

KHOTSO

August 2010



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Message from the Country Director



Rori Pulvino at his keyhole garden

With the World Cup over and the sound of *vuvuzelas* almost out of our heads, the PC office in Maseru is gearing up for the CHED 10 swearing, Rich's imminent departure and the end of winter. For all of you who made it to a World Cup match or just watched them on TV with friends and neighbors, I hope you had fun. I know I did (although I'm still not over Ghana's loss to Uruguay)! As an added bonus no Peace Corps Volunteers (from any country) were involved in any safety and security incidents that we know of. I hope all of you who took (well deserved) vacations this winter had a great time. My husband and I went skiing at Afriski over the July 4th weekend. Completely surreal but very fun.

Dr. J's barely been gone 2 weeks and we miss him already. He's emailed and called and reports that Canada is "hot." Thanks to all the Volunteers who sent messages for his memory book; he was touched. Dr. Tanaka Muzenda, the PCMO from Botswana, arrived August 1st and will be here for a month. Originally from Zimbabwe, he's married, has a 3-year old son and expects another one in October. Welcome, Ntate Tanaka!

Thanks to 'Me Jimi for organizing the PEPFAR-funded HIV Workshop for the ED 10 group and their counterparts last week. We hope it was useful and that the Volunteer and counterpart participants gained new skills for responding to the HIV epidemics in their communities and schools.

On a related note, I had a chance to see the fruits of a PEPFAR-funded VAST grant this month. Well, not the fruits yet, but hopefully something

that will turn into fruit, or in this case probably veggies. Rory Pulvino (ED 10) and several support groups in his village and neighboring communities in the Fobane area applied and were approved for VAST funds to help build keyhole gardens for households with orphans. Rory took me to see two and I saw photos and video footage of the other gardens that they had built. The next step is to procure and plant seeds and work with the orphans and their caregivers to improve their nutrition status and possibly sell the surplus. The community seemed very engaged and Rory got help from some of his ED 10 buddies, who not only broke and hauled rocks but also taught local kids dance moves worthy of Dancing with the Stars!

Thanks to everyone who's been using the new Whereabouts phone (6288-5598). This will help us with tracking. Please remember that telecommunications in Lesotho are not perfect so if you don't hear back from someone within 2 days, please text again and cc your Program Asst.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of the Volunteers who completed the Annual Volunteer Survey. Your input is valuable, and we will share the results once we receive them. As of August 2, Lesotho is leading the Africa Region at 85%. This is 5 percentage points higher than the agency's goal. Even though we did not reach 95% by August 1 (possibly in part because of Volunteers who are no longer in country), I am quite pleased with our response rate and am granting all Volunteers an extra day of leave (which will be taken into account in VIDA). For the very few who have not responded yet, don't be a slacker! You have until August 15th to get your survey in.

Khotso Pula Nala
Kathy.

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From the Editor's Desk

Articles must be received by the 4th Monday of the month to be included in the following month's edition of the Khotso. **When submitting articles, please provide the name of the person making the submission and a contact person for follow-up questions.** The Newsletter will be emailed and a hardcopy made available in the office on or about the 1st of each month. Please make sure that your email address is on file with Peace Corps.

