Meet the Editors

Barb Knittel served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bulgaria from 2007-2009. She is currently the co-coordinator of Peace Corps Programs; in charge of coordinating all of the service and social events, as well as co-editing the Internationalist!

Mirinda Gormley is an RPCV in Tanzania from 08’-10’ where she served as a Health and Education volunteer. Mirindia has served as the Co-coordinator of Peace Corps Programs since May, 2011. This is her second semester as the editor of the Internationalist.

Taylor Bednarz hopes that her upcoming Peace Corps experience will help her to create experiences that she “can’t find in the States”. She finishes her academic course work in the Department of Tropical Medicine in December.

Megan Sauer is a student in the MI/MSPH Program at Tulane, in the Tropical Medicine Department. Megan is looking forward to the day she finds out where she will be serving in the Peace Corps. This is her second year working on the Internationalist.

Krystal Segar is a student in the department of Tropical Medicine. Krystal hopes to gain a Peace Corps placement in Sub-Saharan Africa, where she can work with communities on projects involving Malaria or infectious disease prevention.

Matt Ward is a student in the MI/MSPH program in the Tropical Medicine department and has volunteered extensively in Uganda. The combination of his past experiences and his current academic level will make him a great Peace Corps Volunteer.

Cover photo provided by MI, Willie Hansen, who is currently serving in Zambia as a Community Health Development volunteer. Pictured is a traditional Nyau dancer of the Chewa tribe. Willie took this picture near his village in Eastern Province, Zambia.

The Internationalist, Vol. 11, Issue 1

Publication: The Internationalist is published twice a year by the Peace Corps Programs Office at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. It is distributed to MI students, PCVs, RPCVs, and the alumni of the Tulane community.

Submissions: We continually seek content for publication. Please submit notes, stories, and photographs to tulanepcp@gmail.com
Contributors

Left to Right: Molly McGuire is an MI in Global Health Systems and Development. She is eager to leave for her Peace Corps adventure this summer!

Lauren Brunner, a native Californian with extensive experience in Europe and South America, hopes to gain a Peace Corps placement in a Spanish-speaking country.

Aimee Edmondo is an MI/MPH candidate with a longtime interest in the Peace Corps. She feels the MI program is a great way to combine international interest with a real work experience.

Alyssa Young is finishing up her course work in the department of Tropical Medicine and will be heading to Benin this June as an MI!

Alicia Cooke is RPCV from Niger where she served as a Natural Resource Management volunteer. She is currently an MI student in the department of Global Community and Behavior Sciences, and is excited about another 2 years in the Peace Corps.

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Highlights
On March 8th, the last of our thirteen new MIs left for their overseas assignments.

We graduated six students - Congratulations Kate Boyd, Erin Berghammer, Kim Peven, Kourtney Rusow, Shawn Peterson, Aimee D’Avignon, and Ron Ikechi!

A mural was created by MI Matt Ward and RPCV Justine Amos that reflects the impact of the Peace Corps on Tulane University. This mural is between the 11th and 12th floor of the Tulane Tidewater building.
REFLECTIONS
Dean Jeffery Johnson

Dear Students, Faculty and Friends of Peace Corps,

While waiting for a connection to New Orleans in the Dulles Airport of Washington DC, I was approached by three eager and familiar faces. Anne Hoblitt, her husband Patrick, and Owmy Boulouette were taking their last long nostalgic looks at the American cuisine of Dulles one more time before their departure to Senegal as students in the Tulane Masters International Program. As we discussed their impending adventure, and anticipated what awaited them in Africa, I realized once again just how special the Masters International students are; their willingness to volunteer during graduate school, following the accumulation of knowledge and skills that would enable most students to snag offers from many different institutions that offer salary and benefits, is admirable. I continue to be proud that Tulane supports a strong Peace Corps Master’s International Program and am excited for the growth that our program has seen this semester.

These three students, along with two other students who left the same day for the Gambia, were the last of 13 students the Tulane MI program sent overseas this year, making the total of Peace Corps Volunteers from the program rise to 32 students. Four of our students graduated this semester, and our first placement of the year was a student in the Tropical Medicine department, who will be leaving for Benin in July. Our program anticipates an even greater number of students for the upcoming year, as more than 35 new students have applied and accepted admission into the Masters International Program for fall 2012.

It is our pleasure in this spring edition of the Internationalist to welcome Barb Knittel (RPCV, Bulgaria) as the new Co-coordinator for Peace Corps Programs. Barb primarily worked with the Roma gypsy population in Bulgaria, making her one of the few and the proud Tulane RPCVs who served in Eastern Europe. Barb not only brings a fresh perspective to the table in terms of her service, she also contributes an extensive amount of knowledge about women and girls empowerment, which comes from her experience in working with Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) during her service. Barb is a strong leader in the Peace Corps office, taking over organization of all of the Masters International meetings and recruiting even more Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to come in and share their experiences. With her passion for teaching and sharing her experience with others, Barb is a wonderful resource to our aspiring volunteers, and the perfect addition to our staff.

I experienced mixed emotions as I watched my students depart towards their gate; I was excited for the adventures that lay ahead of them, and jealous that I was unable to accompany them! Despite my many travels to XXXX, XXXX, and XXXX, I realize that though I have seen many different places and cultures, I have never seen them from the perspective of a person who lives it. Thus I consider it a great honor to provide our students with the opportunity to see the world from this rare perspective, and am continually proud to provide countries around the world with students of the highest caliber and education, to help meet the needs of their communities. I have great expectations for the growth of our program, and eagerly anticipate the new experiences and opportunities that lie ahead of everyone in the Tulane Peace Corps Programs family.

