

Visit us on the internet at [www.rpcv-neny.org/](http://www.rpcv-neny.org/)

Catch up with old friends and make new ones at our monthly meeting...details below!

Next month's dinner/meeting will be Tuesday, March 4, 2003, read on...

## FOOD, FUN and FASCINATING PEOPLE

It has been a fun couple of months for the group since the last newsletter! Where to begin?

For the first time, RPCV's of Northeastern NY hosted a Harvest Dinner for local international students at the RPI Union in November. The food was great - lots of wonderful Thanksgiving food, as well as some interesting dishes from around the world. We had, as I recall, 62 people! After the dinner everyone introduced themselves, and all the students, most of whom had never had an American Thanksgiving, were very appreciative and touched by the effort. It was a lot of work! Thanks to all who worked so hard for this event!

Several of our members-- Jeanette Gottlieb, Bob Fakundiny, John Flynn, and Terry Amrhein-- met with Congressional Representative McNulty to secure his promise to sponsor legislation to expand and strengthen the Peace Corps. Great work! Terry Amrhein reports on the bill in this issue.

We have been keeping up a regular monthly schedule of dinner meetings at the Latham Biryani Restaurant the first Tuesday of every month. Every meeting brings more people and new faces. In December, I was pleased to be the presenter for the evening to talk about my recent trip back to my PC host country, Niger. (I talk some about that in the following pages.) In January, we had a great crowd (20 people) for David Borton's fascinating presentation on solar power and his solar project in India--a large solar installation at a hospital in that will air condition the entire building. Up to this point the hospital has been deforesting the area and burning the wood to cool the building. This is a very important project and David has been working hard on it for several years now. Great job David! We're proud of you!

Also in January, we welcomed Shannon Cornelius who just returned from Ghana. Shannon was the invited speaker for the SUNY Center for International Development and also spoke at the Bethlehem library about her experiences as a volunteer in Ghana. Good job Shannon!

For those who missed it in December, Bob Fakundiny hosted his famous Christmas party. Singing, eating and wine tasting with geologists, wine drinkers and Peace Corps Volunteers. How can that be more fun?

So what's on for our next meetings? Well, we have a great schedule. On February 4<sup>th</sup>, our speaker will be Anne Hensel, who returned a year ago. Anne will speak on her experience as a volunteer in both Uganda and Kiribati. Be there also to meet our possible honorary guest who is a visiting member of the South African Constitutional Court! In March, there will be a special presentation by Tammy Kelly, who returned just this fall from Northeastern China. Come meet Tammy! And in April, we will feature a presentation by none other than Bill Batt, who will tell us about his trip to India and his PC host country of Thailand.

Remember, we meet the first Tuesday of every month at the Latham Biryani at 6:00 pm. The Latham Biryani Indian Restaurant is on Rte. 9 just south of the Rte. 155 junction. The number is 638, and it's in an old Pizza Hut building. They serve a very good Indian/Pakistani menu. Starting in February we will have a buffet for \$11.00 per person (plus a little extra to pay for the meal for the speaker or a special guest of the group).

See you there!

*Steve Hoyt (Niger '94 - '96), President*

### ***Getting involved***

For those who are interested in joining us, maybe just for one event, please do. We are involved with local events, sometimes as a sponsor or cosponsor. We'd like to expand our work with the Partnership Program, which is a direct link to current volunteer projects in the field. Membership dues from the National Peace Corps Association is our only source of income. We don't have a lot of money, but we do a lot with what we have. So while you don't have to be a member to participate in our events, please remember to renew every year. Newly returned volunteers get their first year free! For more info on membership, hit the membership link on our website, [www.rpcv-neny.org](http://www.rpcv-neny.org).

## Peace Corps Day: Celebrate a Legacy of Service, Friday, February 28, 2003

To commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps, returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) will celebrate Peace Corps Day on February 28, 2003. RPCVs will be visiting classrooms, community organizations, and workplaces throughout the United States to share the knowledge and insights gained from their overseas experiences. When RPCVs speak about their Peace Corps experiences, they enrich the lives of students, neighbors, and colleagues. RPCVs also raise awareness of the Volunteers' ongoing global contributions and plant the seeds of community service.

Peace Corps Day is your opportunity to promote a better understanding of the people of your host country among the people of your current community. You can participate in a variety of ways: Perhaps you have photographs, artifacts, music, or folktales that you could share with students or other groups. You might encourage your local newspaper to run a story about your experiences in the Peace Corps or to publish a letter to the editor about Peace Corps service.

**If you are in the Capital region** and would like to get involved in Peace Corps Day activities, there are two options. To make visits to local schools, contact: Don Hegeman (Liberia, 67-71), 518 392 9704, [hegemd@empireone.net](mailto:hegemd@empireone.net). Don is acting as coordinator of school visits in Albany, Rensselaer, and Saratoga counties. He is receiving requests for RPCVs to speak at local schools and needs your help as a RPCV presenter. When contacting him please provide:

- your name, country of service, and the best way to reach you
- your preferred presentation (will you talk about your country of service and what you did, show slides and artifacts, etc?)
- how far you are willing to travel to make your presentation
- a specific age group your presentation is meant for, if any

If you are interested in appearing on Vox Pop, a live WAMC public radio program, to talk about your experience in Peace Corps, please contact Christine Vanderlan (Guatemala '99-'01), 518-463-7152 or [cvanderlan@hotmail.com](mailto:cvanderlan@hotmail.com). This event is not yet definite and will depend on WAMC's schedule.

