were replaced with group Swahili classes, Queer RPCV Kiki brunches, cooking lessons and trivia games. Virtual happy hours, lunches and coffee breaks were scheduled to socialize and connect too.

We felt it was important for the public to hear how ERPCVs' lives were affected by the evacuation and organized to appeal

to newspaper editors and journalists. Sarah Hinton and I successfully encouraged the San Francisco Chronicle to write an article about how the evacuation was affecting ERPCVs, and they also published our follow up letter. Madeline Kellner, a tireless board member and evacuated Peace Corps Response Volunteer from Peru, devoted much time and energy to get the story out via interviews with North Bay radio stations.

The National Peace Corps Association provided updates about Congress's efforts to include ERPCVs in health insurance and unemployment benefits and issued calls to write to Senators and Representatives about pending legislation. We saw the power of the March Days of Action to create legislative support for the Peace Corps, when congressional offices began consulting NPCA about policy. I personally found it effective to call and leave a message with my local representatives and to write to several senators and representatives out of my area.

Though many ERPCVs simply wanted to know when they could return to their country of service, in the midst of it all, evacuees took the time to express their appreciation for the information NorCalPCA provided and the opportunities to connect. Some also told us that they preferred to meet independently of the organization. We recognize that our role is to listen and to support ERPCVs' efforts to address their own needs as they deem best.

We are grateful to Methi Satyanarayana, Armenia 2019-2020, and Katie-Lauren Dunbar, Tanzania 2017-2020, who share their perspectives on being evacuated with us in this newsletter. Their energy, spirit, and resilience are what the Northern California Peace Corps Association celebrates and why our ongoing advocacy work is vital.

Career Networking & Job Search Support

Career networking and job search resources are traditionally high on the list of priorities for NorCalPCA members, especially recently returned volunteers. In March of 2020, the NorCalPCA network sprang into high gear to bring even greater focus on this subject to support RPCVs who had been evacuated from their countries of service and those looking for new jobs due to COVID-19. A subcommittee was formed to make the best of our strongest asset—our members—

and a series of online workshops and networking events were scheduled.

Watch the NorCalPCA Events page for job search events, including:

- Skills development and networking opportunities hosted locally
- Resume writing and employer spotlight events hosted by the National Peace Corps Association

You can help too!

- Post job openings you learn about on the NorCalPCA Facebook Group, LinkedIn page, or on the Peace Corps Career Link board
- Share your expertise! Contact the board to join our Careers Subcommittee and join the effort to support RPCVs at all different stages of their careers.

Evacuee Stories

By *Katie-Lauren Dunbar, RPCV Tanzania 2017-2020*

My name is Katie-Lauren Dunbar and I served in Tanzania from July 2017-March 2020. I was an Education Volunteer and started as a third-year volunteer with an NGO in the Health Sector before evacuation. While this time has been stressful and emotionally taxing, I cannot stress how supported I have felt by my family and PC staff. Evacuation week felt simultaneously like the longest and shortest week of my life; filled with rushed goodbyes, frenzied packing, and a rollercoaster of emotions.

I have kept in contact with my colleagues from the NGO, who check-in to make sure that I am not forgetting Swahili! I also keep in touch with a small handful of teachers and students, and we reminisce over old lessons and shared memories. Throughout my service I wrote myself letters where I listed stand out memories. I have started reading those since being back, and they have brought back many fond moments that may have been forgotten had they not been noted. I miss my students all yelling “Madam KL” in unison, playing typing competition games with fellow teachers, walks to the market with my dog, sipping on chai with friends, and so much more. I miss the little moments of joy, growth, laughter, and learning.

While it was challenging to be torn away from my service so abruptly, I think my entire PC experience has prepared me well for this and other uncertainties in life. We are trained on resiliency, and if I’ve learned anything from this evacuation, it’s that the message of resiliency sunk in! Throughout my service I constantly learned, and relearned, that it is important to have an open mind and come into situations with no expectations. During this transition I am now applying for jobs in science education and am learning to re-adjust my expectations for what that might look like moving forward.



By *Methi Satyanarayana, RPCV Armenia 2019-2020*

Cut wood, carry water. These were my daily chores and the mantra that I have subconsciously internalized from my time in an isolated village in Armenia. Since my evacuation, it has taken a whole new meaning as I navigate the ‘new normal.’

Resiliency is adapting and learning. Sometimes in order to be resilient you need to be firm, like wood. You need to scrape together the drive to do the things that are necessary for survival, even if they are unpleasant or challenging. Since re-entry, I’ve had a seemingly endless pile of tasks to accomplish. Applying to jobs, participating in webinars, researching graduate programs-tiring tasks, but ones that I know will be beneficial for my future.