With sincere regards,

Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs
Once again, the semester has flown by and it seems we have barely had time to look up. Thanks to the hard work and dedication from our MI students and RPCVs, this program is stronger than ever. In fact, the strength of our program was recognized by Peace Corps this year when they named us one of the top Peace Corps volunteer-producing graduate universities in the nation! The spirit of volunteerism is alive at Tulane and we hope it remains an integral part of the Tulane tradition for years to come.

This semester we have been working hard to provide our students with meaningful service projects that provide useful skills for their futures as Peace Corps volunteers as well as give back to the New Orleans community. One of the most unique aspects of coming to Tulane is that students are able to work and volunteer within New Orleans – a city with many needs and endless opportunities.

In February, we went to Belle Chasse, LA to help rebuild Louisiana wetlands by planting native Cyprus trees. This work is so incredibly important for our coast land not only because it allows us to restore coastal ecosystems, but this work also helps to mitigate hurricane damage – an issue closely tied to New Orleans.

In March, MIs and RPCVs ran the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen 5k benefiting the NO/AIDS initiative. This service project was appropriate for us on several levels: First, it provided us with an opportunity to emphasize and engage in healthy lifestyle choices. As Public Health students, we actively discuss preventable diseases like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease on a daily basis. In participating in this 5k, we are able to encourage MI students to do more than just talk about living healthy. Secondly, as many of our MIs and RPCVs are currently serving (or have formal served) in Africa, running to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS is a cause very near and dear to their hearts.

In April, we plan to team up with the Louisiana Peace Corps Association and Second Harvest to assemble produce baskets for people around the city. Providing families with the right foods to enrich their diets with essential nutrients is a cause we can all get behind!

All of our service activities have a purpose and they have come to strengthen our program by providing opportunities for our students to express their desire to effect change and leave a lasting impression on the communities they call home. We thank all the MIs and RPCVs for their hard work both here in New Orleans and in their communities overseas. You have made an impact and we know you will continue to build upon this spirit of volunteerism and make a lasting impression wherever you go. We wish you all the best!

Barb Knittel, RPCV Bulgaria 2007-2009, Peace Corps Coordinator, Spring 2012 - Present

Mirinda Gormley, RPCV Tanzania 2008-2010, Peace Corps Coordinator, Summer 2011-Spring 2012

“We have been working hard to provide our students with meaningful service projects that provide useful skills for their futures as Peace Corps volunteers”
In fourth grade my teacher had each of us write a letter to his niece who was serving in the Peace Corps in Bolivia. At the young age of 10, I had never heard of the Peace Corps, and Bolivia could have been a planet as far as I was concerned. After a short explanation, I had a vague idea of what it meant to be a Peace Corps volunteer. This short, seemingly meaningless elementary school activity made a permanent mark in my memory.

Fast-forward one decade: I found myself at Princeton on the pre-med track unsure if I wanted to go straight to medical school after graduation. I found myself most interested in the classes required for my minor in Global Health. Not only was I in love with the idea of working abroad, but the field of public health seemed to hold endless potential for adventure and opportunity. Whether or not this idea was just an artifact of the excitement of my sudden discovery of this field is to be determined; but like most things I do, I committed myself to public health wholeheartedly.

I decided I wanted to do a medical internship and my senior thesis research in a foreign country so I chose to spend the summer after my junior year in La Paz, Bolivia, shadowing doctors in a disadvantaged pediatric hospital. I also conducted the field research for my Psychology thesis, focusing on the doctor-patient relationship and factors that affect patient compliance with physician advice. During this summer, I was taken by the Bolivian culture and people, and found myself enthralled with the issues that affect rural populations.

I was also lucky enough to meet an American who told me about the Masters International Program; a way to combine a Masters degree with the Peace Corps. It was not until this conversation about planning to do the MI program that I made the connection between the country where I conducted my research and the letter I wrote in fourth grade to a stranger in a strange land. The country of Bolivia had come full circle in my life. Since I hate to admit that this bizarre coincidence may have changed the course of my entire life, I rationalized my decision to come to Tulane and apply to the Peace Corps in a more “logical” way.

From a young age, my parents instilled in me a love for service and world travel. I was fortunate enough to travel internationally with my family throughout my childhood. I was also involved in a variety of community service projects, which I always found to be a rewarding experience. Over time, I realized that Peace Corps is an opportunity to combine the two activities that have brought me the most joy in my life. So, I took the plunge and applied to the MI program at Tulane. Now that I have decided to do the MI program, I often wonder what my life will be like in whatever country I am placed. Sometimes I wish I could just start my service tomorrow, because I am so anxious to start my adventure. However, I know that I am benefiting immensely from the Tulane community, and I’m hoping to make the most of it all before I leave.

Top Center: Lauren (left) with a fellow volunteer and local children in La Paz.

Bottom Right: Lauren and a young Bolivian girl at the Pediatric hospital in La Paz.
Finding My Future in West Africa: From Niger to Haiti
by Jennifer Miller

When I headed off to Peace Corps Niger in October 1995, following graduation from Ithaca College I was ready for anything. Studies abroad during college to England and Australia were stepping stones to West Africa. I enjoyed Peace Corps training in French, Kanuri, and natural resource management. In the time before laptops, internet and cell phones, and with the closest volunteer 100 kilometers away during my second year, I loved the cultural immersion and language learning. I attempted many natural resources projects, secondary health projects, and thought a lot about development.

Toward the end of my time in Niger, I applied to transfer-extend to a second Peace Corps country. I had found my momentum in Niger and wanted to capitalize on my enthusiasm for West Africa and further my knowledge in development work. I was accepted for a post attached to a community-based organization in northern Ghana working in Small Enterprise Development. Half-way through my time in Ghana I transferred to Accra to work directly with the Peace Corps office to further the agenda of women’s and youth development.