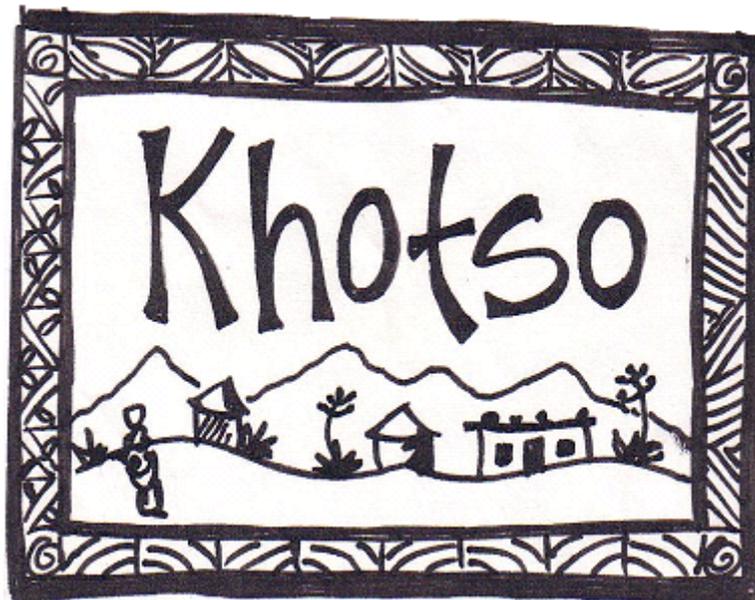
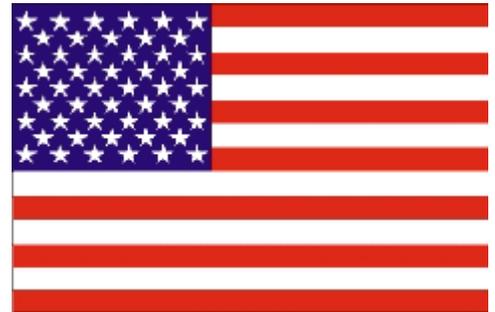
The editorial staff would like feedback from PCVs regarding the content. It is our desire to provide you with information that is useful, helpful, and encouraging. We would appreciate receiving constructive feedback from you as to whether the information contained in this newsletter met your needs.

By submitting articles, you are providing Peace Corps Lesotho with the right to reprint your article in full or part in any publication.

Deepak Pullanikkatil
Editor



Editorial



PCV Birthdays

Birthday greetings go out to the following PCVs. The Peace Corps Lesotho staff sends you greeting and hope that you have a very prosperous year.

Happy Birthday PCVs

August

Hoehner, Samantha	August 9
Berdini, Ariana	August 12
Ebata, Kimiko	August 13
Laufman-Walker, Aaron	August 16
Langridge, Jessica	August 19
Veiga, Tarsha	August 19
Marlow, Sarah	August 20
Peel, Austin	August 27
Deakin, Matthew	August 29
Murray, Melody	August 31

September

McClaine, Ryan	September 1
Reed, Kristan	September 5
Liberio, Sonny	September 8
Jones, Christopher	September 9
Wade, Cullen	September 10
Johnson-Miller, Diana	September 19
Washington, Maya	September 19
Kelly, Megan	September 25
Schofield, Jesse	September 30

STAFF SPOTLIGHT**Lebohlang Ranooe**

Full name: Ranooe, Lebohlang

Job title: Receptionist (The face and the voice of the office)

How long with PC: I joined Peace in 1991. (Probably some of you were still in school)



Job prior to PC: My first job ever

Family status (married? kids?): I am married with two children, the boy is 17 and the girl is 12

Where you grew up: Different places. I was born at Ha –Makhalanyane, in Maseru district, from there I lived in different parts of the country for survival and in search of education.

Favorite part of your job: Meeting volunteers and visitors; getting to talk to different people from all walks of life.

Least favorite part of your job: Time sheets

Hobbies: listening to reggae and country and western music, reading, studying and playing tennis in my dreams.

If you could meet anyone in the world, who would it be? Nelson Mandela, he is my hero.

Advice for PCVs in Lesotho: Take care of yourselves and enjoy your stay in Lesotho.

PCV News Corner



Staff Birthdays



August/September/ October
No staff birthdays.

Peace Corps Lesotho Holidays

August

No holidays this month.

September

September 6— Labor Day (US Holiday)*

July

July 5— Independence Day (US Holiday)*
July 17— King's Birthday (LS Holiday)*

*PC Lesotho remains closed on this day.

