



# ReConnections

A monthly newsletter of the West Cascades Peace Corps Association

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## Upcoming Events

**Sun. March 1:** Kick off Peace Corps week with a **pizza get-together at Roaring Rapids Pizza from 1 - 3 pm!**

**Tues. March 3:** Story Slam at Wilamette Hall 110 on UO campus at . *Details page 2.*

**Sat. March 7:** Peace Corps Week Service project at Bauman Tree Farm. *Details page 2.*

**Thurs. March 12:** **WCPCA Book Club** will meet **6:30-8:30** to discuss *Living Poor* by Moritz Thomsen at the home of Julia Harvey. *Details page 2.*

**Fri. March 13:** Pub Night! Celebrate Spring early outside at **Ninkasi, at 7 pm!**

**Mon. March 30:** Join fellow WCPCA members at **Food for Lane County (770 Bailey Hill Road) from 6-9 pm** to help package food for a great cause!

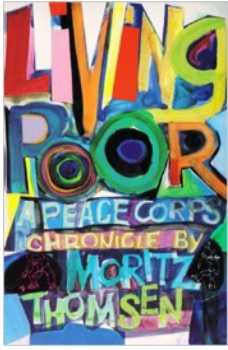


**February Pub Night on the 27th:** WCPCA members Rolly, Cary, Roger, Maggie, Andrew, and Wayne met up at Oakshire Brewing and visited with Catherine Trebes (RPCV Micronesia 1988-1990), who was travelling through town.

## Peace Corps Week is Coming to Campus March 1-7!

The week of March 1-7, 2015 is to commemorate President Kennedy's establishment of the Peace Corps on March 1, 1961. RPCVs are encouraged to become involved in activities and events in their areas to celebrate the ways that Peace Corps makes a difference abroad and at home.

To start off Peace Corps Week, WCPCA is inviting all RPCVs and potential PCVs to a pizza get-together **Roaring Rapids Pizza on Sunday, March 1st from 1:00 - 3:00 pm.** Roaring Rapids is located at 4006 Franklin Blvd. in Eugene. Bring the whole family for a fun, relaxed social event! Please be prepared to contribute to food



### **March Book Club: *Living Poor* by Moritz Thomsen**

The WCPCA Book Club is meeting on **Thurs. March 12 from 6:30 - 8:30 pm at the home of Julia Harvey** to discuss Moritz Thomsen's memoir *Living Poor*.

Thomsen joined the Peace Corps at the age of 48 and served in Ecuador for four years as a Volunteer, and then never left the country. Thomsen wrote four books over his life, all memoirs about living in Ecuador. *Living Poor* is specifically about his time as a Peace Corps Volunteer and is considered to be one of the best accounts of the Peace Corps experience to this day by many reviewers.

*Living Poor* presents Thomsen's keen observations about life in crushing poverty as well as presents a window into a troubled soul. Thomsen died in Ecuador on August 28, 1991 at the age of 75 years old from emphysema and cholera.

Directions to Julia Harvey's home are in the directory. All are welcome!

costs. Roaring Rapids is generously giving WCPCA a 15% on total food purchases. There will also be a prize to share between the group that represents in the highest numbers: "newer" RPCVs and "esteemed and experienced" RPCVs... you choose the group for you! Help us kick off Peace Corps Week!

UO Peace Corps rep Laurette Garner has organized the following events for Eugene-area RPCVs/potential PCVs. For more information about either of these events, please contact Laurette at [pcorps@uoregon.edu](mailto:pcorps@uoregon.edu).

### **Story Slam: Tuesday, March 3, 6:00-7:30 pm @ Willamette Hall 110**

The Story Slam & Information Session for UO students will involve RPCVs sharing a story from their service about a cross-cultural interaction, a 'Host Country Hero', or a humorous tale. Stories should be under 5 minutes long and can include a visual if sent to Laurette ahead of time. You can sign up at the following link to the Doodle site sign-up: [Story Slam Sign-up](#). If you prefer not to perform, please come out to hear some great stories about service and to support the spirit of Peace Corps Week!



### **Service Project with Trees Today and Forever: Saturday, March 7, 10:00 am - 1:30 pm @ Bauman Tree Farm, 84289 Territorial Rd.**

Help prepare forest trails for forestry education programs, which serve over 1,500 middle school students each year. The experiential program teaches students about how to sustainably manage forest habitat for timber, wildlife, and clean water. The work includes picking up winter debris, weeding along the trail edge, and spreading wood chips and gravel. Please contact Laurette if you have shovels, work gloves or clippers as these would be helpful! To sign up, please see visit the link for the Doodle sign-up: [Service Project Sign-up](#). More information will be sent to those who sign up.

*Thank you for your participation in Peace Corps Week and we hope to see you there!*

## 2015 WCPCA Member Survey

WCPCA wants to accomplish its goals promoting Peace Corps' Third Goal. The organization also serves as a great social and professional network for area RPCVs, and we are always looking for ways to better serve our members. Please participate and provide feedback on activities and programs you'd like to see this year for WCPCA! [2015 WCPCA Member Survey](#)



### Notes from the Field: **PCV Zach Rowland in The Gambia**

*Zach Rowland is a UO graduate and currently serving Peace Corps Volunteer in The Gambia. He recently wrote to WCPCA to give an update of his service. Portions of his letter appear here:*

Salaamaalekum! Summo Lee? (Peaceful greeting, hope the home people are okay.) Greetings from the humble little country of The Gambia!