While thinking about the possibilities and shortfalls of development, I came to feel strongly about working on healthcare as a development issue. I felt that health should be the fundamental building block on which education, business, and environmental projects should be built. That without health—women, men, and children cannot participate in determining their own future.

It was during this time that I decided to apply to Tulane’s School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine to focus on International Health and Development. I was enthusiastic to take my experience and apply it to my class work. Furthermore, I was thrilled to find my classes were filled with many other students from all over the world with different experiences and similar values. Upon completing my MPH, I applied for and received a Michigan Population Fellowship and spent two and a half years in Guyana working with USAID to start an Adolescent Health Unit at the Ministry of Health. I loved tying all of my experiences from the Peace Corps and my Tulane education into this fellowship. It was incredibly rewarding to see it all coalesce.

These days, I live in Chicago and work with Children’s Place International managing a project in Haiti supporting families affected by HIV/AIDS. I travel to Haiti four times a year and am in constant contact with our local Haitian staff working to improve our service delivery. I continue to improve my French and have been learning Haitian Creole. I’m happy to be able to support the Global Health movement and continue to feel this is crucial for the greater development of our world.
Experiencing NOLA: How New Orleans has prepared me for the Peace Corps
by Alyssa Young

Living in New Orleans for the past 5 years has directly influenced who I am. There is something truly remarkable about this city – ask anyone who has been lucky enough to spend even a few days amongst its beauty, filth, and charm. It completely changes you. It changes the way you think, the way you approach situations, and the way you view different experiences. Hell, it even changes the way you greet people. It’s now unnatural for me not to smile and ask every stranger I pass on the street they are doing and whether or not they saw last night’s Saints game.

New Orleans is the kind of place that infects you, and becomes part of who you are. Once you’ve danced to the Soul Rebels brass band at Les Bon Temps Rouler, tried one of MidCity Yacht club’s Bloody Marys with homemade veggie vodka, or laid in the sun for hours on the levee of the Mississippi River watching the many barges float by, it’s hard not to love it. In New Orleans you will eat the best food, hear the best music, see the most original art, and meet the most unique people of your life. It is an amazing city, but like all places it is not without flaws.

As a Master’s International student at Tulane’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, I like to think that New Orleans has in some ways prepared me for the many challenges I will undoubtedly face while serving in the Peace Corps. One of the qualities I’ve gained by living here is patience. The “laissez-faire” mentality that makes New Orleans what it is, can at times prove to be frustrating. Because of it, I’ve learned how to live and work within an infrastructure that is less than organized, doesn’t always exercise communication skills, and requires much more funding and volunteers than it will ever receive.

Another area in which New Orleans has prepared me for the Peace Corps is more food-related. From the many RPCVs I’ve met through Tulane’s MI program, I’ve learned that I’m most likely going to consume a large amount of rice and beans while in my host country. Thanks to Zatarain’s Red Beans and Rice and Jambalaya, I already consume enough beans and rice each week to feed a small family. I also now know how to handle some Cayenne pepper.

Furthermore, this city has taught me about the importance of friends and how true friendship is not bound by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. The friends I’ve made here have shaped who I am and will be a part of my life forever. They are the types of friends who don’t hesitate to drive you to and from a Mardi Gras ball at two in the morning. They’ll help you paint your entire body gold so you can go make a fool of yourself by dancing to Blink-182 and Snoop Dogg at Voodoo Fest. They’ll sit on your porch with you and drink iced tea, but they’ll also bike with you all the way from MidCity to the French Quarter with a flat tire because you “feel in the mood for jazz music.”

For those of you who have never been here, you should visit at least once in your lifetime. You won’t regret it. And for those of you who have, you know what I mean when I say that New Orleans is the place for anyone who requires a little inspiration, needs to feel alive, wants to see what rebuilding a community really means, wants to know what triumph feels like, or just needs a vacation from the ordinary. This city has been good to me, and although I’m going to miss it like crazy during my 27 months of Peace Corps service, I know it’s still going to be here waiting for me, unchanged, and just as quirky as ever.
Shoes and Coconuts: The Do’s and Don’ts of Mardi Gras
by Anna Adams

DO!

Pace yourself y'all, Mardi Gras is a marathon!

Wear an eye-catching outfit - feathers, glitter, masks, and costumes are encouraged!

Know when the best krewes roll

Display your beads proudly or reuse them in arts & crafts projects

DON’T!

Cross the street through the band or while the parade is rolling

Stand in front of kids - you won’t get anything

Show up late! You’ll never get a spot and you’ll miss all the good stuff

Anna Adams is an MI/MPH student in the department of Global Community Health and Behavior. She is looking forward to exploring new cultures in the Peace Corps.
Imagine this scenario: you find yourself with extremely limited internet access and resort to hand written correspondence. You are in a community that doesn’t speak the country’s language, the language you have spent three months diligently learning. The people you are assigned to work with have no interest in you. To top it off, you *volunteered* for this. What do you do? You do Peace Corps Elliott Brannon-style.

Needless to say, Elliott Brannon, a Master’s International student in the Department of Epidemiology, found himself in this exact situation. Working in the sub-district of Srivichai, located in the province of Nakhon in northeastern Thailand, Elliott quickly adapted by collaborating with the local Health Clinic to determine the needs of the community experiencing seasonal outbreaks of Dengue fever. Being close to the Laos border, many of the villagers speak Lao with only the more educated community members speaking Thai. Despite this, Elliott sees his time learning Thai as an asset:

“One of the reasons I continue to study Thai is because my work area is large, containing about 10,000 people. To reach the most number of people I have to work with the local organizations like the Health Clinic, Schools, or the government office. People in these places speak and understand Thai but also speak Lao, so they are great intermediaries. Connecting these people with the villagers is actually one of the goals of my program, and it also saves me from learning another language!”

