

# peacecorps Armenia

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2007 PEACE CORPS ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST



A JOURNAL OF UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS  
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA



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A14	14th group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia (arrived June 2006)
A15	15th group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia (arrived June 2007)
CBD	Community and Business Development, a sector
CD	Country Director
CHE	Community Health Education, a sector
Counterpart	Host country partner
EE	Environmental Education, a sector
IT	Information Technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PCT	Peace Corps Trainee, pre-Volunteer status
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PCPV	A grant through the Peace Corps Partnership Program
PST	Pre-service training, 3-month period of language, cultural, and sector training
RPCV	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, a Volunteer who has completed service
Sector	Type of technical expertise comprised of CBD, CHE, EE, and TEFL
SPA	A grant for Small Project Assistance funded by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and Peace Corps
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language, a sector

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*Front cover photos: 2007 Photo Contest entries submitted by (clockwise from top left) Scott Demyan, Leigh Paynter, Matt Hamilton, and Elizabeth Pou*

*Back cover photo: Prize-winning competition entry submitted by Matt Hamilton*

*Graphic design services donated by Ellen Herr*





## *Kennedy's Promise*

*We will only send abroad Americans who are wanted by the host country-who have a real job to do-and who are qualified to do that job. Programs will be developed with care, and after full negotiation, in order to make sure that the Peace Corps is wanted and will contribute to the welfare of other people. Our Peace Corps is not designed as an instrument of diplomacy or propaganda or ideological conflict. It is designed to permit our people to exercise more fully their responsibilities in the great common cause of world development.*

*John F. Kennedy  
March 1, 1961*



fall 2007 • ABOUT PEACE CORPS

# ABOUT PEACE CORPS

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship by challenging students to live and work in developing countries. Since then more than 187,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have been invited into and served in 139 countries all over the globe.

No longer limited to students, today, almost 7,800 Volunteers and Trainees are serving abroad. Representing every demographic group, they reflect the extraordinary diversity of America. Volunteers serve for 27 months in their host countries, learning language and culture and living at the same level as the people they serve.

The Peace Corps Armenia program was established in 1992. Since that time more than 574 Volunteers have served in villages, towns, and cities around Armenia. Currently 83 Volunteers work in:

- Community and Business Development
- Teaching English as Foreign Language Education
- Community Health Education
- Environmental Education

Peace Corps is an independent agency of the United States government. The current director is Ron Tschetter, who served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in India during the 1960s. The Country Director for Armenia is Lee Lacy, former Volunteer in Samoa.

## PC ARMENIA PROJECTS

### Community and Business Development [CBD]

- NGO capacity building
- Small and medium enterprise development
- Business and IT training for students of local colleges and other community members

### English Education [TEFL]

- Teaching English
- Teacher professional development

## The Peace Corps Mission

**Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.**

**Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the [Armenian] peoples served.**

**Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.**

- Resources development
- Community development projects

### Community Health Education [CHE]

- Preventive health education
- Nutrition training
- HIV/AIDS awareness
- Health resources development

### Environmental Education [EE]

- Environmental education
- Environmental agencies development
- Creation of resource centers
- Environmental educational camps

Peace Corps Ministry Partners are:

Ministry of Education and Science  
Ministry of Trade and Economic Development  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Nature Protection  
Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs

Lee Lacy was appointed Peace Corps Country Director for Armenia in May 2007. She began her long-time Peace Corps connection as a Volunteer English teacher in Samoa (1971–73). Following her service she worked for Peace Corps in its Program Evaluation Office in Washington DC. In the early 1980s, while her husband served as Peace Corps Country Director in Nepal, she worked as Community Liaison Coordinator for the US Embassy in Katmandu.

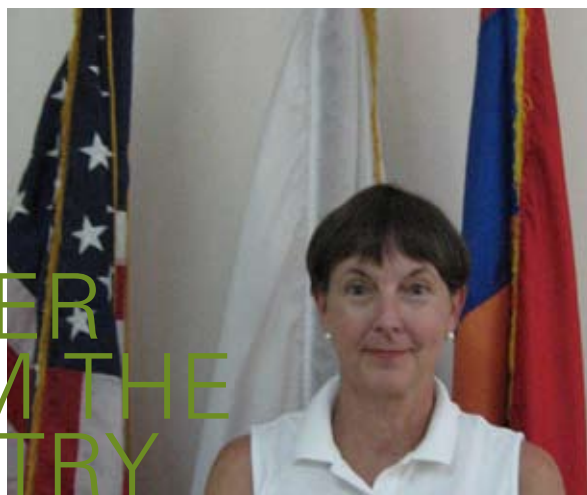
In the 1990s Ms. Lacy returned to Peace Corps and served first as the Director of the Office of Special Services and later as Chief of Operations for the Asia Pacific Region. In 2002, she began work as Chief of the Field Assistance Division.

