



Northern California **PEACE CORPS** ASSOCIATION



2023 Newsletter

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Letter from the Board President

Dear NorCal Peace Corps Community,



Ashley (left) with Board member Andrea Crider at the 2023 SF Pride Parade

As we wrap up 2023, I'm so happy to write to you with updates on another wonderful year of local RPCV news, events, and connections. We've accomplished a lot, and it's been great to see the hard work of our members pay off in big ways.

Earlier this year I stepped into the role of Board President following the term of my predecessor, Danice Guzman. I would like to thank Danice for her hard work and dedication to NorCalPCA, as well as all of the new, continuing, and past officers and Board members who have helped lead our organization so nimbly over the last several months and years. NorCalPCA is one of the largest RPCV chapters in the country and run entirely by volunteers, so please join me in showing them some love and gratitude!

2023 was a year full of amazing events and get-togethers! We filled vacant Board positions in both the South Bay and North Bay and resumed regular gatherings in both of those regions. In our other regions, we continued to host fun social events like monthly happy hours at Comal in Berkeley, rotating happy hours and dinners in San Francisco, and hikes and wine tastings in Monterey/Santa Cruz. We also organized several community service events, marched in the SF Pride Parade, hosted a second Ukrainian Sunflower Festival, cheered on local sports teams at Oakland A's and Oakland Roots games, and continued our important work in advocacy and grants. Finally, our 3 biggest events of the year brought together hundreds of RPCVs from around the Bay Area: our Annual General Meeting in Mountain View, Annual Picnic in Santa Cruz, and weekend camping adventure in Big Sur. These events would not have been possible without massive amounts of help and planning behind the scenes, so thank you to everyone involved on these respective committees. What a year!!

In order to continue all of these fantastic activities into 2024 and beyond, we need your support! Please consider joining or renewing your membership at the Appreciator, Supporter, or Volunt'Hero level, or making a donation to our general fund before the end of the year if you are able. You can find ways to join our community or make a donation on our website at www.norcalpca.org.

We also encourage you to support NorCalPCA by joining us at an event near you, sharing your ideas, and/or by getting more involved! Please reach out to us at help@norcalpca.org to learn more. Finally, be sure to mark your calendars for our 2024 Annual General Meeting, which will take place on **Saturday, March 9, 2024** at the Sports Basement Bryant St. community room (1590 Bryant St. in SF). We'll have delicious international food, NorCalPCA updates, guest speakers, and more. We hope to see you there!

Thank you again for being part of our NorCalPCA community! Please take some time to read through this annual newsletter to learn more about what our organization and members have been up to.

Wishing you a very happy holiday season and new year,

Ashley Burke
NorCalPCA Board President
Niger 2010-2011; Rwanda 2011-2012

LEADERSHIP 2022 –2023 NorCalPCA Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Ashley Burke, President
Chibo Shinagawa, Vice President
Toni Gale, Treasurer
Kristina Cabrera, Secretary

At Large

Sarah Campbell (Alternate)
Andrea Crider
Frank Price (Advocacy Chair)
Vida Tehrani

Santa Cruz/Monterey

John Bost

San Francisco

Lauren Cono
Brady Fuller

East Bay

Kathleen Campbell
Moana Fogg

North Bay

Sierra Anderson

South Bay/Peninsula

Diana Garcia
Roy Kornbluh (Alternate)
Nancy Paul

Extraordinary Committee Chairs

Nancy Beam, Grants Committee Chair
Pete Johnson, Historian/Membership Chair



NORCALPCA VALUES STATEMENT

The Northern California Peace Corps Association is committed to bettering our communities at home and abroad. Our actions are driven by communication, active listening, transparency, and collaboration. We recognize that RPCVs have all had varying experiences and that we all bring different ideas, goals, opinions, values, and purposes to our actions. We are honest and curious with open hearts and minds. We believe in progress and embrace opportunities for growth. Our diversity unites us and helps us bring about meaningful change.