Education Corner

By Malitaba Hlabana

It seems like winter is ending but not so sure. With the schools closed and almost all PCVs on vacation and other attending World Cup, it's been a little quiet here at HQ. So now World Cup fever is gone. "Feel it, it's no more here"! Below are a few reminders and announcements though:

1. If you haven't submitted your trimester report, please do so. We have responded to those who have submitted their report and are analyzing them for our annual Project Status Reporting. Please start working on the last trimester June - September.

2. We would like to thank those ED10 who attended the HIV/AIDS workshop held at Molengoane Lodge on July 26-30, 2010. We hope whatever you learned at this workshop will help you to help Basotho in regard to HIV/AIDS. Keep up the good spirit that you showed during this workshop.

3. The ED PAC members meet at 9am on Wednesday, September 1st at the Training Center.

Close of Service for ED09s

[including Violeta, Tarsha and Phil]

Time flies! It's time for you to be planning your "Close of Service". The official COS date for ED 09 is January 7, 2011. Kathy has the authority to advance your COS date by 30 days. Dates beyond these will need to be approved by PC/HQ. Post can process about 4 COSes a day. Therefore, we will need your group to have your COS dates spread out. We will have a COS Date Calendar at the COS conference to sign up on. Unless you get an exception, your COS date should be on Wednesday, Thursday or before 1:30 a.m. on Friday. Normally, you will come to the office on Monday and immediately begin your medical clearance, which will take two days due to the TB test check. You should not plan to arrive in Maseru over the weekend prior to your COS date or have a Peace Corps driver pick you up on the weekend since that's overtime, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Remember, the time to say goodbye to your friends is at the COS conference, not when you're actually COSing. We

expect you to have your COS or extension plans at the COS conference. Because the lead times are considerable, delays in getting this date will affect when you receive your Cash-in-Lieu and 1/3 Readjustment Allowance payments. A checklist you may begin reviewing will be sent to the COSing Volunteers. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact Clement or Rich.

The COS conference for ED09s will be held in Maseru on September 1-3, 2010. Please take note of these logistical aspects: 9/1 - COSers arrive in Maseru- Check in at the Maseru Sun Cabanas. PC will pay for Dinner and Lodging only on this day. 9/2 - Sessions 9/3 - Sessions until lunch (possibly late lunch), Banquet. Following the banquet, Volunteers will be expected to move to the Training Centre for the night. 9/4 - Check out of Training Center. Please note that the CHED group will be arriving to begin their Mid Service on 9/4... therefore it's important that you all check out by 10am. If you have any question regarding the COS conference, please call 'm'e 'Masechaba.

Safety & Security Corner

By Thamae Mpiti (REPEAT FROM LAST MONTH)

Message to District Security Reps: THE DSR CELL PHONE ISSUED TO YOU IS NOT FOR YOUR (OR ANY OTHER VOLUNTEER'S) PERSONAL USE. These phones should be used to disseminate messages received from PC to Volunteers in your district or in cases of

emergency. We have received exorbitant phones bills for many DSR phones with many unauthorized calls. Beginning in July, DSRs will be charged for any phone calls that can not be justified as safety and security related. A DSR training is in the planning stages.

Stayed tuned.



Staff Corner,
Education Corner &
S&S Corner

CHED Corner By Charles Miller & Selloane Pitikoe

Below are the CHED '10 site placements.