**In other areas of the state:** Online registration is available on the Peace Corps Day website ([www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday)). All respondents will receive a free presentation kit. The presentation kit includes souvenirs for your audience and materials to help you prepare for and promote the day. Visit the Peace Corps website for more information. If you have any questions, contact the Peace Corps Day Coordinator at [pcday@peacecorps.gov](mailto:pcday@peacecorps.gov) or call 800.424.8580 (press 2, then ext. 1961).

Last year, more than 6,000 RPCVs shared their overseas experiences in elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges and universities throughout the United States. Nearly 500,000 students were visited by an RPCV. Whether you choose to bring your Peace Corps experience to a local school or take part in one of the activities mentioned above, participation is key in helping Peace Corps achieve its third goal. Sign up today!

## Congressman McNulty Agrees to Sponsor New Peace Corps Charter

On January 13, 2003, four members of the RPCV-NENY met with Congressman McNulty in his office in Troy. The four RPCVs, Jeanette Gottlieb, Bob Fakundiny, John Flynn and myself, obtained Congressman McNulty's agreement to sponsor the new Peace Corps Charter for the 21st Century. The charter was introduced during the last session of Congress but was not passed. It has been reintroduced this session as House Bill HR257. The new charter would provide:

- funding to double the size of the Peace Corps from about 6,000 volunteers to about 14,000 volunteers and authorizes funds of about \$235 million in year 2003 to \$560 million in 2007,
- a restatement of the independence of the Peace Corps,
- new reporting to Congress on Country Security and student loan forgiveness,
- special volunteer placement in Muslim countries,
- training for all volunteers in global infectious diseases,
- re-activation of the Peace Corps Advisory Board,
- an increase in the monthly volunteer re-adjustment allowance from \$125 to \$275 per month, and
- a \$10 million annual Peace Corps Innovation Fund to fund RPCV third goal activities.

If enacted, the new charter would represent the biggest change in the Peace Corps since its creation. For more information, contact Terry Amrhein, the Advocacy Coordinator for RPCV-NENY.

## My Trip Back – Steve Hoyt Visits Niger

Wow, had it really been six years? In November, I finally was able to return to my host country of Niger with the Friends of Niger. The occasion for the trip was PC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Niger so many of our group of about 30 had been in the Peace Corps in the 60's and 70's and were startled by some of the changes they saw. The population has grown tremendously in that time. Many of the cities have 10 times the population they did then. There is now a paved road that goes across the country and another that goes straight up to Agadez in the desert. But people are actually poorer than they were 40 years ago. For me, the youngest of the group, being back was like putting on a pair of favorite old shoes. I knew how to get around, and it was as if I could just reach in my pocket and pull out my key to the culture – my ability to speak Hausa. It was great to slip back into being a volunteer for 3 weeks, but most of all it was great to see my friends and so many people I knew! My best friend Yahaya was there waiting and traveled with me around the country to places I had lived.

And yes, I did act the volunteer again. By the second week, I was giving a demonstration to other volunteers, a cookstove that burns millet chaff and peanut shells instead of wood. I also was able to spend a lot of time talking with a brilliant friend of mine Boubacar. When I had been a volunteer, we had collaborated on a few unique inventions and new technologies like the cookstove. Now that we had some time to talk we decided to continue collaborating on some very exciting projects. We created what I have named 'The Inventor's Project'. You see, Boubacar had invented a machine to ground millet flour equal to the high quality flour produced by the traditional pounding method, but without the back-breaking work. Since he had already invested more time and effort than he could afford, we decided to raise money here in the US to support its development. In addition, we decided to begin work on an ambitious project to build a solar steam pump for pumping well water. You can read more about these projects on the website – [www.rpcv-neny.org](http://www.rpcv-neny.org).

Thanks to a \$270 donation from RPCVs of NENY and a \$500 donation from Friends of Niger, Boubacar will now be able to begin work on the project! Also I'd like to thank the group for a donation of \$150 and an additional \$50 from individual members for medicines for several clinics in Niger. Thank you very much!

## RPCVs of NENY To Step-up Activities Abroad – Get Involved

The initiatives in Niger organized by Steve Hoyt and funded by RPCV-Northeast NY are not the only projects the group has recently decided to support. Through the work of our previous president, Bill Batt, RPCVs of Northeast NY donated books to a school in Thailand. Member Besty Campisi has suggested the group raise money from outside our treasury to fund more projects. Maybe, suggested Betsy, we could develop an 'Adopt a School' program for individuals or US school groups to help fund schools in other countries. PC Niger and other host countries have scholarship programs to help girls afford an education. Do you have any ideas? Like to get involved? Come to the next meeting or contact Steve Hoyt at [steveh@albany.net](mailto:steveh@albany.net).

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### ***War for Energy***

Civil War – slave energy needed for farm work  
World War II – energy embargo on Japan led to Pearl Harbor  
Kuwait, 1991 – oil  
Iraq, 2003 – you decide  
North Korean threat, 2003 – for energy concessions

***Submitted by David Borton***

**Stop the presses!** *Until recently, our newsletter was printed through the generosity of one of our members, but that arrangement is no longer available. Is there someone who owns or has access to free photocopying who can have the printing done for us? Of course, some members still will end up around a table, pasting labels and stamps, but that's part of the fun! Please contact President Steve Hoyt or Bill Batt if you can donate copying services or cover the cost of producing the newsletter.*

Check out our website: [www.rpcv-neny.org](http://www.rpcv-neny.org). For news, events & more!  
If you prefer to receive the newsletter by e-mail, please notify [cvanderlan@hotmail.com](mailto:cvanderlan@hotmail.com).