Ms. Lacy has also worked for the Corporation for National Service, where she served as Senior Program Officer; Volunteers in Service to America as director; and for Overseas Briefing Center at the Foreign Service Institute where she designed and managed the Department of State's Security Overseas Seminar, expanded the Post Information Center and Training, and contributed to the design of the Arlington Campus.

Ms. Lacy received a BA Degree from Georgia State University; an MA in Education from Stanford University; and an MS degree in Organizational Development and Knowledge Management, from George Mason University. She also holds a certificate in Organizational Development from Georgetown University.

Ms. Lacy has two grown children, Lillian and Henry.

## A LETTER FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR



**Dear Ministers and Staff of the Republic of Armenia, staff of Non-Government Organizations, and Volunteers:**

This is the second of many newsletters that will report on the range of activities that Peace Corps Volunteers and their Armenian counterparts have been engaged in during the recent months. As you can see autumn has been a very busy time with a large focus providing leadership and life skills training for many, many young people in small communities across the country. Also this year Peace Corps marked its 15th anniversary of service in Armenia. In recognition of our collaboration with the government of Armenia we have signed Memorandums of Understanding with the Ministry of Nature Protection and Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs; and renewed the Action plan of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education and Science.

A variety of other events engaged teachers, students, and other community members in English immersion programs, and technology training events. I wanted you to know what Volunteers have been accomplishing in Armenia and most especially to thank you for your support for our program.

Respectfully

**Lee Lacy**  
Country Director  
United States Peace Corps, Armenia



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## CBD

### OPENING, NEWSPAPER ROOM, NOYEMBERYAN SCHOOL #1

October 11

Eileen Marin, A14 CBD PCV



A newspaper disseminates information. There are newspapers that focus on certain subjects and papers that are broader in nature and report on a variety of topics that are of interest to its readers. In addition to providing information and enjoyment, a newspaper can be used as a teaching tool.

Peace Corps Volunteer Eileen Marin, Noyemberyan School #1 Principal **Rubic Gishyan**, and English teacher **Ani Harutyunyan** made the idea of starting a school newspaper a reality.

With the support of teachers and interest from students, the officially designated newspaper room, with equipment in place, was opened on October 9. After the ribbon was cut, the discussion centered on organization. Students will be given the opportunity to learn about being a reporter, writer, editor, photographer, computer layout designer, and sales person. The paper, for and by students, will reach out to the surrounding village communities since reporters will be assigned to those schools.

The newspaper will be sold to School #1 student families at for 20 AMD and to the community for 50 AMD. Sales will replicate the real world end-process of publishing and enable the school paper to be a sustainable operation.

The process of publishing a school newspaper will foster skill development such as critical thinking, organization, working in a team and a sense of responsibility for the students participating. Broadening young minds to the types of jobs and opportunities that exist in a world outside their town/village becomes a priceless by-product. 🌱

### WOMEN'S BUSINESS SOCIETY OF KAPAN ROUNDTABLES

November 3 and 10

April West, A15 CBD PCV

Women's Business Society of Kapan (WBS), an organization that was founded with the valuable support of US Peace Corps Volunteers **Hillary and Phillip George** in April 2006, recently completed an 18 week project that trained local women in common business techniques.

The project was financially supported by OSCE Yerevan office and implemented by the NGO president and project director **Anna Minasyan**, US Peace Corps volunteer April West, and trainers **Nazeli Aleksanyan** and **Hermine Hovhannisian**. WBS mission is to increase women's presence in business by stimulating and fostering women entrepreneurship, advancing business education of women, and improving the success of businesses in the community.