This statement of optimism and perseverance could only come from a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Like much of Thailand, the community experiences seasonal outbreaks of Dengue which affected some of its...
most vulnerable members: children. Curious as to how he could help, Elliott began to do research. He learned that Ovitraps, traps that are traditionally used to count and collect larva specimens of the *Aedes* mosquito (the vector for Dengue fever), are also effective in reducing mosquito populations. Once the female mosquito deposits her eggs in the container, they fall under a screen and hatch into larvae. The screen placed over the water prevents the larvae from exiting, ending their life cycle.

Another Peace Corps Volunteer, Roger Brubaker, developed a low cost Ovitrap made from a 2-liter plastic bottle, a ring of bamboo and a piece of cloth to serve as the screen. These materials are cheap and easy to find. In all, each cost 6 baht (20 cents). When Roger promoted the idea to his own Health Clinic, they were not interested. Not discouraged, Roger began training other volunteers about his low-cost Lethal Ovitraps and one of these volunteers just happened to be Elliott. Elliott was able to recognize from his research and friendship with the Health Clinic that these could be put to use. Naturally, the first thing he did was to go and build thirty. THIRTY! However, this was part of his strategy:

"I talk to almost everyone about my projects, but during the initial steps no one ever works with me. I put a lot of foundational work into each project and have some sort of product or goal that I can show people before people are willing to consider supporting the project. Sometimes no one is interested and this time is 'wasted' but it is the only way I’ve found to get any sort of project done."

In order for this strategy to succeed, he needed to produce results. He began by placing the Ovitraps around the government office, health clinic, health volunteers’ houses, and village chiefs’ houses. He then checked the traps every week or two and created a brochure— one in English and one in Thai. After presenting his results his own Health Clinic became excited about the project and decided to jump on board.

The first phase of the project was to teach Village Health Volunteers (VHV), village members who attend health seminars once a month, about how to use the traps. Included in these lessons was education about Dengue Fever. Today Elliott is teaching the VHVs in sixteen villages. In the second phase of the project, the VHVs will teach other villagers how to build and use the traps. For the villagers who do not want to make their own Ovitraps, the VHVs can sell them at cost. This is seen as an incentive to get individual village members to be invested in the project.

The overall goal of the program is to have five traps per house, which should lower the number of *Aedes* mosquitoes and subsequently the number of Dengue cases. In order to measure the success of the program, Elliott and the Health Clinic will be monitoring the number of Dengue cases. If the project is successful (few dengue cases) the nearest hospital (in the district capital) wants to fund the project in all of the other sub-districts.

Currently Elliott just finished the first phase of the project teaching around 150 VHV’s and building a collective 800 traps! He reflects:

"It is interesting to work with the Health Volunteers even though it is difficult for us to communicate. Some villagers are extremely interested in the traps and continue to build them even after the training session. Some villagers show up an hour or two late and don’t want to build any traps."

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Abigail Aldridge

Deep in the Heart of West Africa, Tulane Masters International student Abigail Aldridge is making a big impact in her little country. Abby lives in Togo, a small West African country wedged between Benin and Ghana, home to 6.8 million people. Abby has undertaken various projects including helping with prenatal consultations and vaccinations at her local dispensary, leading Peer Education groups at her middle school, and helping teach HIV/AIDS prevention and education in her community. Abby's ambition is not limited to making a difference in her small community, recently she was given the opportunity to help create a framework that will have a national impact.

Abby was selected to travel to Senegal in order to attend Malaria Boot Camp, training held by the Stomping Out Malaria Africa Initiative. Together with fellow volunteers of surrounding countries, Abby worked to update the Togo Peace Corps five year program framework (which currently only includes community health and HIV/AIDS prevention) so that it includes more Malaria prevention activities. Because Togo is currently not a part of the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI), they do not receive the money or resources that are given to other PMI countries for Malaria prevention and treatment. This means that the activities that Togo volunteers undertake to will be very ground up, an undertaking that will be guided by the framework Abby helped to create, which puts a large emphasis on these Malaria activities, and builds a foundation for the Malaria prevention and education activities to be undertaken by future volunteers. Abby's role of representing Peace Corps Togo was a great honor, of which she believes she owes some credit to being in the Masters International program. Abby writes, “I know that a lot of MI’s worry that the Peace Corps experience might not match up to their coursework and they won’t use any of their knowledge for two years, but they should know that there are opportunities like this waiting”. Abby will continue to help Peace Corps Togo in the creation of an extensive training packet for new Togo volunteers, as well as participating in the evaluation of a World Health Organization project called “PlanTogo”, which will be responsible for the distribution of bed nets around Togo. Abby is truly a leader, not only among Togo volunteers but also among her fellow Masters International students, seizing a new opportunity and expanding upon it to forge new paths for the improvement of her Peace Corps fellows, and her country.

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Vanuatu
Sarah Weber

What first impressed me about living in my village, Londar (on the island of South Pentecost in the country of Vanuatu) was the feeling of being part of a small community. My first few weeks in the village I had the opportunity to get to know the young women through volleyball practice. But being as though my volleyball ability leaves much to be desired, I decided to go a different route and formed a weekly small group with the young women to discuss reproductive health issues. I had learned that many of them had never had formal education about reproductive health let alone correct information about family planning, STI and the fertility cycle. Although these subjects are taboo in Vanuatu, I found that once I got to know these women, and created an open and safe place to talk about sex, many were quite interested and willing to talk and ask questions.

During our group sessions we discussed a wide range of topics such as STIs and where to seek treatment, family planning methods, safer sex practices, as well as social issues that impact women's sexuality and self esteem. Each time the women left for the night I would feel a sense of excitement and gratitude for the opportunity to talk openly with them, answer questions, and give knowledge that I had always taken for granted. By starting the dialog about reproductive health, a comfort level was created and these women started coming to ask the village health worker.