I’ve learned that resiliency also means being flexible like water and showing grace to ourselves when we’re struggling. In the days following my return to America, I have struggled with many complex feelings. Guilt, for leaving everything behind. Helplessness, from coming back to an unrecognizable America. Anger, from witnessing peoples’ selfishness and ignorance. I feel a deep sense of loss but most of all I feel thankful for how much Armenia had given me. I know I’m not alone in that sentiment.



Grants Program

The NorCalPCA Grants Program continued to support communities around the world this year, dispersing over \$7,600 to five projects in Mali, Nepal, South Africa, Peru, and the U.S. NorCalPCA members Katie Christ, Deanna Zabaldo, Aladrinne Young, and Madeline and Clint Kellner recommended these projects for review by the grants committee.

More than 43 donors contributed to the Grants Program, including gifts made in memory of NorCalPCA members Joe Moriarty and Lenore Waters. Proceeds from the 2020 International Calendar sales also added to the grants fund. In addition to this brief summary of current projects, more details about how these communities are adapting in the COVID era can be found at www.NorCalPCA.org/grants.

Mali

\$2,175 to Mali Kalanso, an RPCV-driven non-profit that supports community education in Nienebale, Koulikoro Region, Mali. NorCalPCA funds were used to purchase 15 desks constructed by a Malian artisan for the middle school. The desks arrived in late February.

Nepal

\$1,955 to Macadamia Nurseries Project in Sankhuwasabha District of eastern Nepal to purchase macadamia seeds and supplies, such as greenhouse hardware, irrigation pipes, and poly bags. The nursery work started in November training farmers in soil preparation, positioning seeds, irrigation, land preparation for plantation, and plant care. The germination success rate was 78% (extremely high for macadamia nuts in Nepal), and ended with 4,680 seedlings germinated as of May 1.

United States

\$1,000 to Hesperian Health Guides of Berkeley, CA. NorCalPCA funds were used as a matching grant by Hesperian to continue providing free Hesperian health materials to Peace Corps Volunteers from Northern California who requested them through the Gratis Book Program.



Students using new classroom desks in Mali



Farmers with macademia seedlings in Nepal



Bambara edition of Where There Is No Doctor

Grants Program, Cont'd

Kids' Pruning Club in South Africa



Home vegetable gardening in Peru



South Africa

\$500 to South Africa Kids Pruning Club (KPC) located in KwaZulu-Natal, will be used to purchase 4 acoustic guitars for the music program. KPC was established in 2014 as a recreation program for youth, ages 9-21. The Director Ilton (Yito) Beleque is a long-time collaborator with Peace Corps Volunteers.

Peru

\$2,000 to Minga Peru in Iquitos, Loreto region of the Peruvian Amazon. This non-profit is known for radio programs, women's leadership training, and sustainable income generating projects. In response to COVID-19, Minga proposed the expansion of family vegetable gardens to broaden access to nutritious foods when markets are inaccessible. NorCalPCA funds will be used to buy seeds and tools for garden training. Ten families will start gardens in three communities near the town of Nauta on the Amazon River. They plan to grow primarily corn and beans, but also squash, peppers, and lettuce.

Visit www.NorCalPCA.org/grants for an outline of the grants criteria and application process. It's easy to nominate a non-profit that supports the community where you served or to help a program or development project that you admire.

The work of choosing worthy grant recipients is carried out by the Grants Committee in September. To participate in the process, please contact grants@norcalpca.org.

The more donations the Grants Program receives, the more community development projects we can support.



The NorCalPCA Grants Committee

Regional Updates

North Bay

The two organized RPCV groups in the region have not missed a beat in keeping up social connection during these times of COVID-19:

The North Bay RPCV Group, based in Santa Rosa, has held 3 potlucks since January, the last two conducted virtually via Zoom. Thanks to Jo Anne Cohn and her colleagues Meghan Murphy and Moriah Hart for coordinating these events.

In Marin, Bob Casey convenes RPCVs each month for a meal at a local restaurant. The group skipped February, but resumed via Zoom in March and are continuing to meet monthly virtually. Bob also hosted the RPCVs for a holiday potluck at his home in December.