As part of their program, WBS hosted two roundtable discussions on November 3 and 10. In order to acquire the broadest perspective possible, they invited guests from several professional arenas. Speakers included a health care professional, several small business owners, an accountant, a teacher, a former corporate executive, and the US Peace Corps Country Director. The discussion topics included; leadership, gender roles, international business, marketing, motivation, starting small businesses and the complexity of the Armenian tax system. The guest and speaker diversity enabled the discussions to demonstrate the similarities in the struggles that women face from around

the entire world. It was suggested that women of Armenia should look to the successes of other countries which have promoted their women for role models. The discussions were inspiring and most of the speakers encouraged our women to work hard.

The roundtables were widely accepted. In fact, WBS plans to continue ongoing round table discussions for current and future members. Future planned WBS projects include; business trainings, microplan trainings, and mentorship workshops for young girls from rural communities focusing on self esteem and career development opportunities. In addition, WBS is exploring projects involving public service announcements, educational television programs, and other related projects. 🌿

## YES! PROJECT REVIEW

**December 19**

**Heather Konjura, A14 CBD PCV**

**Andrea Hendrickson, A15 CBD PCV**



At Stepanavan's #2 School, on Wednesday, afternoon December 19, the participants of the YES! Project presented what they learned about running a business and working in a team as well as the new business knowledge and skills they acquired.

This semester, 20 students, five teams of four students, at Stepanavan's #2 Secondary School, were trained on business skills including accounting, marketing, economics, business plan writing, teamwork, and the buying and selling of products. With the help of the school's English teacher, **Aida Tshshmarityan**, Peace

Corps volunteers Heather Konjura and Andrea Hendrickson conducted the after-school trainings to the selected participants, which represented forms 9, 10, and 11. At the conclusion of the extensive 14-hours of training, which also included business simulations, the five teams used their new knowledge to compete with one another.

Each team was given an equal opportunity to borrow a set amount of "money" from the bank. Their respective interest rate was based on their participation from the after-school trainings. Using novelty items from the United States, teams had the opportunity to determine what to buy, the selling price of their products, and how to market their product offering. The remaining students in the school, who earned "money" from their teachers based on good behavior, completed homework, being prepared for class, good grades, and participation in class, determined how and where to spend their money. To further simulate true conditions, the teams were staggered throughout the semester, often in direct competition. At the end of the semester, after the teams repaid their loans and paid their interest, fixed costs, and taxes, the team with the highest overall profit won the semester-long YES! competition. Although the outcome was close, the winning team, consisting of two male and two female 11th form students, tripled their initial investment. Overall, the project was a huge success and was enjoyed by the participants, the students, the teachers, and the director.

This is the second time the YES! project has been implemented in the Republic of Armenia. The first time it was introduced in the town of Goris by **Uy Ta**, A13 CBD PCV. 🌿

*Photo, left: YES! Project participants, English teacher, and PCV Heather Konjura*

# CHE

## SURENAVAN COMMUNITY PLAYGROUND OPENING

September 20

Sarah Zaenger, A14 CHE PCV



The official opening of the Surenavan Community Playground/Recreation area, For Our Health, took place on Thursday, September 20. Located in Surenavan Village, Ararat Marz, the brand-new playground was spearheaded by Surenavan Secondary School teacher, **Alvina Grigoryan**, who grew up in the village and has worked with Peace Corps for one year. After completing the Peace Corps Project Design Management workshop in February, she returned home inspired to improve her community and, together with PCV Sarah Zaenger, brought people together to make a reality of the parents' and teachers' dream of a safe and clean playground/recreation area. The village donated the site on school grounds and provided more than \$2,000 in community contributions including time, labor and materials. The village received a Small Projects Assistance Grant from the US Agency for International

Development through the US Peace Corps for materials and equipment purchase and solicited in-kind donations from community members for playground sand and trash cans. Playground equipment, basketball hoops, tennis and volleyball nets and eight Armenian-flag-colored benches were installed at the beginning of September. The project concluded in November with the planting of 100 decorative trees. More than 50 Armenian volunteers cleaned the playground and constructed the benches, basketball hoops, and tennis and volleyball equipment.

The playground equipment was constructed by Magnon Playground & Equipment Company, a Gyumri-based business that has constructed playgrounds throughout Armenia and has worked with internationally-recognized organizations including USAID and WorldVision. The community chose equipment based on teacher input, student activities and community needs. "We knew based on a community needs-assessment and focus group that the village had no place where adults and children could relax outdoors. Before today there was nowhere for students to play and no green space for adults to relax," Grigoryan said. "The village chose the location for its inclusive atmosphere and proximity to the school and village kindergarten."