Things have been going really well in The Gambia. It is a very small and poor country, but has a big heart. I haven't met one person yet who hasn't greeted me with the utmost kindness. I'm learning Mandinka and it's going pretty well. It's a fairly easy language, except that every word has multiple meanings depending on the context. Makes it hard when you can only understand a word here or there. As the saying goes around here, I am on it slowly, slowly (that's like the Gambian motto). Life here is not easy, the people work hard and get little. There is just no money in this country, and things aren't getting any easier unfortunately. Prices keep going up but the wages stay the same. I guess we'll see what happens and hope for the best.

The culture is Muslim, so you must dress appropriately and greetings are a central part of any conversation. The families all live in one compound instead of individual houses which I like, it keeps the family close. We eat from one bowl and use our hands (as well as with using the bathroom, I won't go into too much detail on that). My family has about thirty people, mostly children. My father has four wives, two of which he inherited from his brothers that passed away (they don't become widows unless there are no more brothers or cousins). The family structure is very different than America, and I'm still trying to understand what I'm considered to people.

I live in Central Region Division in a village called Madiana. It's a really small village of about 250



*PC Gambia Volunteers with the US ambassador to The Gambia.*



people and it's deep in the bush (that's what they call forest). The nearest market, or for that matter anything interesting is about 6k away, which means I've been biking a lot! Good thing I love it. The women's garden is 4k away and they walk to it everyday. They are some of the hardest workers I have ever met, and I deeply admire them.

I have been starting several projects, and am getting ready for more when the rainy season comes around June. The smaller ones include improved gardening techniques such as spacing and intercropping and to establish family gardens and several personal tree orchards using cash-producing species. I will be working on soil degradation and live fencing, as those are two very big issues. There are many wild animals, and large herds of cattle that roam anywhere, including the garden's if the fencing isn't strong. This year with the help of the community I hope to sow several hundred Maringa trees and other useful live fencing species. If you have never heard of Maringa, get on it. It is one of the most incredible trees and I believe it will play a huge part in developing countries. Next year when fencing won't be a big issue, the town can focus on planting other trees for bee fodder and timber.

*Zach wanted to acknowledge the support he received at the University of Oregon, and in particular, to thank UO PC rep Laurette Garner for working with him.*



## Visiting RPCV: Catherine Trebes

*By Denise Silfee, Thailand 2011-2013*

One of my favorite things about being a part of the Peace Corps family is the ability to connect with fellow RPCVs to share stories and advice. I recently had lunch with Catherine Trebes, a Micronesia RPCV (1988-1990), who has been working internationally ever since. After her service, she earned a degree in Global Management, Asian Studies and Mandarin from Thunderbird and since then has lived in numerous countries, including Mongolia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Thailand, South Africa and Sri Lanka, to name a few, and worked with organizations such as Peace Corps, USAID, UNICEF, the EU, and MSI. Over Thai noodle soup and fried tofu, we talked about her career path and she offered some advice to those of us interested in pursuing a career internationally. Here are the main ideas I took away from my lunch with Catherine:

1. **Buy a house, even though you won't live in it while you're working all over the globe.**

Catherine said that the one thing she would do differently is buy a house 20 years ago as an investment, something that would be paid off by the time she was ready to stay in one place. She talked about the possibility of renting it out while abroad for extra income and having the option of selling it if she decided it wasn't in a location where she wanted to stay.

2. **Expect any organization worth working for to pay for your relocation fees.** That being said, when you are starting out, don't rule out a job that sounds interesting or could provide a foot in the door. Just don't be afraid to expect assistance, or to hold out for it.

3. **Apply to jobs you are not 100% qualified for.** You might still be the most qualified, or the employer could see something in your experience that they had not considered before.
4. **You don't need the right degree for every job.** Your overseas experience (Peace Corps, that first job that didn't pay your relocation fees) and work history (think skills) often count for more than having the perfect degree.
5. **It isn't strange to have 2, or 3, or 4 phases to your life... it's an opportunity!** Before Catherine joined the Peace Corps at age 29, she worked in advertising. After Peace Corps, she began her twenty year career in international work, and now she is thinking about finding a place to settle down and begin a third phase of life in organic farming.

The biggest thing I took away from my lunch with Catherine is that it's not too late to change the direction of your life, and to not underestimate yourself or your professional experience. Best of all, I appreciated the chance to meet and get to know a fellow RPCV in a network of individuals with a shared experience! Thank you, Catherine!



## New Membership Chair: **Nicolette Ulrich**

Nicolette Ulrich has stepped up to serve as the WCPCA Membership Chair. Nicolette was an Environmental Ed. Volunteer in Senegal 2011-2013 and has experience working with organizations like Heifer International, Food For Lane County, and Partners for Hunger Free Oregon. She is currently a PPPM graduate student at UO. Nicolette is also a yoga instructor, and lives and spends time with goats at Berggren Farm in Marcola. Before moving up to Eugene, she was involved with the RPCV Orange County group, and is excited to serve on the board and continue swapping stories with Eugene-area RPCVS. Please contact [Nicolette](#) for any membership related questions!

### **Calling for Submissions!**

If you'd like to submit something to the next WCPCA newsletter, please send your submission via email to newsletter editor [Denise Silfee](#) (Thailand 2011-2013) by the end of the month! Articles about recent travels, updates about your host country, service opportunities, humorous tales, a photo-essay, are all welcome! Pictures or a visual would be a nice addition as well! Thank you for reading!

### **April Preview: Upcoming Events**

**Potluck Social Event:** In early April there will be a potluck featuring talks by WCPCA members about recent travels to difficult to reach places around the globe including Cuba, Burma/ Myanmar, and Tibet. Date and location TBD.

### **Earth Day Events on Campus**

**WCPCA Kickball Team Signups!** *Go Team Peace Corps (and friends and family of PC!)*