East Bay

Prior to the pandemic shutting down many activities, the East Bay had been successfully continuing its tradition of activities and events into 2020. We had volunteer days at the Alameda County Community Food Bank, something we have done regularly since 1993. Our social get-togethers normally occur every other month at The Albatross Pub in Berkeley, attracting the recently returned as well as those who served in decades past. The Book Club and Dinner Group met monthly in a local restaurant to discuss books by Peace Corps authors and focused on international topics. Under the pandemic, we have switched to virtual Book Club gatherings and are trying to support the same restaurants we used to meet in by ordering takeout since many are small, immigrant-family-owned businesses. As a virtual Book Club, we are pleased to welcome new participants from beyond the East Bay. We will be considering other options for East Bay events and activities depending on the return to in-person events as things evolve. New ideas for activities are always welcome.

San Francisco

This past year seems like such a blur! Pre-pandemic, the San Francisco RPCV community had been going on monthly hikes around the Bay, as well as meeting up for our regularly scheduled monthly happy hours. The views were great, the chat was superb, and the memories made were top notch. We are all missing that in-person community so much now, and have been doing our best to continue fostering it over Zoom! From learning to bake to learning to juggle, RPCVs are nothing if not creative and resilient.

We look forward to the hikes we can go on again and the toasts we can make in a post-pandemic world.

With hope and love, your SF Representatives.

Peninsula/South Bay

Our region includes San Mateo County and part of Santa Clara County. We are an active and engaged group participating in happy hours, hikes, and picnics. One of the highlights was our hike/picnic/wine tasting event at Picchetti Winery. Following the Shelter in Place order and PC evacuation due to Covid-19, our group continued to socialize and support each other virtually with happy hours, Swahili language practice, Skills and Games. These and virtual offerings hosted by other regions were open to all, which gave us a unique opportunity to connect with the wider RPCV community without having to travel.

Santa Cruz & Monterey

During the past year we've enjoyed several lunch pot-lucks, a birdwatching hike led by two local expert birders whom we treated to lunch afterwards at a Mexican cantina. Over 30 regional members completed a survey of their interests in social and service activities plus organizational ideas. Their answers will guide us going forward. The Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) RPCV Club joined us to make a work-party of 25 in the restoration of a section of the San Lorenzo River bank. We worked under the guidance of the Coastal Watershed Council's River Specialist, Whitney Reynier. RPCV Greg Pepping, CWC's Executive Director, explained the importance of a healthy watershed as we rested with pizza and drinks.

Due to the SIP order a number of events have been postponed. However, we have learned new ways to get together. In conjunction with MIIS's Club, we had several very successful Zoom storytellings. We are saddened and angry at the cruelty visited upon people of color. Many of our members are participating in the Black Lives Matter marches and related activities. We continue to support that movement in the expectation that we must make permanent change for the better.

Membership

NorCalPCA Annual Picnic
Marin Headlands, September 2019



Become a member or make a donation to support our mission.

Membership is open to ALL.

NorCalPCA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Membership dues and other contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law. See back cover for information on membership tiers, subject to change.



Register online at
www.NorCalPCA.org/join
or fill out this form and mail to:

NorCalPCA
P.O. Box 2547
San Francisco CA 94126

Checks should be made payable to
'NorCalPCA' at the same address.

Tell us about yourself and your service!

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Name: | |
| Address: | |
| City, State, Zip: | |
| Email: | |
| Country of Service: | Years of Service: |
| Sector/Assignment: | |

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to NorCalPCA!

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| General Fund: \$ | Grants Program: \$ |
|----------------------|------------------------|

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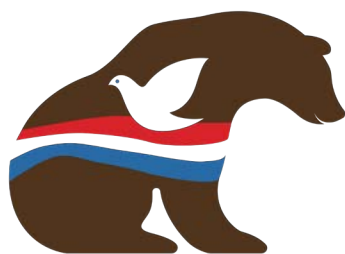
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We offer several ways that members can support NorCalPCA. Which membership tier are you signing up for?

FREE! **NorCalPCA Basic Membership**
With a Basic Membership, you have access to everything NorCalPCA has to offer!

\$20/year **NorCalPCA Appreciator**

\$50/year **NorCalPCA Supporter**
Publication of name in the NorCalPCA annual newsletter
Special invitation to a NorCalPCA Supporter Appreciation event

\$100/year **NorCalPCA Volunt'Hero**
Publication of name in the NorCalPCA annual newsletter
Special invitation to a NorCalPCA Supporter Appreciation event
Recognition at the NorCalPCA Annual General Meeting
Name or note included in a Care package that goes out to currently serving volunteers

NorCalPCA is an affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA). As you join or renew your membership with NorCalPCA, you will have the opportunity to join NPCA and over 180+ other affiliate groups it's quick, easy, and free!



If you'd rather not register online, please fill out the form on the back of this page.