Lauren Deakin	Menkhoaneng Community Council	Butha Buthe
Matt Deakin	Community Farmers Association	Butha Buthe
Juliana Fulton	Maliba Lodge	Butha Buthe
Brandi Helm	SMARTD – Youth Development	Qacha's Nek
Wes Helm	SMARTD – IT/Resource Center	Qacha's Nek
Benja Davies	Khomo Phatsoa Community Council	Qacha's Nek
Lee Niang	TBD	
Kelly Anderson	Taung Skills Training Center	Mohale's Hoek
Delia Helie	Nohana Primary School	Mohale's Hoek
Ariana Berdini	Ntlatfatso Skills Training Center	Mohale's Hoek
Mike Kerr	Katse Development	Thaba Tseka
Kelsey Marsh	Number 10 Riverside B&B	Mokhotlong
Sarah Marlow	NGOC	Mafeteng
Zach Rosen	MCA-Lesotho	Maseru
Jesse Schofield	MCA-Lesotho	Maseru
Kate Rogers	Itjareng Skills Training Center	Maseru
Evan Anderman Hahn	LESEDI	Maseru
Amy Jo Carson	Paballong Clinic	Maseru
Kate Glanville	Katleho Moho	Maseru
Tori Koch	LASLAM	Maseru
Chanté Liggins	Leseli Youth Sports Program	Berea
Angee Hadar	Mbeya Clinic	Berea
Grant Comstock	Sebetia Clinic	Berea
Danielle Sanni	Zenon High School	Berea
Brandon Delise	Sacred Heart	Berea
Adam Peel	GRO	Leribe
Kevin Casimer	Qoqolosing High School	Leribe

CHED Corner

**STAFF SCHEDULE**

August 9-11:	Clement visiting Sebitia PS, Malefane PS, St. Denis HS, 'Moteng LCE, Rehahu-hetsoe HS and Sefako PS overnight at Botha Bothe
August 11:	CHED 10 Swearing-in (Training Ctr off limits August 8 – 12)
August 16:	Malitaba visiting Fusi SS
August 17:	Malitaba visiting Mohatlane SS
August 18:	Malitaba visiting Lejone PS
August 19:	Malitaba visiting Ralikariki SS
August 19-22:	Mokhotlong and Thaba Tseka Diversity Camps
August 23-27:	Clement visiting Thaba Tseka & Mokhotlong: Likalaneng PS, TTseka ECCD, St. Theresa SS, Sekonyela HS, Phahameng SS, Senkoase HS, 'Malefiloane PS and Mokhotlong HS
August 26-29:	Qacha's Nek and Quthing Diversity Camp
August 26-29:	Butha Buthe Healthy Living Camp
August 28-29:	PSN Training (Training Ctr off limits Aug 27-29)
September 1:	ED PAC Meeting
September 2-4:	ED 09 COS Conference (Training Ctr off limits Sept 4)
September 5-7:	CHED 09 Mid-Service Conference (Training Ctr off limits September 4-8)
September 7-16:	Clement on leave.
September 13:	VAC Meeting (Training Ctr off limits September 12-13)
September 17:	DAR Meeting (Training Ctr off limits September 16-17)
TBD:	DSR Training

Duty Officer Schedule

August 2 – 8	Clement
August 9 - 15	Masechaba
August 16 – 22	Rich
August 23 – 29	Charles
August 30 - September 5	Deepak
September 6 – 12	Charles
September 13 – 19	Kathy
September 20 – 26	Deepak



PCV Life

HIV/Contraception News in Brief

By PCV Aaron Laufman-Walker, CHED 09, DAR Member



There's a lot of interesting news this month due to the XVIII International AIDS Conference which just ended in Vienna. If you have a moment, browse the website for the conference or just search for HIV News and take a gander. Here are a few pieces of news that were passed among DARs this month.

An FDA advisory panel has voted unanimously to recommend a new emergency contraceptive that can be used up to five days after sex. The emergency contraceptives currently available in the United States only work up to 72 hours after sex. The FDA has no obligation to take the advisory panel's recommendations although it often does. Research discovered that the pill is not as effective for obese women. The contraceptive pill has been named Ella.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/06/18/fda.sex.pill.ella/index.html?hpt=Sbin>

A study shows that a gel containing a prescription HIV drug, tenofovir, can sharply reduce HIV infections in women. In the study the gel was used before and after sex. The infection rate was lowered "by 50% at 12 months but then the efficacy declined." The decline is blamed on a lack of adherence over time by those involved in the testing.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN1912934120100719>