Treasurer's Report

For the last year, 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, has a current total of \$59,000. Our Fidelity investment account, used for long-term projects, now totals \$50,264.

During fiscal year 2023, we took in \$2,740 in membership dues and \$4,200 in general donations. Thanks to these donations and a financial surplus from two years of shutdown during the pandemic, we were able to spend \$3,230 on in-person events to continue to build and support our local RPCV community, including our Annual General Meeting, Summer Picnic, regional get-togethers, and participation in San Francisco's Pride Parade.

Funding of approved grants this year was \$24,605 and we took in just under \$6,724, resulting in a current total balance for our grants committee of \$22,688 to push additional grant efforts forward. Lastly, our second Ukrainian Sunflower Festival Fundraiser this year brought in \$6,000. The profits of this fundraiser went to Ed's Friends Ukraine, a U.S. based non-profit founded by RPCV Edward Ma (Ukraine 2003-2005). To learn more about this organization, please visit <https://edsfriends.org/>.

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

2022-2023 Donors

These members and friends have made a donation to NorCalPCA during the last fiscal year (October 1, 2022-September 30, 2023). Their generosity supports all Northern California RPCVs and the communities we continue to serve. Please join us in thanking them

Lifetime Platinum Membership

Robert Casey
Elizabeth Karplus
Terry Vogt

NorCalPCA Volunt' Hero

Samuel Abbey
John "Johnny" Alexander
Marika Batina
Keith Beck
John Bost
Noah Brod
Amy Brownell
Ashley Burke
Theresa Cameranesi
David Castle
Sue Castle
Maria Caluag
Todd Cowgill
Jay Davidson
Stephanie Engelsen
Janet Espinosa
Lynn Foden
Patricia Garcia de Nixon
Pete Johnson
Rick Kaye
Penelope Khounta
Richard Morten
David Motoki
Gordon Radley
John Richers
Jesse Schofield
Joyce Seitz
Andrew Treptow

NorCalPCA Supporter

Deborah Aarhus
John Barnacastle
Marietta Bartoletti
Adrienne Borgia
Chris Carlisle
Patrick Cotter
Ellen Davis-Zapata
Kathy Day
Susie Devlin
Crystal Eubanks

NorCalPCA Supporter (cont'd)

Marilynn Foree
Pamelynn Y Greenwood
Lila Holzman
Marilyn Hyde
Jennifer Kleckner
Joseph Kotun
Evelyn LaTorre
Vincent Anthony Lauter Jr.
Ken Logan
Bob McKoon
James Munroe-Davidson
Linda Munroe-Davidson
Denise Owen
Isaac Pearlman
Ryan Plesh
Hillary Pollaro
Ariana Rickard
Jessica Beth Romm
Jill C Schiager
Kenneth Shaw
Chibo Shinagawa
Penelope (Penny) Taylor
Michele Tsuchiya
Michele VanHentenryck
Chris Wilmoth

NorCalPCA Appreciator

Sierra Anderson
Russell Andrews
Sharon Armstrong
Laurence Bahr
Nancy Beam
Alan Beber
Christopher Bentley
Renee Billingslea
Steven Bjerck
Stacey Blasing
Robert Booth
Martha Brown Gould
Dirk Bouma
Mark Carlson
Marianna Castiaux
Bobbie Celeste
Marshall Chase
Andrea Crider

NorCalPCA Appreciator (cont'd)

Marilyn Douglas
Marshia Duncan
Nalini Elkins
Genevieve Evenhouse
Charisse Feldman
Brady Fuller
Lee Gallery
Heather Gardner
Jessica Garlock
William Gavelis
Diane Gubatayao
Mary Heare Amodio
Thomas Henry
Stephen C Hill
Thinh Hoang
Larry Hyde
Michael Kiernan
Kelly Lathrop
Leo Levenson
Janet Magnuson
Megan McGuire
Diane Melendez
Meghan Murphy
Eric Nedervold
Elaine Neufeldt
Amanda Noble
Christa Peacock
Marie Phipps
Wayne Rhoten
Landa Robillard
Peter Ross
John Ruiz
Kourtney Rusow
Timothy Sandoe
Jessica Santillano
Chuck Sayon
Karen C. Scharff
Karen A. Scott
Bosco So
Elizabeth Spencer
Peter Szydlowski
Janet Thibault
Alan Toth
Mark Trabing
Nancy Vassallo
Sam Williford

