

Please send announcements or articles for the newsletter to cvanderlan@hotmail.com.
Also, be sure to visit us on the internet at www.rpcv-neny.org.

Coming Events

Happy Hour

Friday, April 2, 6:00 pm
Albany, NY

The RPCV association of Northeastern NY is trying to involve and attract new or uninvolved members in order to strengthen our organization. At the end of February we had a very successful happy hour at the Lark Tavern in Albany. And we want to do this (and many other social events) again! Many of you have heard from us via email, and if you would like to be a part of this social network, please email us at capregrpcvs@yahoo.com. Or join the yahoo group, rpcv-neny@yahogroups.com.

Our next event is scheduled for Friday APRIL 2nd at 6pm, 80% sure it will be held at The Fountain Restaurant on New Scotland Avenue in Albany. An email announcement will come out a week before the date. Please email questions to capregrpcvs@yahoo.com or call Laura at 518/426-7955. We hope to see you there!

Laura Van Deusen Eliot Cresswell
Morocco '00-'02 Morocco '00-'02

Monthly RPCV Meeting

Tuesday, April 6, 6:00 pm
Latham Biryani Restaurant, Latham, NY

Our monthly meeting will be held on the first Tuesday of the month, as usual, at Latham Biryani Restaurant, 638 Loudon Road (Route 9), Latham.

Latham Biryani serves great Indian food, and generally we hold our meeting over dinner, followed by a speaker. The dinner usually costs a reasonable \$12-15 per person.

For more information, contact Steve Hoyt at stevch@albany.net or 518-732-1213.

Does Public Diplomacy Have A Conscience? a lecture

Thursday, April 15, 7:30 pm
Unitarian Universalist Society, Albany, NY

Along with several other local organizations in the Capital District, RPCVs of Northeastern New York are joining with the Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany in sponsoring the 12th annual Channing Lecture. Dr. John H. Brown, a career diplomat who resigned rather than continue to serve the Bush Administration, will give an address on the place of moral conscience in public service. The lecture will be at the Unitarian Universalist Society, 405 Washington Avenue, Albany. The lecture will be free and open to the public.

Dr. Brown was one of three senior officers of the career foreign service to resign early last year in response to the Bush administration foreign policies. His letter to Secretary Colin Powell, printed later in Government Executive Magazine, said in part, "I cannot in good conscience support President Bush's war plans against Iraq," after which followed his enumerated reasons. Dr. Brown was a member of the U.S. Foreign Service from 1981 until March 10, 2003 and has served in London, Prague, Krakow, Kiev, Belgrade and Moscow. His recent articles have appeared in *The Washington Post* and *The Foreign Service Journal*. And he now assembles a daily blog, "Public Diplomacy Press Review" which brings together from media sources worldwide, materials that are of interest to the American foreign policy community.

The Channing Lecture strives to foster greater moral responsibility and understanding in its congregation and in the community at large. RPCVs of Northeast New York is pleased to co-sponsor the Channing Lecture for the second time; the first was for the visit in May, 2002, of Dr. Bill Schultz, President of Amnesty International, USA.

Message from the President

Hi again everyone! Well let me bring you up to date on some of what has been happening with RPCV's of Northeastern NY and some of what's to come. We continue to have successful meetings and presentations every month as well as other activities. For those who have yet to attend a meeting, we meet the first Tuesday of every month at the Latham Biryani at 6pm, and we always have a presenter to speak, often a newly returned PCV or someone who has traveled recently or has a topic of interest.

In March, Kathleen Stolle presented to the group on Peace Corps recruiting, the make-up of PC today and also some about her experiences as a PCV in Albania and Morocco. Our own Tim Cooke (Malawi '92 and webmaster for our website www.rpcv-neny.org) gave a very interesting presentation on the Galapagos Islands based on his recent trip there with wife Tracey Erney (Malawi '92). Before that in January, we had an excellent presentation by Scott Van Alstyne who had just returned from his service in Armenia. The Ghana Association of the Capitol Region, with whom we have begun cooperating on several events, were special guests to several of our meetings as well.

The fall was very busy for us. In November, we hosted a special event, organized by Christine Vanderlan (Guatemala '99 – '01), at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany for a special screening of the documentary about Guatemala "Precarious Peace." About forty people attended and engaged in a lively and informative discussion with the producers of the film, Randy and Shirley Nelson. This was also our second year for our Thanksgiving Day Dinner for international students and other foreign guests. Thanks to the amazing efforts of Harry and Joan Thornhill (Sierra Leone) and many others it was a great success! We had, by one estimate, over 120 guests! Lastly, of course there was the Fakundiny/Finch Christmas Party – always a lot of fun!

I'm also pleased to tell you that Harry and Joan Thornhill are now in Ghana teaching in a rural school for (I believe) 6 months. They are sending regular letters to the e-mail list. And we look forward to hearing more about their experiences when they return!