Sub-Saharan Africa is seeing an increase in the number of circumcision campaigns in hope of reducing the number of HIV infections. Circumcision can reduce the risk of HIV by 60% for men. It shows no benefit for women. Not everyone agrees with the circumcision campaigns. Some organizations argue that once circumcised, some men believe they don't need to use condoms and therefore increase the spread of HIV. Others also cite complications from the procedures. (FYI: DAR was informed that the Lesotho Government is not promoting circumcision at present (possibly due to pressure from traditional healers and circumcisers and lack of surgical capacity). Kathy requests that volunteers refer people to the clinics for information; do not advise them on your own.) <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/20/news/la-heb-aids-circumcision-20100720>

We also have two pieces of news that arrived from the world of my nightmares:

African heroin users in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the island of Zanzibar, and Mombasa, Kenya have begun practicing flashblood; injecting themselves with another addict's blood. "It puts users at the highest possible risk of contracting AIDS and hepatitis." Heroin use is growing in African cities and this new practice could spread the disease even further. Many of these addicts are also sex workers. It is unknown if flashblood produces a high.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/health/13blood.html>

A South African doctor has invented a condom with teeth as an anti-rape contraceptive. The condoms are called Rape-aXe. "It hurts, he cannot pee and walk when it's on." The inventor distributed the condoms during world cup games. Although the condom is painful when attached, it does not break the skin and prevents fluid exposure. Some argue that the condom could result in more violence from the attacker and that the condom, if worn all the time, can provide a constant reminder of the vulnerability of these women and provides a false sense of security. The doctor's response to critics: "...my device may be a medieval, but it's for a medieval deed that has been around for decades...I believe something's got to be done ... and this will make some men rethink before they assault a woman."

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/06/20/south.africa.female.condom/index.html?hpt=C1>

Stay well and get ready for SPRING!

REPSSI: Psychosocial Wellbeing for All Children

By PCV Jackie Tipword, ED 09, PSN Member



Hello Peace Corps Lesotho! I'm writing on behalf of Peer Support Network (PSN) to tell you about REPSSI a regional non-governmental organization that we have been lucky enough to come across. They work with many partners in Southern Africa to promote psychosocial care and support (PSS) for children affected by HIV and AIDS, poverty and conflict in Southern and East Africa.

After looking through their website and downloading their free manuals, we have found that a lot of these materials may be useful to the Peace Corps Lesotho community.

Those of you that have experienced RPCV Kaye Thompson's Grief Training Counseling sessions or had a mental health session with her during training may be familiar with the Tree of Life. This was developed by REPSSI.

Not only is there a PDF of the Tree of Life, but there are also manuals with such titles as Mainstreaming Psychosocial Care and Support within Early Childhood Development, The Journey of Life: Community Workshops to Support Children, Memory Work Manual: Facilitator's Guide and Making a Hero (Active Citizen) Book: a Guide for Facilitators just to name a few. These manuals are written very simply and are for anyone and everyone that works with children, so you don't need a Master's in Psychology to understand.

More specifically, I personally like the Making a Hero (Active Citizen) Book and Memory Work Manual. Both give you specific activities using storytelling and art exercises to help children and youth begin to speak and share their inner life. This process not only encourages children to share, but also to help them to think through and learn positive problem solving and community mobilizing skills.

These REPSSI manuals are now on sharepoint under the PCV Group Files > Committees > PSN > Repssi files. PSN hopes they may be helpful!

Also the Tree of Life activity is included below, as many of you were looking for it.

Khotso Pula Nala

Tree of Life

This is an interesting exercise that may show you parts of your life that you had not been fully aware of. It is useful in helping to consider the different parts of your life. We will help you to think of ways in which you can think about these as different parts of a tree. This exercise will help you to think about your family history, your environment, the important people, the important times (good and bad) and your dreams and aspirations (goals) or objectives, i.e. what you hope to achieve in life).