General & Grants Funds

Christine Anderson
Jayne Booker
John & Jenny Bost
Pamela Boyle
Marjorie N. Burston
Robert Casey
Doorey Chung
Charles Clemens
Laura Clifford
Andrea Crider
Lewis D'Azzara
Doris Dodge
Christie Emberley
Janet Espinosa
Marilynn Foree
Matt Francois (*in honor of Susan Neyer*)
Amy Greene (*in honor of Jerry Greene and Lenore Waters*)
Gloria Haars
Thomas Henry
Halyna Hostetler
Marilyn & Cliff Hyde
Luke Jansen
Barbara Jue
Joan Krzeminski
Sandy Leon
Dennis Mar
Shirley McGrath
Richard Morten
Ruth Owades
Marie Phelps
Patricia & Vern Phillips
Frank Price
Amy Ross
Elena Russell
Jim Schutz
Chibo Shinagawa
Janet Thibault
John Thoeleck
Terry Vogt
Daniel Wood (*in honor of Lenore Waters*)

Our Ukrainian Sunflower

Festival Fundraiser
Iryna Anpilogova
Jose Avelar
Simona Benjamin
Lori Bersabe
Tom Blackburn
John & Jenny Bost
Tonya & Victor Brilon
Ed Brown
Brent Burkholder
Kathleen Campbell
Randee Chin
Adela, Daniel, and Nick Di Canio
Oksana Fedko
Moana Fogg
Tim Frahme
Antonia Gale
Marilyn Glaubensklee
Marilyn & Cliff Hyde
Alma Johnson
Pete Johnson
Natalia Karpenko
Sophia Lennox
Sergey Lobov
Dennis Mar
Chris McDaniel
Kristen Moriarty
Ron Myres
Stephanie Newland
Frank Price
Bogdan Paliukh
Karen & Richard Sanico
Iryna Smovzh
Liz Stout
Paul Szymanski
Oksana Tumko
Jeni Webber
Kimberly Wells
Mason Wolf
Ukrainian American Coordinating Council
Mary Lou & Don Lang

Peace Corps Afghanistan 61st Anniversary Celebration

By Toby Marion (Tiburon Resident & RPCV Afghanistan 1971-1975), with support from Anthony Agnello (1972-1975) and Nancy Cunningham (1965-1966)

Friends of Afghanistan (FoA) organized a Peace Corps Afghanistan 61st Anniversary Celebration in Denver from September 19-22, 2023. Over 120 people attended from around the country, including Peace Corps Volunteers who served from the program's beginning in 1962 until April 1979, when Peace Corps withdrew from Afghanistan following the assassination of the US Ambassador, Adolph "Spike" Dubs. The Soviet invasion occurred later that year, on Christmas Eve.

The conference and celebration included two and a half days of events, starting with a welcome reception, slideshow, and open mic on Tuesday evening. Jan West, FoA's Secretary and Newsletter co-editor, chaired the organizing committee, which was comprised of Denver area RPCVs. FoA

President Anthony Agnello dedicated the conference to the memory of RPCV Teri Sullivan Lutz, who passed away the day before the conference commenced and was the first event chairperson and originator of the proposal to make Denver the site of our celebration.

Following welcomes and introductions on Wednesday morning, the first official event was a Zoom call with Marnie Gustafson in Kabul. Marnie is the Executive Director of PARSAs, an NGO working with disadvantaged communities to promote social change and civil society, especially for women and children. It was stunning to hear that their work continues to be successful, and that the Taliban government works well with them. The presentation that followed was from former refugee Bibi Bahrami, the founder of AWAKEN, a non-profit that improves access to education, healthcare, vocational training, and clean water and sanitation for Afghan women and families. Bibi shared the positive work they do in both Afghanistan and Muncie, Indiana.