I remember one day a good friend in the village came to me to ask about family planning options. She had heard a bit about family planning but had also heard things that made her unsure of its safety. Despite this, she wanted to learn more about her options. She had had her first child at age 16 and now with 4 young children she was ready to be done with child bearing. I told her about her different options, cleared up some misconceptions, and encouraged her to go to the dispensary. Later that week she came back and told me she had started using family planning. She was enthusiastic and relieved to not have to worry so much about getting pregnant again.

I realize through my experience in the village that what matters most are not the flashy buildings or infrastructure projects that come to mind when one thinks of development; instead it's the small moments with the people you come to know and love that matter the most.
I had a very late start applying to schools. In fact, I didn’t really get the gumption up to start until late April. When I first called the International Health Department at Tulane there was a note of desperation in my voice when I asked to speak to someone about the admissions process. Penny picked up on the other end. Towards the end of my spitfire questions I sheepishly admitted to Penny that I had applied to several other schools and was turned down, and I was nervous that Tulane would do the same. I’ll never forget Penny’s laugh when she said “we have a place for you sweetheart, just send in that application”!

Words of encouragement are a signature of Penny’s, one she has offered to the hundreds of students she has worked with for her 33 years at Tulane as a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of International Health, now known as the Department of Global Health Systems and Development. Penny is not only advisor to more than 56 students, she is the faculty head of the Humphrey Fellows Program, a position which has led her to work with 264 students from more than 93 different countries for over 30 years. “Penny has been referred to as an ‘institution’. She knows Tulane backwards and forwards; you name it, she knows the answer or where to get it” says Roseanna Rabalais, a colleague who has worked with Penny for more than 15 years. Dean Jeffery Johnson contributes, “I will always remember Penny Jessop as a champion and advocate for students. Penny offered advising and general guidance for countless undergraduate and graduate students interested in global health and service, both at home in her beloved New Orleans and abroad.” Roseanna adds, “Anywhere in the world if you mention Penny Jessop, they know its Penny at Tulane!"

Penny recognizes the difficulty for students facing mountains of debt to take on even more in order to pay for a three month practicum overseas. Despite these difficulties, she is insistent that students go abroad; “We have a faculty that is rich in experience, but they got that in the field. Our students also need to feel empowered to..."
go outside of the classroom in order to get that experience.” Penny believes that it is so important to get outside of the classroom, and that “learning is what happens when your feet are in the field”. The desire to encourage and continue to help students gain academic experience abroad is how the Penny Jessup Travel Fund was born.

The Penny Jessop Travel Fund is an endowment that will benefit students who wish to continue their academic exploration abroad. The Travel Fund will help the student buy a plane ticket, or help them find housing in the country where they will stay. “We want to encourage students to do their practicum overseas, to go to a conference, to further their professionalism. We can’t pay for it all, but we can help with the ticket!” Penny’s hopes are that the current students and alumni of Tulane will all see how important the Travel Fund is to the education of future students, and that everyone will chip in a little to make a difference. Jessop notes, “if every student put in just ten dollars, added up that money could pay for someone’s trip. Students could take the initiative to make a huge difference in the life of a fellow student.” The Fund will be endowed in perpetuity at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, and the annual proceeds will go to students on a merit basis, for their desire to work/study abroad.

After 33 years of teaching and pouring her heart and soul into making a difference in the lives of her students, Penny will return to Southern Florida, where she will be closer to her mother and her sister. “If I have learned one thing, it is the importance of family. I only have a couple more years with my mom, and that is where I want to be.” While she spends time with her family, Penny will also be pouring her heart and soul into her art. Penny has a passion for pottery. Her pottery techniques were on hiatus when Katrina swept away her studio, but now Penny can use her time in Florida to recreate her studio hone her skills with the clay once again. There are also, Penny admits with a sly smile, two other universities in Southern Florida that could use her expertise!

During my time as co-coordinator of Peace Corps Programs I have worked closely with Penny, going to her with my questions, and sometimes just running in to ask her opinion on a project, because I know that even though she will give me a brutally honest answer, she will still smile and say “but it still looks great sweetheart!” Dean Johnson will always remember Penny as a "dear colleague and friend", adding “There will never be another ‘Mama Penny’ at Tulane”! Roseanna adds, “Penny genuinely cares about the students and puts them first – ALWAYS! Her integrity is admirable and she is known throughout the departments and the student body. I will have some very VERY big shoes to fill when she retires”! While Penny’s legacy will live on at Tulane in the form of the travel fund, her real legacy is alive within the hundreds of students that she has had an impact on while here at Tulane. Au revoir, kala tonton, y Adios Penny; Irikoy ma cabe cere!
The Technique of Making Friends
by Barb Knittel

Food is such a magical thing because it helps you make friends wherever you go. This is more than just an anecdotal statement; it is a fact Peace Corps volunteers learn almost immediately upon arriving to their site.

I served as a volunteer in Dupnitsa, Bulgaria – a mid-sized city about 60 km from the capital, Sofia. When I arrived to my site I, like most other PCVs, felt the sting of loneliness set in immediately upon dropping my bags on my new concrete floor. Over the next few months I began the slow process of adjusting to my surroundings, attempting to improve my ability to communicate, and evading the frigid Eastern European winter. When spring rolled around, and Bulgarians came out of hibernation and began to smile again, I realized I desperately needed to make friends.

I began my coercive friendship making techniques by making chocolate chip cookies for the families in the neighborhood where I worked. My plan worked! They went like hotcakes – everybody loved them. In fact, people were so impressed by my magical American cookies that I started getting invitations to dinner almost immediately.