"The playground is a great asset to the school and the Surenavan community," school director Valya Avetisyan said. "It provides these children from our small village the opportunity to play on equipment similar to what the children in Yerevan have access to. Certainly it will be the recreation center in Surenavan for many years to come. 🌱"



## VILLAGE DARBAS FIELD AND FITNESS DAY

September 21

Jamie Slater, A14 CHE PCV



Jamie Slater, a Community Health Education Volunteer organized Village Darbas Field and Fitness Day on for 60 children from grades 5 through 9. The sixty students were divided five groups of 12 and were led by a Darbas teacher, an 11th-grade student, and a Peace Corps Volunteer.

The schedule for the day included:

Poster design for team's chosen name

Relay race

Food pyramid game

Lunch

Fitness tests:

100 meter dash, long jump, push-ups, sit-ups, and pull-ups — one minute allowed for each

Potato sack race

Tug of war

Awards:

4th and 5th places received ribbons, 1st through 3rd places received medals; all participating students and teachers received a T-shirt; all participating community members and volunteers received a certificate.

The community counterpart and Jamie also created an Armenian/English manual of all activities, which was given to each Armenian and American small group teacher.

Jamie's family and friends in the US provided funding for the program. 🍇

## TEFL

### OPENING, COMPUTER AND LANGUAGE LABORATORY, VARDENIS STATE COLLEGE

November 15

Connie Speake, A14 TEFL PCV



PCV Connie Speake, who team teaches English at Vardenis State College, assisted the college in creating the new Computer and Language Laboratory. The college takes a special pride in both this room and the previously created English Language Resource Room which provide students with computers, language learning software, books, maps, dictionaries, and posters. These resources have boosted student interest in computers and English.

Connie and counterpart **Anna Mkrtchyan** wrote a Peace Corps Partnership Program grant for equipment including six computers, monitors, keyboards, UPS surge protectors, printer, headsets which was put on the PCPP Website in June. In late August, the equipment purchased over the summer and the mayor's donation of computer furniture were installed in the newly remodeled room. One week of teacher training followed and on September 1, the first day of classes, CALL was open for business much to the amazement of the more than 350 students, teachers, and staff.

The language laboratory consists of *Talk To Me*, a wonderful, interactive software program, in which students must listen, speak, write and read, and check their scores. Students also have 11 graded readers with accompanying CD so they can both read and listen to the story. The

readers are traditional and contemporary fiction at 5 levels. After each chapter the student must write a synopsis or answer questions about the reading to insure understanding.

Non-English majors can come to the CALL for 45 minutes before their classes begin to work on individual projects in their related to their field such as foods, business, and accounting. Students demonstrated their abilities during the Open House.

The CALL supervisor has developed four community computer classes using the laboratory. Students now use are beginning to use Internet, including e-mail after demonstrating language and specific computer skills. All new students must take a computer class and use the CALL equipment in scholarly ways. The possibilities of and enthusiasm for the call are thrilling.

All the VSC students who have written the UGRAD applications have used the CALL to write and edit their essays. 🍷



*Photos:*

*Previous page: Anna Yengoyan helping PC Armenia Country Director, Lee Lacy, to use the Talk to Me program at Open House.*

*Above: Computer and Language Laboratory room before remodel.*

## Multi-sector

### NOYEMBERYAN STUDENTS BUILD "OUR CITY"

October 28 through November 1

Kyle Gifford, A14 CBD PCV

Kevin Gage, A15 CHE PCV

Nicole Elkin, A15 CHE PCV

Alex Harris, A14 EE PCV



Thirty-four secondary school students from three towns and villages participated in the "Our City" program in Noyemberyan. The program was conducted by four Peace Corps Volunteers with the support of several local English teachers.

During the five-day program, interactive lessons and activities taught students about the roles of citizens in a community, local governance (laws and elections), and the fundamentals of operating a private business (customer service, budgeting and planning, job applications, and advertising). All courses were taught in English as an additional benefit to local students seeking to apply to university.

The capstone of the program was the "City Day," which was held on November 1, the final day of the program. During the program, students decided which jobs they would have in their city, and then applied for them. After-

wards, they developed advertising, products, and a store front for their business, which they physically built in the local school auditorium. Elections were held for the Mayor and Vice-Mayor of the city, which the students named, "Dream City." Eight businesses were created for the Dream City, including a newspaper, radio station, zoo, bank, supermarket, candy shop, restaurant, and hospital. City Hall also conducted elections for the citizens who voted on the best businesses for certain categories (such as advertising) and constructed a monument in the town square. During City Day, students worked at their businesses, selling products or services to the other citizens, each of whom received a salary for their work.