Following lunch was a four-person panel titled *The Colorado Afghan Refugee Program: Challenges & Opportunities*. where we learned about hurdles overcome as well as community outreach and support from various individuals and entities. We were also able to take two field trips to visit Shaver & Ramsey, Fine and Custom Rugs. To our surprise, we learned that 98% of all carpets are now woven in workshops and that a large percentage are modern designs of all types of different colors and often abstract patterns. They are of fine quality, but the old Turkomen and Bokhara designs, starting with the traditional Fil Pai pattern (elephant foot), are of a past era. Finally, we all went to the top local Afghan restaurant for dinner that evening and enjoyed many of our old favorite dishes. The restaurant owners were Hazara people, and we had an alcohol-free evening consistent with the owners' religious preference.

Thursday morning featured FoA's Silk Road Bazaar, organized by Conference Chairperson Jan West, selling items donated by RPCVs, local shops, new Afghan Americans, and more. There were carpets, lapis lazuli, silver jewelry, textiles, Afghan clothing, bags, books written by Volunteers, carvings, photographs, and many knickknacks and other items. The bazaar was a success, raising nearly \$6,000 for Afghan charities!

In the afternoon, we heard presentations on the Bamiyan Textile Project from FoA Board Member Phil Smith, the Peace Corps Commemorative Project from former National Peace Corps Association President Glenn Blumhorst, and the Museum of the Peace Corps Experience from Museum Board Member Chet Orloff.



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Peace Corps Afghanistan 61st Anniversary Celebration (cont'd)



The keynote speaker was FoA Board Member Baktash Ahadi, the first Afghan American Peace Corps Volunteer, who served in Mozambique. He subsequently served three deployments as an interpreter, embedded with the U.S. Marines in southern Afghanistan. His exciting talk was entitled *An Afghan American's Perspective: The Importance of Storytelling for Cultural Understanding*. Baktash is the Executive Producer for the documentary *Retrograde*, for which he won three Emmy awards a few days after the conference. He is currently working on a post-war documentary titled *Horses for Heroes*, in which he showcases the healing effect of equine therapy to help heal members of the U.S. military and their Afghan counterparts suffering from PTSD.

Friday morning was our final day of sharing and discovering old and new friends and acquaintances, followed by goodbyes. I knew about a dozen attendees and recognized the names or faces of about thirty volunteers with whom I'd overlapped. Overall, it was a great event that opened channels of thought and communication, bringing powerful experiences and learnings back to life.

Friends of Afghanistan is a nonprofit organization established in the early 1990s by Beryl Brinkman, Suzanne Aronson, and others, which has published the *Afghan Connections* newsletter since about that time. In 2014, FoA reorganized as a 501c3 nonprofit organization with President Anthony Agnello from Buffalo, Chief Operating Officer Terry Dougherty from Indiana, Vice President Nancy Cunningham from Georgia, and author and *Afghan Connections* co-editor Elana Hohl rounding out the FoA Board. Friends of Afghanistan's mission is to build and sustain an information exchange about Afghanistan and its people and to network for their peace and prosperity. Its current goals are to facilitate peaceful and constructive dialogue about Afghanistan. In 2023, FoA contributed over \$23,000 to ten Afghan partner organizations that strive to make a difference in the lives of individual Afghan citizens and small Afghan communities. To learn more and support FoA, please visit <https://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/companies/friends-of-afghanistan>.



Regional Updates

North Bay

Monthly happy hours at Pond Farm Brewery in San Rafael continue to provide regular opportunities to enjoy our local RPCV community over good drinks and food. This summer a delicious potluck was held in Santa Rosa, and Aqus Cafe in Petaluma hosted a lovely RPCV dinner this fall.