One family who invited me to dinner asked me to make them an American dish and in return they would make me my favorite Bulgarian dish. I chose to make them Enchiladas. I know, it’s not entirely American, but they seemed the most interesting option for those foreign to American food. For the record, Enchiladas are a horrible idea when you don’t have access to corn tortillas or a tortilla press. The corn flour is sticky and they take forever, but that’s neither here nor there. They absolutely loved them and invited me back often.

In the end, I became very good friends with this family and I visited them every day of my service. They became my “Bulgarian” family and we shared many holidays and celebrations over the course of my service. As you can see, food was an essential aid for me in making my Bulgarian friends.

In exchange for those Enchiladas, my family made me Sarmi – a vegetarian stuffed cabbage dish that Bulgarians eat at Christmas and during Lent. It’s my favorite Bulgarian dish and the one I will be sharing with you. Take it and impress the soon-to-be-friends you’ll make abroad.

Sarmi: Bulgarian Stuffed Cabbage

1/4 cup vegetable or olive oil
2 onions, finely chopped
1 rib celery, finely chopped
1 cup of mushrooms finely chopped
2 cups long-grain rice, rinsed
2 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
Salt, paprika, and black pepper to taste
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 (3- to 4-pound) head cabbage
1 (32-ounce) jar sauerkraut, rinsed and drained

Preparation:

Heat oil in a large skillet and add onion, celery, mushrooms, and sauté until translucent. Add rice, tomatoes, salt and pepper, and simmer for 5 minutes. Set aside to cool and mix in garlic. Meanwhile, steam cabbage until leaves are limp and pull away easily. With a paring knife, remove the tough ribs from leaves without damaging them and reserve the tougher outer leaves but don’t use for rolling. Heap 2 tablespoons vegetable filling on each leaf, fold top of the cabbage leaf up over filling, then fold sides to the center, and roll. Repeat until filling is gone.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Discard the cabbage core and coarsely chop any remaining cabbage except the tough outer leaves you have reserved. Spread chopped cabbage on the bottom of a large casserole dish. Add the sauerkraut. Layer on the cabbage rolls, seam side down. Cover rolls with reserved outer leaves. Once the dish is full, pour enough lukewarm water in it so that the cabbage rolls are soaked halfway. Cover casserole dish and bake 1 hour. Let sit 20 to 30 minutes before serving.
Peanut Butter Rice

Ingredients:
Rice and 1 spoonful Peanut Butter for every serving of rice

Preparation:
1. Make rice as normal, but just before the rice is done (when there is still a bit of water left) add in the peanut butter.
2. Stir in the peanut butter until the mixture is smooth and thick.
3. Enjoy!

Use more or less peanut butter to your liking. If you like spice, you can also add a bit of cayenne pepper.

This is a great dish for any time of the day, whether it is solo or paired with meat or greens. It's easy and only requires two ingredients!!

Bonnie Katalenich, RPCV Zambia, 2008-2011

Dona Rosie's Bagels: Honduran Style

Ingredients:
2 c. warm water
1 ½ tablespoon yeast
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon oil
2 teaspoons salt
1 cup whole wheat (or white) flour
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour

Add all the above into a large bowl and stir, mixing in the whole/white flour first. Next, add in the all-purpose flour a little at a time until the dough makes a ball that can be kneaded--making sure that the dough is not too sticky. Next, knead the dough roughly for 15 minutes. Pound it, stretch it, punch it--lo que sea. Add flour to the dough and your hands as necessary. The dough is ready when it stops sticking to your hands and/or becomes harder to knead.

After this, wash your hands and then cover them with a little oil. Pat the dough ball to cover it with the oil and place it in the bowl to rise. To do this, cover the bowl and set it in warm place until it doubles in size (~30 minutes).

Before your dough has fully risen, put on a large pot of water for boiling and preheat the oven to 400 degrees. When the dough is done rising, punch it down and cut in half twice, leaving you with 4 chunks of dough. Divide each chunk into thirds. Form these 12 chunks of dough into round balls. Then, with the cap of a 2-liter bottle, punch out the middle of each chunk and make sure the hole is large enough that it won't close up.

Once all your bagels are formed and the water is boiling, place 4 into the pot of water. Boil 1 ½ mins on 1 side and then flip to the other side using 2 forks. Once boiled on both sides, immediately remove the bagels from the water and place them on a clean kitchen towel with the prettier side up. (This is the top of the bagel.) Lastly, After the 12 bagels are boiled, place on a greased cookie sheet and bake until lightly browned (30-40 minutes).

Gabriel Cohen, RPCV Honduras, 2007-2010
PROFESSOR PROFILE

From Student to Professor: RPCV The Gambia
by Molly McGuire

For his college graduation, Dr. Joseph Keating’s mother bought him his very own chain-saw. Disillusioned by the limited prospects of the job market for biology majors, he had purchased some remote land in Eastern Kentucky and proceeded to build a self-sustaining log cabin. When we began to talk about his Peace Corps service during the interview, he showed me a picture of this humble, sturdy little structure with no running water. Life in rural Kentucky, he remarked, prepared him well for his years in the Peace Corps, citing his construction of the cabin as the reason the Peace Corps assigned him to a construction position.

However, Dr. Keating never wound up doing construction in the Gambia, his country assignment from 1995 to 1997. He told Peace Corps he wanted to put his degree to use, and despite having a limited background in agriculture, Dr. Keating was assigned to an agro-forestry project in rural Gambia, where he engaged in tree-planting and crop diversification projects. He took it on, although he admits he was in a little over his head. He remarked that the cultural exchange is more important: “It’s really a cross-cultural experience. It’s about disseminating information about America, taking cultural issues back to the States about where you were. The technical side is somewhat secondary.”