Dream City invited several local community leaders, including teachers, school directors, media, and the Noyemberyan Mayor. At the end of City Day, students were presented with participation certificates and were given awards for their businesses. Overall, the program was a resounding success, and evaluations indicated that students would like to continue the program next year.

The Our City staff, Dream City citizens, and community members of Noyemberyan, Koghb and Berdavan would like to thank the Mid-Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteer group for their financial contributions to this program.

Kyle Gifford was project director, Kevin Gage, Nicole Elkin, and Alex Harris were teachers. 🍷



*Photos:*

*Previous page, top: Dream City banner welcomes guests; bottom, Dream City Medical Center staff diagnose their fellow citizens*

*Above: Students and community members dine at the local restaurant*

## ATHENS CLASSIC MARATHON

November 4

**Kyle Gifford, A14 CBD PCV**

**Rud Hubbard, A14 EE PCV**

**David Johnson, A14 CHE PCV**

**Syd Merz, A14 TEFL PCV**

**Jamie Slater, A14 CHE PCV**

**Sarah Zaenger, A14 CHE PCV**



Six US Peace Corps Volunteers ran the 25th annual Athens Classic Marathon in Greece with purpose.

Whether bridging Armenian and American culture or fundraising for a nonprofit organization, the volunteers made the most of an opportunity to represent both countries by completing the historic run.

They trained at their individual sites for five months, successfully fulfilling the second goal of the Peace Corps by demonstrating the American preference for regular exercise and outdoor recreation. Armenians were exposed to the true meaning of the term 'healthy lifestyles', a class taught in the Armenian school system.

"There wasn't a single run I completed without someone stopping me on the road to inquire about my behavior," said Syd Merz. "Running for pleasure isn't widely practiced in this country."

Peace Corps development work is centered on smart goal setting. By training for a marathon the volunteers exhibited how to set and implement a smart goal.



“I told community members months in advance what I planned to do,” Kyle Gifford said. “By following through and achieving my goal I set an example to others that hard work reaps great results.”

In addition to completing a marathon, Gifford was able to raise more than \$2,000 for Push America, a non-profit organization that works to instill lifelong service in its members while enhancing the quality of life of people with disabilities.

“The Push America Challenge encourages current and former members of my fraternity, Pi Kappa Phi, to challenge themselves while raising support and awareness for Push America,” Gifford said. “To me, Push America isn’t just an organization, it’s a part of me. It’s made me the man I am today by instilling a genuine desire for volunteerism and advocacy for people with disabilities.”

All volunteers finished the 42-kilometer run in less than five hours, returning to Armenia with medals, photos and stories to share.

“My village was thrilled about the accomplishment,” David Johnson said. “My host family took pride in having a marathon runner in their community.” 🍷

*Photo, previous page:  
After the marathon, PCV runners Syd Merz,  
David Johnson, Sarah Zaenger, Kyle Gifford,  
Rud Hubbard, Jamie Slater*

## AIDS AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITIES

December 1



PC Armenia Volunteers have defined an HIV/AIDS initiative to help raise awareness of this problem and to assist Peace Corps Volunteers in all sectors (health, education, business, environment) to incorporate HIV/AIDS awareness and education into primary and secondary projects.

Under the auspices of this initiative, PC Volunteers organized a poster contest in their respective towns and villages to commemorate AIDS Day on December 1. Eighty students participated from schools in Tatev, Halidzor, Zolakar, Vardenik, Jermuk, Noyemberyan, Vardablur, Yeghegandzor, Aintap, Surenavan. The posters were on exhibit in the foyer of AIDS Prevention, Education and Care (APEC) NGO so NGO staff, AIDS peer educators, and visitors could vote for the best three posters (winners not yet announced). Following the poster contest PCVs will distribute AIDS related informational materials from APEC NGO, award certificates for participation, and conduct seminars to better inform students about HIV/AIDS. 🍷

# EVENTS



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## MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRES

Welcoming Lee Lacy on her appointment, Foreign Minister expressed his great appreciation for the work that the Peace Corps has done in Armenia over the last 15 years. He stated that they were delighted to have Armenia as a part of Peace Corps' program and PCVs as "Armenian Ambassadors" in America upon return.



