

NENY RPCV Meeting Notes
Tuesday January 10, 2006

Agenda items:

- Eats
- Introductions
- Email list
- Books
- Happy hours
- Fund raising
- Sweeney update?
- Issues from the floor
- Is Terry back?
- Next meeting
- Presenter: Kirsten Keefe from Biloxi

Eats:

Thanks to Bill & Karen (& their kitty) for opening their home to 18 additional people. Thanks to Steve Hoyt for sending a business agenda, or else we would have just sat around all evening, chatting over cheese and wine.

Books:

Bill took the opportunity to show off his fine collection of Peace Corps authors, tantalizing us with the story lines from almost a dozen books... including one title that was written as a RPCV chapter ***fund raiser*** with contributions from their members (hint?). Other members added additional titles & topics from their own libraries. An active RPCVs writers's group is located at <http://www.peacecorpswriters.org/>

Email list:

If anyone knows anyone who is not getting the emails, please send their contact info to Tim, tc8050@albany.edu

Happy Hours: TBA

Carie, carieannem@yahoo.com, took a consensus from the group regarding interest in happy hours. ***All in favor!*** Other preferences include:

Goal: Recruiting, networking with potential PCV's & their parents
John & Bill have access to contact info for new returnees
Advertise in MetroLand/ Craig's list and other places utilized by the target demographic for information to find RPCV's not in the email loop
Contact recruiters and schools to invite potential new PCV's

Costs: Cash bar + additional \$6-8 per person for nibbles & tips

Frequency: Suggestions ranged from 2x/year, quarterly, weekly, with as long as interest is present being generally agreed upon.

Good Days: Sorry... I missed this part of the conversation... I was sitting too far to hear. (editors note – I think it was midweek when bars are quiet).

Fund raising:

Garage sale: Late April or early May (before it gets too hot!)

The Gottliebs will kindly offer their garage for sale again this year. ...well, OK, so their offer is limited to orchestrating what has proven to be a successful event.

Don't know to whom to re-gift all those holiday presents?
Start your spring cleaning now... you can bring stuff over for storage from
now til G-sale day. sgott@mail.als.edu

Sweeney update?

Wendy Davis had no news on meeting with Representative Sweeney. This was primarily because she is in Egypt. She will be asked to update the mailing list when she returns, which should be soon, as she is scheduled to teach on Monday.

Issues from the floor:

War & Peace:

Bill raised the success of the separation of Peace Corps from military service, a topic which was thoroughly discussed at our August meeting and about which this chapter drafted a letter of support of the NPCA's position. Other members expressed the need to be diligent with such concerns.

Giving:

Joan asked how the group decides to which groups we should donate, citing the school with which she and Harry worked.

Bill cited Peace Corps Partnerships and the groups history of supporting efforts of local volunteers to enhance networking.

Steve G & Joe D suggested that key issues in deciding on support are... what will be done with the money and who gets the benefit.

Bob F suggested that we should have a set of questions, or perhaps a short (less than 2 pages) proposal procedure.

Chris suggested that Peace Corps Partnership funds for currently-serving volunteers, available via their embassy, is undersubscribed! Perhaps when volunteers ask, we should direct them through the process?

Tim suggested that if they submit photos for the web page, he'd be happy.

Photos:

We need more color on the web page. Send photos of your PC experience to Tim
tc8050@albany.edu

Is Terry back?

No one reported any updates. You out there, Terry?

Next meeting: 1st Tuesday in February:

The next meeting will held Chris's home at 518 Warren St, Albany. 518-859-9119
Chris's home is located just off of S Lake, across from the Capital District Psychiatric Center (no reflection on Chris). Folding chairs and tables are greatly appreciated.

Presenter: Kirsten Keefe from Biloxi:

They still need help down there??

Kristen's photos brought yet another meaning to "The Star Thrower" by Loren Eiseley (even without PowerPoint!). Though the devastation in her photos appeared ubiquitous and complete, the point was made that Biloxi missed the eye of the storm. Her presentation also triggered discussion of the social and political factors involved in New Orleans, and Elliot's volunteerism there, via Veterans for Peace, was mentioned.

Kristen previously posted her Katrina relief experience with Hands-On USA to the listserv, but her pictures triggered interest in additional detail. Some highlights are...

- Hands On USA's web page is here... <http://handsonusa.org/>
- The group started as Hands On Thailand after the tsunami and is run by a core of "permanent" volunteers who all appear to be under 25.
- Hands On had contacts in Biloxi, so setup operations in a Church there after Katrina.
- Volunteers stay in tents or inside the building, share 3 showers and eat MREs (previously known as C-rations). (editor's note – MRE's are only for lunch. Other food is better than Salvation Army!)
- All volunteers get cool T-shirts.
- Many evacuees also stay in tents... but don't get cool T-shirts.
- The group's administrative procedures include...
 - you show up,
 - you do whatever you're capable of,
 - you stay as long as you can,
 - you leave when you need to go back.
- The group's unconventional go-to-it-ness breeds success.
- The group partners with other organizations, such as the Salvation Army & ASPCA.
- Each morning, volunteer team leaders walk around camp and "recruit" workers for their particular projects.
- Kristen worked on mold removal in homes that were structurally sound but uninhabitable due to water damage. Her team stripped the homes down to bare studs and scrub the studs with wire brushes and other tools.

Would she go back?

Yes!

Should you go too?

There is plenty to do, regardless of your skills. Kristen met volunteers who never thought they'd volunteer, but they returned several times.

- FEMA paperwork is so intensive that volunteers are needed to help evacuees go through the process.
- The region doesn't have enough plumbers, roofers, electricians, etc.
- If you bring your own chain saw, you get to do tree removal.
- Some corporations have sent volunteers... equipped with tools, tents and even cars which they have left behind for the next volunteers.
- Hands On USA has wireless internet at camp
- You can sign up via their website... <http://handsonusa.org/>