In January, we held elections. Most positions remained the same except for two notable changes. I am pleased that Augusta Fields (Lesotho '88 – '90) has now become our VP/Coordinator. Augusta now organizes our meetings and locates our monthly speaker. We are very pleased to put her organizing expertise to use! Also, Laura Van Duesen and Eliot Creswell (both Morocco '00 – '02) have become our New Member Coordinators. Already they have done an excellent job launching a email contact list and organizing a first RPCV happy hour at Lark Tavern that got a good turnout. Thanks to all for your hard work!

Please come and join us!

Steve Hoyt (Niger '94 – '96), President, RPCVs of Northeast New York

Connections

submitted by David Borton

Our newspapers often do not make the connections between articles that they publish. Recent articles have discussed:

- OPEC reduced the amount of oil it will pump into the market
- the cost of natural gas is up
- Alberta, Canada will not be able to pump as much natural gas
- a LNG (liquefied natural gas) facility in Algeria just blew up.

All the above effect the price of gasoline and electricity. Those closely related articles are not connected explicitly in the newspaper. Neither are the connections to the increase in global climate change nor the increase deficits in our treasury and balance of payments part of the media's story.

The expression "follow the money" is increasingly equivalent to "follow the energy," but few people, or commentators, make the connections.

Greetings from Akropong-Akuapem! a letter from the Thornhills in Ghana

Joan and Harry Thornhill are teaching in Ghana for six months. They arrived there in January. We'll add another letter or two in future editions of the newsletter, space permitting.

Friday, January 23, 2004

Greetings from Akropong-Akuapem!

We arrived last Saturday. Our liaison, Eric drove us to Akropong in the late morning. It took about an hour and a half. The road was "paved", potted and narrow. We traveled up through a mountain area--very pretty. Our home is a "boarding" house. There are Ghanaians--two men and our host teacher (female) and another woman staying here. It is very nice. We have a formal living room and dining room--which no one uses. We are the only ones who use the dining room.

Madame Verra, our host teacher is our cook. The kitchen is very interesting. Sometimes she uses the "crow" pot (an metal hibachi type thing), sometimes she uses a hot plate if there is electricity. We do have running water with an inside toilet and shower. Our bedroom is quite large and we have put our twin beds together and moved some of the furniture around a bit. We have two plastic chairs, a very old broken vanity, and an armoire type closet--also broken. We have linoleum on the cement floor.

In the afternoon, Verra took us for a long walk around town. We visited the School for the Blind that is in Akropong--quite large and well maintained. The students (several hundred) live there in dormitories. It is amazing to see how well they get around because it is hilly and the paths are not smooth. We wonder how they see snakes! We came back by walking around almost the entire town and got a bit lost. We walked to another town before we realized that we did not know where we were--Verra was not with us as we had dropped her off at her church. We got a taxi to bring us home.

On Sunday we went to Mass at a new Catholic Church located down the block from our home. The priest was African, and we think that he must have several towns to cover because he was gone before we got out of church. Mass had lots of drums, singing, clapping, incense, bells, and a choir dressed in maroon graduation gowns and caps. They welcomed us and had us introduce ourselves. The church is called St. Pauls. In the afternoon, we took a walk to our school--Akuffo-Tom--to see how long it would take us to walk in the morning. We ended up going the long way so it took about 45 minutes. The biggest problem for retired people is a huge hill that we have to go down in the morning and back up in the afternoon heat. It is a bit like climbing Prospect Mountain as the road and paths are full of potholes, gullies, stones, and litter. It is all red dirt. Our first impression was--What have we gotten ourselves into!--keep in mind that it is a sauna. There is a breeze early in the morning and late in the afternoon.

The school is very old. The elementary school is made of wood with cement floors. The desks and chairs are also made of wood. The students must share the desks, benches and books--old books. The Junior Secondary School where we teach is made of cement blocks with metal pan roofs with a small square panel to let in light. It is newer than the elementary buildings. The schools are separated by a "playground" which is very steep, barren, and filled with tree stumps. There is no equipment. The students and faculty have a latrine (separate). There is no faculty room, xerox machine, running water, electricity, or spare desks or chairs.

Monday morning we met with the owner of the school and the headmaster of the JSS, Mr. Latte. We are assigned to teach English (Joan) and Social Studies (Harry) to Forms 1 and 2 which is like 7th and 8th grade. The ages are between 10 and 16. Form 1 has 40 students and Form 2 has 28. We are on a college-like schedule so that we do not meet our classes at the same time every day or even every day. Joan has ten classes a week and Harry only has six. We have been team-teaching in both (a new concept to them). We are impressed with the students and the quality of education that they have received despite their surroundings. Joan had them write letters and they were quite good. The faculty is very dedicated and work very hard trying to give the students a good education. Akuffo-Tom has a very good reputation in town and last year all of their students went on to high school (we think they weed out the ones that will not make it so that it will look good for the school). The students are very well behaved because they are caned if they are not!--interesting! Harry has to teach about human rights as part of my curriculum. We have to follow the government syllabus when we teach--with no resources.

Love and Prayers, Joan and Harry Thornhill