

NENY RPCV Meeting Notes

Tuesday October 03, 2006

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- Presentation: Natasha & Erin from Engineers for a Sustainable World

Apologies:

First, I offer my apologies for not having last month's meetings notes out last month. I will insert announcements into this month's notes. But since our last month's presenter is a brilliant and prolific journalist and political historian exiled from Nigeria and presently getting a 2nd masters degree at SUNYA, I can't possibly do him justice in summary, so you'll have to go to his website yourself. <http://www.moshoodfayemiwo.com/>

Moshood has also kindly volunteered to take over Tim's webmaster duties. Our new webmaster's address is mf456674@albany.edu, but more about Moshood below.

Food, Introductions:

October brought another veggie pot luck (2nd month in a row with no meat offerings... must be harvest season!). Thanks to Augusta for sharing her birthday with 21 of us... some first timers, some last timers.

First timers included Becky from Bolivia, Jane from Nepal, Abeba from Eritrea (more about her book below), and our two speakers from RPI, Natasha & Erin (more about their works in Mexico and Uganda below).

Last timers included Tracey & Tim who will leave the country next week. They'll return in December briefly (hopefully for a party) and will start work in New Zealand six months from now. We'll surely miss them, but as they say in show biz... Break a leg!

Thanksgiving dinner: Saturday November 25th

A Thanksgiving dinner is served to RPI's foreign student community at the Student Union on the Saturday after Thanksgiving each year. Sign up with Joan & Harry to help

cook or serve or to donate cash <HarryThornhill@hotmail.com>. If you can bring a microwave, also indicate such.

Harry & Joan will email a "Please donate" letter (Stewarts donated all the drinks last year). Please consider hand delivering the letter to the manager of your own favorite food store.

Some changes will be made to the Thanksgiving dinner tradition. First, Augusta will look into using the Student Union kitchen in the future. That option will come with a fee and RPI will require a certain number of regular staff to be present. But, more importantly, Joan & Harry will step down from Thanksgiving coordinators after this year and pass the baton to ...??? Augusta has volunteered to co-chair the event, but a second co-chair is needed.

If you can co-chair future Thanksgiving dinners, please contact Joan & Harry.

Treasurer's report:

Garage sale: Jeanette commandeered another successful garage sale, raising \$351.90 (with much thanks to all who helped). This success was after having donated more than \$200 worth of household and baby items to the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (as per our vote last month to support a Rwandan family of 10).

The USCRI has continual need for household items for arriving families. If you have something you'd like to donate, please contact:

USCRI's Albany Field Office
10 Russell Rd
Albany, NY 12206
518-459-8812 (voice)
518-459-8980

Leftover cloths from the garage sale went to Unity House, and all other leftover items went to the Salvation Army or Good Will.

...except for the **aquarium**, which they wouldn't take. If you (or your child's school) needs an aquarium, please contact Yvonne <Yvonne.M.Demarino@aphis.usda.gov>.

Calendar sales netted \$100! There are 40 left and they make great gifts. Contact Jeanette <jeanettegny@earthlink.net>. If you are doing an event at which they can be sold, please contact Jeanette to arrange this as well.

Membership numbers are up! Jeanette received \$15 from National, even though we keep forgetting to bring membership applications to the meetings. You can ante up online here... <http://www.rpcvw.org/store.html>, or download the membership form here... <http://www.rpcvw.org/join.pdf>.

End-O-Month balance was \$2229.09.

Mashood Fayemiwo:

I know. You were all curious when I apologized for not being able to summarize the brilliant work of our last month's speaker, so you already looked at his website <http://www.moshoodfayemiwo.com/>. For those of you at last month's meeting, you know

that, not only has Mashood volunteered to take over our website, but he was imprisoned for his work in Nigeria. Pope John Paul II went to Nigeria to pray for his release, and the US Ambassador agreed to bring him to the US if he would write about his work. He's written 2 books, was the former editor of the Razor, an African newspaper, and is currently contributing to local periodicals such as the Informed Constituent. Mashood's Nigerian English diction, however, prevents him from contributing as a speaker in public forum.

RPCV-NENY members moved, seconded and voted to sponsor Mashood for 50% of the cost of tuition for a US English pronunciation class at St Rose. Bill Batt will work with other organizations to attempt to raise the rest of the funds. If you want to contribute personally, contact Jeanette <jeanettegny@earthlink.net>.

Carol Bellamy, Friday, October 20th at Siena College, \$25:

Carol Bellamy will be the guest speaker at the local chapter of the United Nations Association annual meeting at Siena College. She is former Director of PC, former Director of UNICEF and current Director of World Learning. Her voluminous bio is here... http://www.worldlearning.org/president_bio.html.

Cocktails start at 5pm in the West Room of Serra Hall (Dining Hall), dinner is at 6, and Carol Bellamy will speak at 7:30pm. RSVP by Oct 11th to Christine Kowalski, 10 Quincy Street, Albany, NY 12205 <ckonline@verizon.net>. Location and payment info are here... http://activistresource.org/calendar/cal_event.php?id=6595

Directory of RPCV's:

This year's directory of RPCV's, which lists contact info for RPCV's who have agreed to be listed, has arrived. If you want to find an old friend, email Bill <hwbatt@yahoo.com>.