For this exercise you will need:

1. A quiet place and about an hour in which to properly concentrate on the activity.
2. A large piece of plain paper
3. A set of colored pencils or crayons

Instructions:

Draw a tree on a large piece of paper. This tree is about your life. It should have the soil, the roots, the trunk, branches, leaves and fruit.

Now think about your life as you have drawn it through the Tree of Life. Think about the following aspects of your life:

- * Soil: The soil is about your country and culture. It is about the environment in which you grew up. Think about your country and the environment in which you grew up. How did it affect you as a child? How has it influenced who you are today as a person? Think also about your cultural and religious background.
- * Roots: The roots are for your family and friends it is about your heritage, your ancestors and family line. Think about the important people in your life. They could be living or may have passed on. Think about how each person has impacted on your life.
- * Trunk: The trunk is for the different experiences you have had in your life. They could be good things that have happened to you. Or they could be bad things that have happened to you. Each of us had positive experiences and painful experiences in our past.
- * Branches: The branches represent other parts of your life (like work, school or education, friends, colleagues, churches, spiritual aspects, hobbies, sports, etc.). Our lives usually have different branches. Each of these could be represented in your Tree drawing. Tell us a little about each of these.
- * Leaves: Trees draw their life strength from their leaves. On your Tree of Life use the leaves to symbolize your strengths, special skills, gifts and talents given to you by those on the trunk and branches, or that you were born with. Tell us about your special skills, talents, and abilities.
- * Bugs: Everyone has challenges, or bugs that challenge our development. Draw in bugs to represent the challenges and difficulties that you need to overcome in your life. Perhaps include people who you see as standing in your way or causing difficulties for you. Perhaps include difficulties that you have been dealing with throughout your life. Tell us a little about these.
- * Fruit: The fruit is for the achievements you had made in your life. It could be passing school, or having good relationships with people. They are the things we are proud of.
- * Buds: These are for your dreams and wishes. In your Tree of Life, the buds are for the chances you have in your life for growth, healing and progress. Think about your dreams and hopes for your life. Tell us a little about these.

PCV Life





PCV Life

Added Self-Reflection on Tree of Life:

Think about your Tree of Life giving special attention to the losses you have experienced throughout your life and how these losses have affected your life journey.

Write down your thoughts and feelings, with respect to each of the parts (soil, roots, trunk, branches, and so on).

How are you feeling now after having drawn your Tree of Life?

Sharing your reflection with a trusted person:

If possible try to share the thoughts and feelings that you have experienced while doing this drawing of your Tree of Life with someone whom you trust.

Retrieved from Module 1: Self Management and Development pages 92-94 from the certification program Working with Children, Families and Communities. A joint REPSSI/UNICEF Collaboration

2010 TAP Program Scholarships Awarded
By PCV Karen Lindquist, ED 09, TAP Committee Chair



The Friends of Lesotho (FOL) Tuition Assistance Applications (TAP) have been processed and checks to schools have been issued and await pick-up by PCVs in their VRC mailboxes.

A Few Facts About the 2010 TAP Program:

- 29 PCVs participated by submitting applications
- 36 Schools were represented in the applications
- 111 Applications were submitted by PCVs
- 90 Students were awarded tuition assistance
- Total Amount Awarded was M50,670.50.



TAP Committee members Nathan Landrum and Karen Lindquist deliver first 2010 award check to Eric Pierce, ED 10.

Information and Instructions for Processing of FOL Checks

1. Checks are written to the Treasurer/Bursar (or the person who handles the school finances) of each school in which students who received assistance are enrolled.
2. PCVs with checks awaiting them in the VRC are required to:
 - (a) Submit the check to the school(s) treasurer/bursar;
 - (b) Inform the school that it is required to provide two (2) receipts for funds received:
 - (i) One receipt is to be made out to "Friends of Lesotho Tuition Assistance Program"; this receipt is for the total amount received by the school and the receipt is given to the PCV;
 - (ii) One receipt must be written out to each student who is being funded – the amount awarded to a student must be deducted from his/her outstanding and/

or future school tuition fees.