Ms. Lacy thanked the Minister for the support Peace Corps received from the Ministry in the 15 years and explained that Peace Corps volunteers in the regions are engaged in providing English language classes for children, immersion classes for teachers of English, community and health education classes, as well as community and business development training. She said the volunteers also run summer camps and teach the process of establishing and running camps.

**September 11** Ms. Lacy stated that there are 87 Volunteers in Armenia currently, ranging in age from early 20s to 50 plus. Ms. Lacy said the volunteers were very pleased and satisfied with the support received from the residents of the rural communities.

Upon the guest's request, the Minister outlined the Rural Development Program of the Armenia Fund, which entails infrastructure and economic development assistance in Armenia's border communities. Ms. Lacy invited a Ministry representative to present the following project at the All Volunteers Conference in November. She also invited the Minister to the 15th Anniversary of the Peace Corps Armenia and Open House in late October.

Both the Minister and Lee expressed mutual thanks for the meeting and the hope that a successful collaboration will continue.

The Minister received a copy of the Peace Corps Armenia newsletter reporting on Volunteer's activities during the summer. 🌿

**Participants:**  
*Vartan Oskanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs;*  
*Salpi Ghazaryan, Special Assistant to the Minister;*  
*Armen Yeganyan, Head of America's Department;*  
*Vladimir Karapetyan, Spokesperson;*  
*Lee Lacy, Peace Corps Country Director;*  
*Diana Sargsyan, Peace Corps Executive Assistant*

## MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF HEALTH CARE

Country Director Lee Lacy thanked the Minister for the support provided to the Peace Corps Program since 2000 when the Community Health Education project was established in Armenia. Programming and Training Officer Jason Compy introduced PC Armenia to the Minister and

### September 12

briefed him about Volunteers' assignment in marzes. Ms. Lacy gave the Minister the *Peace Corps Armenia* journal reporting on Volunteer's activities during summer 2007. She especially highlighted the fitness and wellness center in Noyemberyan recently opened with the help of Peace Corps Volunteers and Small Project Assistance grant of the USAID/Peace Corps. She expressed a hope that Volunteers' work would continue to align with the priorities of the Ministry.

The Minister assigned Dr. Narine Beglaryan, Chief Specialist of the International Cooperation's Department of the Ministry as a point person to collaborate with the Peace Corps. ❖

#### Participants:

*Haroutyun Kushkayn, Minister of Health Care; Head of the International Cooperation's Department of the Ministry; Minister's Spokesperson; Lee Lacy, Peace Corps Country Director; Jason Compy, Peace Corps Programming and Training Officer; Diana Sargsyan, Peace Corps Executive Assistant*

## MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF SPORT AND YOUTH AFFAIRES

Lee Lacy, Jason Compy, and Arshak Hovhannisyan introduced PC Armenia to the Minister and briefed him about youth development activities.

During the meeting the Minister expressed both appreciation for the work of PC Volunteers in Armenia as well as interest in collaborating with PC Armenia. Those present were especially interested in promoting the idea of volunteerism among the youth of Armenia. It was decided that PC Armenia will participate in Advisory councils of regional youth development centers. The Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry was signed at the end of October during the visit of the PC Director. ❖

### September 12

#### Participants:

*Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Dr. Armen Grigoryan; Deputy Artur Poghosyan; PC Country Director Lee Lacy; Programming and Training Officer Jason Compy; CBD Program Manager Arshak Hovhannisyan; CD Executive Assistant Diana Sargsyan.*



*2007 Photo Competition entry submitted by Phyllis Bickford*



## PEACE CORPS MARKS 15 YEARS IN ARMENIA



*Photo, left:  
Cutting cake to celebrate  
15th anniversary of  
Peace Corps Armenia,  
left to right: Minister of  
Nature Protection Aram  
Haroutyunyan; Ronald  
Tschetter, Director of the  
Peace Corps' operations  
worldwide; Dan  
Hastings RPCV A1;  
and Lee Lacy, Armenia  
Country Director*

**October 29** US Peace Corps Armenia held an Open House to welcome Ronald Tschetter, Director of the Peace Corps' operations worldwide, and Regional Director Jay Katzen; and to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the program in Armenia. Tschetter came from Washington to recognize Volunteers' service and to meet with Government of Armenia Ministry representatives to express his thanks for the support of the Peace Corps Program during the past 15 years.