New president:

It appears that farms in South Carolina have a lot of biogas! As Steve Hoyt is spending more time there than anticipated. Biogas makes great renewable energy, and Steve makes a great RPCV president, but he's asking that Augusta's temporary presidential coverage become permanent. Membership moved, seconded and voted Augusta as our new leader. Steve will become VP and be at the Thanksgiving dinner.

Newsletter: Deadline October 10th

Christine will try to get a newsletter out before the Carol Bellamy talk, and certainly before Thanksgiving dinner. If you have contributions, please contact Christine before next week <cvanderlan@hotmail.com>. She would like to include articles on past meeting presentations or on our current projects as well as a message from our new president (or maybe an intro paragraph from those of you who can't make meetings?).

Christine just started a masters degree at SUNYA and Tim is leaving the country. They may not have time to correlate postal vs. email address lists before the mailing, and you might get both formats. If you prefer email newsletters, please let Christine know.

Festival of Nations: Sunday October 29th:

We would like to have a booth at the festival of Nations at the Empire State Plaza. The \$125 booth fee is waived if we can get 6 volunteers for 2.5 hour shifts for the festival.

Volunteers get free entrance. Contact Jane <jcthapa@aol.com>.

Green Building Tour: Saturday, October 7th:

Dave Bourton's home, as well as numerous other renewable energy buildings, is on the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association's Green Building Tour. Find a Green Building near you here... <http://nesea.gaiahost.coop/buildings/openhouse/>

Green building meeting: January(?):

Chris and Kim's greenly built [Mango Tree Imports & Las Mariposas Language Center](#) is not on the Green Building Tour this year, but they're considering giving us our own tour (as in, hosting a meeting). They will also have an open house this coming Friday, October 6th at [Balston Spa's First Friday](#) event.

Christmas party: December 16, 2006

Only 73 shopping days left till Bob Fakundiny's Christmas party. Think calendars!

Next meeting: 1st Tuesday in November

Swing on by to the next meeting at Kathy's home on Krumkill Rd in Swingerlands. Our presenter will be Abeba Baatai <abeba5@hotmail.com>, from Eritrea. Preview her book, [A Painful Season & A Stubborn Hope: The Odyssey of an Eritrean Woman](#).

Tonight's presentation:

Erin Lennox (Oaxaca, Mexico) & Natasha Kulkarni (Kamuli District in Uganda)

We were happy to hear from 2 RPI undergraduates who spent the summer overseas with [Engineers for a Sustainable World](#). ESW has chapters on 20 – 30 campuses. RPI has 20 – 30 participants, but only Erin & Natasha have traveled so far. This was partially with the help of a small contribution from RPCV-NENY. After they thanked us for our contribution, they relayed their experiences.

Erin <lennoe@rpi.edu> worked with solar powered water UV disinfection devices which were developed at Berkley <<http://uvtube.berkeley.edu/>>. Various UV disinfection units are available for household and commercial use in the US. The current cost of units suitable for Mexican households is ~\$80. They required 15W of solar generated power 15min/day to disinfect 10L of water.

Erin inspected previously installed systems and worked on redesign to make them more convenient (installing pumps, for example, so people don't have to lift large containers of water). She also worked at reducing the cost by using locally available materials. Each village has one person trained in repair, and repairs would be more convenient with local materials. Hence, redesign with local materials is vital. Erin then approached new villages to see if there was interest in new units. She often found someone who had already heard of the units and knew that folks who used the disinfected water got sick less often. Photos of the units in use are here... <http://www.pbase.com/amyjanel/uv_tube>

Natasha Kulkarni's <kulkan@rpi.edu> experience in Uganda reminded her of visiting family in India... except that she didn't see "intense poor" in Uganda. Uganda is 80% agricultural, so there's little hunger. However, unrest in Sudan to the north has reduced the food supply from northern Uganda, where the Lords Resistance Army from Sudan abducts Ugandan children for LRA fighters and sex slaves.

Natasha worked with a Ugandan NGO, Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns on three projects:

- Building structures for biogas digestion of cow manure. The end product is methane gas for cooking and fertilizer for agriculture.
- Water harvesting, which is basically digging big holes, lining them with tarp so the water won't seep through the sand, and covering them with organic matter to reduce evaporation.
- Water disinfection using UV radiation from direct sunlight by placing plastic bottles filled with water in locations where they will be exposed to the sun.

Natasha's water disinfection project used the same theory as Erin's – both used UV radiation to kill microbial toxins – but Natasha's was much lower tech. Laying plastic bottles in the sunlight is much more affordable and does not require electricity, while Erin's units are powered by solar panels and required each village have a someone trained in repair. However, the amount of time required to ensure disinfection using direct sunlight is not completely predictable. If it was sunny, then 6 hours exposure was recommended, while 2 cloudy days would do the trick and rainy days were not recommended at all. In both systems, the amount of debris in the water would effect disinfection and neither system would remove heavy metals or VOC's.