In September, Sierra Anderson (RPCV Honduras) joined the board to fill our vacant North Bay representative position, and we could not be more excited to have her with us! Originally from west Marin, she recently returned after 20 years abroad and is eager to engage in the NorCalPCA community.

San Francisco

SF NorCal members have had an action-packed year connecting at delicious restaurants, on lively dance floors, and at beautiful outdoor festivals! Keeping with the spirit of previous years, we have made it a priority to explore the various neighborhoods around the city and highlight what makes them each so unique. A few favorites from this past year included a weekend volunteer trip to Yosemite to remove ash from firepits and enjoy the sights and a get-together at Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival in Golden Gate Park.

We hope you will join us at an upcoming SF event soon, and if you have any ideas or suggestions on hikes, cultural events, local bars/restaurants, or volunteer opportunities, please let Brady Fuller (Cambodia 2016-2018) and/or Lauren Cono (Thailand 2017-2019) know!

Santa Cruz/Monterey

In March, we did our second annual Pinnacles National Park nature & wildflower hike led by retired park ranger and RPCV Peter Szydowski and Charles Ewing, both of whom worked at Pinnacles for years. We did another hike in July through the Santa Cruz mountains which was followed by live music at a local winery and drinks and lunch at a local brewery.

In August, we enjoyed a walking tour of historic homes in Monterey and hosted NorCal's annual picnic in our region at Harvey West Park in Santa Cruz, where 80+ RPCVs and their family and friends enjoyed BBQ, bocce ball, and good company.

We have partnered with the Peace Corps Club at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies regularly over the years, and in October we co-hosted a welcome party for new RPCV students with pizza, drinks, and sharing of stories. Finally, our second annual camping trip at Point 16 in Big Sur was a huge hit despite various setbacks such as having to reschedule due to landslides and a broken water line. In true Peace Corps fashion, our group weathered the storm with adaptability and camaraderie. A shout-out to everyone who attended and helped out, and to retired Congressman and RPCV Sam Farr (Colombia) for hosting us.

East Bay

We kicked off 2023 in the East Bay with pizza night in historic downtown Niles and volunteer events with the Alameda County Community Food Bank on Martin Luther King Day and local nonprofit Rebuild Together to do yard cleanup and small home repairs for the family of a local veteran. We celebrated Earth Day by picking up trash at the Oakland MLK Regional Shoreline Park and appreciated culture at a performance of *Cambodian Rock Band* and visit to the Oakland Museum. It was also a fun year for sporting events! NorCal groups attended an Oakland Roots soccer match, a FIFA Women's World Cup quarter-final game watch party at Arthur Mac's in Oakland, and an A's game in September (where we even made it up onto the big screen!).

If you haven't heard, a group of RPCVs are founding members of an East Bay co-housing initiative called Mission Peak being built in Fremont. You can learn more on their website (www.missionpeakcohousing.org).

Finally, you are invited to our somewhat monthly happy hour on the patio at Comal, 2 blocks from the Berkeley BART station. Hope to see you there!

South Bay/Peninsula

Thanks to some awesome new regional reps in the South Bay (positions that were previously vacant), regular happy hours in this region of NorCal are back! They are at 6:00pm on the third Thursday of every month. The location revolves around the San Jose Sharks game schedule. If the Sharks are playing a home game, you can find us at the Rose and Crown Pub in Palo Alto. If they are **not** playing, we'll be at San Pedro Square Market in downtown San Jose. Hope to see you there!

In addition to regular happy hours, we hosted a fun night dining out at local food trucks, several hikes, and the Ukrainian Sunflower Festival in our region.

Follow us on social media @norcalpca, check out our events calendar at norcalpca.org/events, and/or email us at board@norcalpca.org if you are interested in attending or hosting NorCalPCA events in your area!