Present at the event were: US Charge d' Affaires Joseph Pennington and Armenian Ministry representatives, including Minister of Education and Science Levon Mkrtchyan, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Armen Grigoryan and his Deputy, Artur Poghosyan, Minister of Nature Protection Aram Haroutyunyan and his Deputy Hakob Matilyan, Deputy Minister of Health Care Tatul Hakobyan. ❖

## OTHER EVENTS

**October 29** An MOU between the Peace Corps and Ministry of Nature Protection was also signed to collaborate and cooperate on environmental education activities in Armenia.

Since the time frame of the Action Plan of the Memorandum of Understanding between the US Peace Corps and Ministry of Education and Science had ended, a new five-year Action Plan was signed. ❖

## ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST SHOWCASES PHOTOS OF ARMENIA

**November 18** The Peace Corps Annual Photo Contest received some prominent visitors this year as it coincided with Peace Corps' celebration of 15 years in Armenia. Peace Corps Director Ronald Tschetter, Regional Director Jay Katzen, US Charge d' Affaires Joseph Pennington, RA Minister of Education and Science Levon Mkrtchyan, RA Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Armen Grigoryan, RA Minister of Nature Protection Aram Haroutyunyan, and RA Deputy Minister of Health Care Tatul Hakobyan all had a chance to look at Armenia from an outsider's perspective in this year's exhibition of over 82 photographs submitted by 19 photographers.

The competition started in the Peace Corps Office at the end of October, just in time for the visit of Director Tschetter. From there it was moved to the lobby of the Hrazdan Hotel, site of the annual All-Volunteer Conference. Contest winners were chosen by ballot and were announced during the All-Vol Thanksgiving Dinner by PC Country Director Lee Lacy, Programming and Training Officer Jason Compy, and Administrative Officer Maureen Yates. Peace Corps generously provided the prizes, baskets containing themed dinners and DVDs, and used an ingenious system of awards which allowed successive winners to select from remaining prizes or "steal" from previous winners. The winners were: Allyson Carr, Constance Speake, Laszlo Lieszkovszky, Kathy Murdock, Matthew Hamilton, Michael Berg, Phyllis Bickford, and Scott Demyan.

A collage of the winning photographs is on display in the Peace Corps Office lobby, and selected photographs will be used in their future publications, including the welcome book for the next group of volunteers. Laszlo Lieszkovszky, A14 CBD PCV was the contest organizer. 🌿



*RA Ministers and PC PTO Jason Compy discuss a 360-degree panoramic photo of the historic Armenian city of Ani*

## PEACE CORPS ARMENIA HELD NINTH ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT FAIR

The Ninth Annual Peace Corps Armenia Development Fair was held at the AUA Business Center. Peace Corps Volunteers and their Armenian counterparts were invited to meet representatives

**November 20** of 40 Armenian and international development organizations. The goal of the event was to promote cooperation and collaboration between PC Volunteers and development organizations, particularly in the areas of English language education, business and community development, health education, and environmental education. Joseph Pennington, Chargé d'Affaires of the United States, and Denny Robertson, USAID Mission Director, addressed the participants at the opening of the fair. 🌿



# VOLUNTEERISM



fall 2007 • VOLUNTEERISM

## ARMENIAN VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

On October 29, at the press conference following the 15th anniversary of Peace Corps Open House, Ronald Tschetter, Director of the Peace Corps' operations worldwide acknowledged the importance of promoting volunteerism among the youth of the world. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Peace Corps and Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs was signed to strengthen the idea of developing volunteerism in Armenia and also to make sure that Peace Corps Volunteers' activities continue to align with Ministry efforts.



The following four nominees were selected to receive certificates of appreciation from Peace Corps Director Tschetter.