While we were sitting for this interview, the image of a younger Dr. Joseph Keating popped up in a video on the computer screen. Every single Peace Corps volunteer stereotype I had ever heard of was reflected in this image: the shoulder-length hair and baggy, altered clothes. I was thrilled to be one of the first people to view footage from his service, which had been newly converted from VHS to DVD. Stark scenes of waterless fields and scrawny, smiling children accompanied the long-haired Dr. Keating, or as they called him, “Kalif Assani,” as he gave a tour of the mud hut he built. The dire landscape left few choices for food, he said, “It’s a whole different kind of hunting,” where bush meat and domestic animals are commonly slaughtered for the next meal. Images of women in long, colorful gowns carrying large pots on their heads prompted me to ask about his interactions with the women of his village. He remembered spending more time with the women than the men, simply because the men spent most of the day in the field tending to their cash crops, whereas the women stayed in the village, tending to subsistence crops and their goats and sheep.

To confront the cultural and language barriers, Keating established himself as part of his predominately Muslim, Mandinka-speaking community by diving in headfirst. He committed to learning the local language and helped with numerous projects, including a goat-fattening project, legume cultivation, and a reforestation project aimed at preventing erosion. Upon reflection, Keating says it was a meaningful and decisive stepping stone in his journey towards global health and tropical medicine.

After the Peace Corps, Dr. Keating dedicated himself to academia; beginning a Master’s program at Ohio University he became affiliated with the Center for International Affairs, where he was able to conduct research on Chagas disease in Ecuador, as well as Dengue in Puerto Rico. He completed that research while beginning his PhD in International Health & Development in malaria Epidemiology at TU SPHTM, and went on to do his post-doctoral work at the University of Miami, Florida, Miller School of Medicine focusing on vector ecology.

While his studies have taken him all over the world, he spends most of his time in Africa, noting “once you’ve been in Africa, you tend to stay.” As a student of his, I speak from personal experience when I say that Dr. Keating’s background, including his Peace Corps service, make him a dynamic and knowledgeable instructor, willing to offer the most honest advice to future public and global health professionals.

Did you know...

Since opening their post in the Gambia, Peace Corps has sent 1,583 volunteers who work in the areas of education, health, and environment. Currently, there are 93 volunteers serving the over 1.5 million Gambians—two of whom are current Tulane MI students.
Adventures in Zarma: Which I swear is not a made-up language
by Alicia Cooke

It’s funny how when a language is so obscure, you look at it from a distance and wonder who on earth would bother to pick it up; but when you find yourself nestled into a tiny village in Niger that language becomes the most important thing in the world. Unfortunately, the Zarma-speaking Korte folk of Atteforme make lousy teachers. Having never been faced with anyone trying to learn their language, most people expected my learning curve to be that of a toddler—not too steep until you try to compete with it. If I didn’t know a word spoken to me, it would be shouted in my face, repeatedly, at high volume. However, how was somebody who lacked the language skills to correctly identify a cat supposed to argue that the word wasn’t going to enter my head until I could consult my dictionary regardless of the spirited repetition?

I had a method to my learning. Every morning I would scour my dictionary for an opener—some sentence about myself. I would repeat this sentence about 20 times a day in the various houses of my neighbors. As they commenced their spirited shouting, I would write down what I heard as phonetically as possible and run back home to consult the dictionary. If I was lucky, I found a translation, and went back into town to begin the whole process again.

It was neither the sheer intake of new vocabulary nor the strain required to comprehend that was exhausting. Instead, it was the emotional exhaustion borne from anxiety that I would never understand the language and the knowledge that until I did, I was essentially the village idiot. The children delighted in their language skills so superior to my own, the women laughed and shared with each other the fact that I couldn’t speak well—a sentence which, ironically, I understood just fine.

And yet, it was a compelling language to me. The language sounded like drums playing with the rolling rhythm of sharp syllables building in intensity with the speaker’s emotions. It’s also inherently poetic. It’s full of onomatopoeia—tissu is to sneeze. Dondon is to play the drums. A kitten is a miau. Idioms are fun as well—asthma is referred to as bine lutu, a fight in the heart. But the best part of the Zarma language is its way with the metaphor. The handu, moon, is accompanied by her “children,” handuizey—the stars. Venus, which appears just after the sun has set, is handu hansi, “moon dog”. Airplanes are beene hiyey, “sky boats”, and thunder is beene donduyan—”sky drumming”. With the right metaphor, everything that could be found in a tiny village—children, boats, dogs—can be used to describe the wider world around us, however big that world becomes.

While my language skills did eventually grow, it was nothing compared to the skills I developed in deception. When I didn’t understand something I read facial expressions, looked for cues, noted the length and the tone of the sentence directed at me in an attempt to judge whether I could feign a sensible response by just nodding or laughing. Sometimes I would judge wrong and nod emphatically at the news that someone’s cow had run away, leaving my neighbors to wonder what part of that anecdote I could possibly be agreeing with. Had I predicted the cow’s departure? Do I generally take note of and accept as a fact the disappearance of cows? Their heads would cock to the side, confusion would spread over their faces, and, caught in my lie, I would be forced to admit my incomprehension. The confusion on their faces would morph into disappointment. I always felt I had let them down, as they had been almost more impatient than me for my Zarma fluency to arrive.