3. PCVs should return to the TAP box in the VRC, as promptly as possible, the following items:
- (a) Receipt(s) from school(s) for which Friends of Lesotho provided tuition assistance for students;
 - (b) A Thank You letter from each student recipient written to "Dear Friends of Lesotho";
 - (c) A photo of each student (or a group photo if more than one student at the same school). Please identify the students on the back side of each photo (photos will not be returned to PCV).

Student thank you letters and their photos will be sent to the FOL Board of Directors in the US. 2009 photos and letters were received with great enthusiasm by FOL Board members.

TAP Committee members thank all PCVs who participated in the 2010 TAP Program. Committee members are below:



TAP Committee: Melissa Hill (CHED 09), Kali Bechtold (ED 10), Karen Lindquist (ED 09, Chair), Nathan Landrum (ED 10) and Parker Bryant (ED 10).

Future KHOTSO issues will detail the TAP Committee's summary of "Ten Years of Friends of Lesotho TAP Program" and the 2010 committee's recommendations for 2011 and beyond. Watch for our updates!

Brownies!

By PCV Violeta Jimenez, ED 08



Dear PCVs, Some people tell you that when life gives you lemons, you should make lemonade. I think lemonade is a pretty poor consolation when stuff goes wrong. I say eat your lemons when you're feeling virtuous, and when you're upset, reach directly for the dark chocolate. Let me tell you a story.

Some few months ago, when it was raining torrentially and I thought the ending of 2012 might actually come true (good thing I'd be safe in Mokhotlong), I was going for a long run. Barely a couple miles out, soaked and already grouchy, I dodged up on some rocks to avoid colliding with a herdboys, who was my competition for the few available inches of not-flooded dirt road. Shortly after, I tripped and donated some blood from my right knee, elbow, and palm to--well, let's just say to Lesotho in general.

"#\$%!*" I said. "\$%&(*ing @%\$!" I said. I wish you could have seen that herdboys face. He had the biggest "WTF?" expression I've ever seen on a Mosotho, even counting the times I tried to tell

PCV Life





PCV Life

my Form As that the moon goes around the Earth. I considered cleaning myself up with the abundant muddy water around, thought about trying to explain that to D. J when I came in a month later with some terrible skin infection, and, with a few more words this fine publication would not tolerate, turned around and started limping back home.

Herdboy followed. Presumably he was heading that way anyway, but he was also regarding me like a bomb that might explode. After about five minutes, he inquired, "Ke bohloko?" I replied that yes, it was painful, and I was going home. As I went on my way, I tried to console myself. It would have been a miserable run anyway, right?

Now I could sit in my warm, dry house for three hours instead, right?

Now I would have time to read a trashy book and . . . yes . . . and make brownies.

With a lighter heart, I magnanimously bid my comrade goodbye, started running towards home, and howled behind me in Sesotho as he finally got up the nerve to ask me for candy.

I like to cook, and I regularly make nice things with which to assuage my loneliness and taunt my cats (they think anything on the stovetop is their rightful property, of course). But I save brownies for occasions when I really need them. Like scraping myself up and ruining a run, or it being super cold and me requiring three sweaters, or because I'm grouchy, or because it's Tuesday. You know.

At present I have fifteen brownie recipes in my recipe files (I know—a pitiful collection, really), and, my dear PCVs, I am going to share with you two of my favorites. While I was on home leave in the States I spent a lot of time wandering through various American bookstores, gaping at the sheer volume of reading material, and the fact that you could get a mocha next to the current fiction section.