**Marina Kirakosyan** (Vanadzor), in recognition of her selfless service and volunteer work serving food to the needy of Vanadzor at the Arakelutjun Hajastan NGO;

**Susanna Margaryan** (Lejan), in recognition of her volunteer work helping the youth of Lejan and Armenia;

**Gayane Mheryan** (Sevan), in recognition of the numerous volunteer activities in which she has participated over the years to support the youth of Sevan and Armenia; and

**Vardine Grigoryan** (Vanadzor), in recognition of the numerous volunteer activities in which she participates to support the youth of Vanadzor and Armenia. 🍷

## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY, DECEMBER 5

On December 5, Peace Corps Armenia Volunteers Sarah Zaenger, Rud Hubbard, and Rud's Armenian counterpart, Artsrun Mkhitarian, President of "Green Tavush" NGO in Ijevan, Tavush marz, were invited to the "5th Wheel" informative TV show on Armenian National TV. The objective of the program was to raise the awareness of and to promote the concept of volunteerism in Armenia, and also to recognize the dedicated work of volunteers all around the world.

International Volunteer Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985, and is celebrated worldwide on December 5. 🍷

*Photo, left: PCV Sarah Zaenger being prepared for television appearance*





# RPCV UPDATE



## AN UNEXPECTED TURN

As is often the case, what began as a two-year commitment to serve in the Peace Corps (Armenia 2003–05) has extended beyond those two years. I was posted in the city of Kapan, in the southernmost region of Armenia where I worked for two years at an orphanage and special school, spending nearly every day with children and young adults with special needs.

What began as an assignment turned into love for and commitment to a group of people who had been marginalized. And this commitment was furthered and unexpectedly turned into the creation of the first long-term group home in the Republic of Armenia. The home, which opened in January of 2006 (after the end of my Peace Corps service), provides long-term rehabilitative care to a group of orphaned individuals with disabilities or mental illness who had outgrown the Kapan orphanage.

Near the end of my service I was informed that the orphans with whom I had worked were to be sent away to the government psychiatric institutions. In the former Soviet nation of Armenia, having a disability was deeply shameful for the individual and their family. The tendency

ing and living side-by-side with the orphans in Kapan, I decided that, with the support of many brave people in Armenia, I must make an honest attempt to create an alternative for my students. Another former Peace Corps Volunteer, Bridget Anderson, who had served in Kapan, joined me in trying to create a viable alternative for these people who had found their way into

my heart.

Warm Hearth was birthed through the initial vision to provide a happy and peace-

ful environment for the orphans in Kapan. Through profound mercies, this vision has been realized one small step at a time, and continues to expand. Word of the project has spread literally around the world, and the first \$80,000 of seed money was donated within a few months in 2005. With this money, the first home was purchased on the outskirts of Yerevan, which is now home to the first eight residents. In this home, the residents are offered the holistic care that they deserve, rehabilitation opportunities, love, support and safety. The hope is that they will be able to re-enter mainstream community life slowly but surely.

*Warm Hearth was birthed through the initial vision to provide a happy and peaceful environment for the orphans in Kapan.*

during these years was to send this vulnerable population to an institution (either an orphanage or psychiatric hospital) where they would be “out of sight.” As a result, Armenia’s population with special needs still struggle to recover a sense of value and dignity and are too often placed in institutions that can not properly care for them.

The institutions are hopeless places that are cold in winter, without sufficient food and resources to care for the patients. After work-

Warm Hearth is the first long-term group home in Armenia. A local partnership has been formed with Mission Armenia, a nonprofit that began in response to the devastating earthquake in 1988. Mission Armenia is responsible for implementing the project and the day-to-day oversight of the home. Upon returning to the United States, I started Friends of Warm Hearth, Inc., to act as a support organization for the group home. Friends of Warm Hearth provides funding for the home and programmatic support, as the group home model had never been attempted in Armenia. We still collaborate with local Peace Corps volunteers and staff. Returned

Peace Corps Volunteers from Armenia and otherwise who have relevant experience visit and volunteer at Warm Hearth throughout the year.

The Armenian government has recognized Warm Hearth as a pilot program for the deinstitutionalization of individuals with special needs. The legal mechanisms are now in place for the government to outsource funding to community-based projects that are offering service and care to vulnerable populations. As the government moves away from institutionalized care for individuals with disabilities and allow for private community-based homes and facilities to provide more individualized care, Warm Hearth has the opportunity to model quality care and be a part of this small



revolution as the idea takes root and more homes are opened. Warm Hearth group home is a new idea but one with promise in a nation like Armenia. It has been an honor and a deep joy to be a part of this grassroots movement and to allow what began as Peace Corps service to remain integrated in my day-to-day life.

Website: [www.friendsofwarmhearth.org](http://www.friendsofwarmhearth.org)



*2007 Photo Contest entry  
submitted by Allyson Carr*



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