Usually, however, it was the novelty of being a white Zarma speaker that saved me. Among strangers, no one expected to hear it come from my mouth and when it did, the reactions were usually of pleasant surprise. It got me better prices in the markets, more street cred than the French-only NGO and embassy personnel. Several times, it got me marriage proposals and once a free meal. And by the end of my two years, most of my past errors were graciously forgotten. My Zarma, by no means perfect, was my own, my accent and mistake unique to the ears of my neighbors who had never heard a foreigner attempt to speak their language before. Somehow, despite everything, people understood me and I had made friends. In the evening, after our conversations had been exhausted we would lay outside, staring up at the moon children, as mias played by our feet and I wondered what to look up in my dictionary the next day.
Getting the Most Bang for your Buck: PC Worthy Courses
by Aimee Edmondo

While the three-credit waiver for Peace Corps Master’s International students is appreciated, many MIs and SPHTM students struggle with choosing elective courses from the wide array offered here at Tulane. MIs want to know what courses will provide them with the tools and knowledge to become effective public health professionals. For MIs like myself, Peace Corps service will be our first endeavor in the field. For this reason, I asked fellow RPCVs and currently serving MIs to recommend courses most applicable to Peace Corps service.

2007-2009 Jamaica RPCV, Kelli Nowicki, says Social Marketing and Behavior Change is the crux of most health work in the Peace Corps and will help MI prospects to understand the role of context and environment in the promotion and encouragement of health-seeking behaviors.

Sarah Higgins, an MI sworn into service in Guatemala this past July believes Monitoring and Evaluation of Global Health Interventions were some of the most worthwhile courses in her time at Tulane, a sentiment echoed by professor and RPCV Joseph Keating (Gambia 1995-1997), who insists on the growing need for M&E skills in the field.

MI Renee Nolan, a maternal and child health volunteer currently serving in Nicaragua since April 2011, credits her coursework in Survey Methodology, Data Base Management, SPSS, and GIS for her involvement with the Ministry of Health on a district level monitoring program.

Currently serving in Fiji, MI Joel Barskey, insists his summer coursework in Grant Writing has adequately prepared him to write proposals, and given him a clear advantage amongst his fellow volunteers.

Perhaps the best advice comes from Thailand PCV Elliot Brannon, who says, “No class specifically prepared me for this experience. Life is hard out here sometimes. Take the hardest classes you can find, and hopefully that will prepare you.”
What did you MacGyver during your service? RPCVs admit how creative they are.

Taylor Bednarz

“Heaven knows why, but my sister had sent me a toilet seat cover from the US. We built up a platform around the [latrine] pit and placed the seat on top of it. Only trouble was, the seat was black and the latrine had no cover…Niger in the hot season? Imagine the first time you sat on that at 12 noon!! After that we kept the seat inside the front door and just grabbed it as we headed out to the latrine.”

Penny Jessup – RPCV Niger

“Live off less and I guarantee you won’t regret it … A $180 Goretex North Face jacket couldn’t look more stereotypical gringo and out of place when everyone in your community is rocking the $1 umbrellas.”

Gabe Cohen – RPCV El Salvador

“I had a terribly annoying bat problem in my home in rural Zambia … One night I got to thinking about bat sonar echo-location and I thought, ‘maybe if I hang stuff from the ceiling at random lengths and in random spacing the bats will become annoyed at having to maneuver through a maze.’ The next day I hung scraps of cloth and strings from the roof beams and I kid you not, the bats came out that night and literally left within minutes, never to return.”

Tess Bonacci – RPCV

“Sit back and let the creative problem solving just happen. That’s not a grass-weaved basket, it’s your new dresser. That’s not an old corn husk, but your friendly companion in bike repair.”

Cathy Enright – RPCV Malawi 2007-2009

“I thought it might be useful to have a dumbwaiter because the kitchen is downstairs. I constructed it one day using a bamboo gear system and hidden counterweight (so kids wouldn’t play with it). It worked well, but we used it once or twice in 6 months, so I eventually dismantled it.”

Elliott Brannon – PCV Thailand
Above: Amanda Appel with her family in the Dominican Republic

Below: Ron Ikechi celebrating World AIDS day with his students in Ecuador

Top: RPCVs Shannon Lindsay, Cathy Echright, and Justine Amos at the American Sector Happy Hour

Below: RPCVs Meg Tremblay, Graceanna, Barb Knittel, Aimee Edmunds, Shannon Lindsay, and Mirinda Gormley at the Krewe du Vieux

Above: Kim Peven reading with a librarian at the Bazou Community Library
TREND SETTERS

Counterclockwise from top: Sarah Hughes with a new friend in Senegal
Left: MI Krista Brooks (far right) and MI Rachael Kramas (far left) during a phagwah festival in Guyana
Immediate Left: MI Carlie Congdon swears in to be a PCV in Vanuatu
Far left: Tulane MIs and RPCVs attend a Tulane Baseball Game
Bottom left: MI Bree Johnston works during a training session in Paraguay
Bottom Left Corner: Nicole Yergler in Peru with Friends
Right Corner: Tulane MIs and RPCVs at a BBQ after the Tulane baseball game
Help Us Honor the Legacy of Penny Jessop

Consider making a donation to the Penny Jessop Travel Fund!

Money from the Penny Jessop Travel Fund will directly benefit students in the SPHTM, enabling them to get out of the classroom and into fields where, as Penny says “the real learning begins!”

Gifts of ALL sizes are welcome – and encouraged!

http://sph.tulane.edu/publichealth/sphtmgiving/jessopfund.cfm

PLEASE JOIN US IN CELEBRATING PENNY!

Friday, April 27, 2012 – ALL SPHTM STUDENTS, ALUMNI, FACULTY AND STAFF!
Time: 4PM until 8PM
Handsome Willy’s Bar (218 South Robertson Street)

Friday, May 11, 2012 – Alumni, Faculty & Staff
Time: Evening
Home of Dr. Jane Bertrand, Chair of Department of Global Health Systems and Development
RSVP your attendance to Alexis Ruffino, SPHTM Alumni Coordinator, ataruffin@tulane.edu

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 Written for Students by Students