Grant Recipient Spotlight

Last year NorCalPCA and our grants committee approved \$24,605 for six projects, including \$5,890 for **Bishop McGettrick Girls Secondary School** in the Afikpo North Local Government Area in Nigeria for equipment and lighting for their computer lab and library, including funding for solar electricity due to erratic power supply in the area. Bishop McGettrick Girls Secondary School serves 176 girls of various religious backgrounds in a secure boarding school setting in an area where educational opportunities for girls are few, public education has collapsed, poverty is on the rise, and security is difficult.

According to headmaster Father Edward, the school has renovated a classroom by painting, installing lighting, and building computer stations using funds from NorCal. During the renovation, students were not told what was happening and were very curious. The computers and solar panels were installed over a school holiday, and when students returned, they screamed with joy and delight upon seeing their new computer room (which now enjoys heavy use!). A printer was also recently installed.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our grants program and make projects like this possible around the globe!



Meet Our 2023 Grant Recipients

Uganda: \$1,500 for a collaboration between **Home of Kigezi, Nkunga Eco Village, & Food Forests Uganda** in Kamwenge District to promote regenerative agriculture, provide income opportunities for youth, improve nutrition, and equip local Ugandan communities with climate-smart gardening skills, all of which will ensure the primary purpose of long-term food security. This grant is for a 12-month pilot program that will train approximately 50 local people, including 20 youth boys and girls, 20 women, and 10 men, who will share their skills in their communities.

Chile: \$500 to **Hidden Wonders** for materials to create field backpacks for forest excursions for local communities in Puerto Rio Tranquilo, Chile. The kits will include magnifying glasses, a few clear viewing boxes for closer observation of insects that can then be released again, a few field guides of local flora and fauna, a few books written by Chilean authors about natural history and indigenous peoples history (to be read between hiking), and a basic first aid kit. This grant will support materials for 1-2 excursions per month, with up to 20 community members per excursion. Emphasis will be placed on encouraging small children and their caregivers to attend and receive a more holistic learning opportunity connected to nature.

Please visit norcalpca.org/grants for more information on our grantees, how to nominate an organization for a grant, and how to get involved with the grants committee.

Peace Corps Museum Expands Its Mission

By John Rude (Carmel Resident & RPCV Ethiopia 1962-1964)



In April 2023, I unexpectedly became President of the Museum of the Peace Corps Experience when the previous President, Pat Wand (RPCV Colombia 1963-1965), died suddenly of a stroke while traveling on Spain's Camino de Santiago. The Museum had just hired a full-time Director, Dr. Zack Klim (RPCV Bangladesh 2001-2002), and was planning to double its budget. Overnight, my retirement was transformed from a casual commitment to the Museum into a full-time volunteer position. It felt like joining the Peace Corps all over again after a gap of six decades!

The United States has only 12 museums dedicated to peace, whereas over 600 museums celebrate war, veterans, and military conflict. The concept of a Peace Corps Museum was hatched by RPCVs as a "virtual" museum in Portland, Oregon more than 20 years ago. Largely through Pat Wand's efforts, the Museum broadened its scope and began to search for permanent space in Washington, DC.

Although I live in Carmel, I work daily with over 35 RPCVs and Board members across the U.S. and abroad. NorCal members are welcome to join us. I encourage you review the website at <http://peacecorpsmuseum.org> and press JOIN. You'll discover how to submit objects, add your story to the collection, participate in events, donate money, and (finally), learn about the Museum's partnerships and future location in the nation's capital.

Help us do more in 2024! Become a member or make a donation to support our mission.

Membership is open to ALL, and we offer several ways that members can support NorCalPCA.

NorCalPCA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Membership dues and other contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

FREE! NorCalPCA Basic Membership

\$20 NorCalPCA Appreciator Membership

\$50 NorCalPCA Supporter Membership

\$100 NorCalPCA Volunt'Hero Membership

Or give in any amount to our General Fund or Grants Fund!

Register online at
www.NorCalPCA.org/join



You can also make out a check payable to NorCalPCA and mail it to:

NorCalPCA
P.O. Box 2547
San Francisco, CA 94126