While my family members looked at books about . . . mollusks, and high seas exploration (my marine biologist uncle and my history-loving grandmother, respectively), I went straight to the cookbooks, picked up the most frivolous I could find, with the largest cupcakes on the covers, and proceeded to write down as many recipes as I could on the cafe's napkins (they give you those for free in America, too—really!) As fate would have it, I picked up Alice Medrich's Pure Dessert, and her bittersweet brownie recipe was the one I decided to try on that rainy day in February. I daresay it must be a proof of the existence of a benevolent deity that I picked up that book, then later fell on my face and made these brownies. And I daresay they are, if not the best brownies in existence, something very like perfection. Even when life sucks, there's an upside!

Some notes for making good brownies (totally possible, by the way, even in a Dutch oven): use butter. No, seriously, not Rama. If you don't have butter, here's a secret: you can use olive oil in place of melted butter in lots of chocolate recipes (even cakes!). As stated in the recipes below, do not overbake your brownies. It is a sin against humanity. Much better, if anything, to have them slightly underdone and gooey, so you can smear them all over your face while eating them, just like you're still five. Am I right? Also—maybe self-evident—use dark chocolate, and use the best you can. If you don't want to wait for a care package full of Ghirardelli (but put that on your wish list, really), the Cadbury Bourneville or Midnight Velvet dark chocolate you can buy in Maseru is OK. And if you must, must have brownies but you have no solid chocolate, we need to have a talk, first of all; but second of all, I have also included the only cocoa brownie recipe I feel is worth making. Because I love you, and I want you to be happy and brownieful.

So when life gives you lemons, blow your nose at them and make brownies. And then share some with me! Peace, love and chocolate ~Violeta

Classic Bittersweet Brownies (from Alice Medrich)

6.5 ounces bittersweet chocolate (184g)

7 tbs. unsalted butter (98g)

1 cup sugar

2 eggs

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp vanilla extract

1/2 cup flour

2/3 cup walnut or pecan pieces (optional)

Line an 8" square pan (or, another pan/pans with approximately a 64 square-inch capacity) with foil or parchment paper, leaving a 1" overhang on the sides (this works like handles to let you lift out the brownies). Preheat your oven to 350°F (or get your Dutch oven set up), and put a rack in the lower third of oven. Melt chocolate, butter and sugar in a metal bowl atop a pot of simmering water (or, melt over very low heat in a metal pot—stir continuously and be careful not to burn the chocolate!). Remove from heat, let cool until just warm, then stir in the vanilla and salt. Add eggs one at a time, stirring after each. Stir in flour and beat until the batter is smooth and glossy. Mix in the nuts.

Bake ~20 mins (longer, in a Dutch oven). The brownies are ready when they are starting to pull away from the sides, the top is dry and a toothpick stuck in the center will come out slightly gooey. (DO NOT overbake!) Remove from oven and put in a larger pan of ice water/cold water to help them cool.

Best Cocoa Brownies (from Alice Medrich's Bittersweet)
 10 tablespoons (1 1/4 sticks, or 141g) unsalted butter
 1 1/4 cups sugar
 3/4 cup + 2 Tbs unsweetened cocoa powder (natural or Dutch-process)
 1/4 teaspoon salt (or a heaping 1/4t flaky salt)
 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 2 large eggs, cold
 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 2/3 cup walnut or pecan pieces (optional)

Preheat your oven to 325 °F, with the rack near the bottom (or set up your Dutch oven). Line an 8x8" pan with parchment or foil, leaving overhangs (see above). Melt butter, sugar, cocoa, and salt, either in a double boiler, or very carefully, in a small pot. Let cool till just warm. Stir in vanilla. Add eggs one at a time, stirring after each.

Stir in flour, then beat vigorously 40 times (come on, do you have something better to do than count to 40 while alone in your rondavel?). Stir in nuts. Spread in pan. Bake until toothpick inserted emerges slightly moist, 20-35 mins. Let cool on rack. Remove using overhang, and cut.

ODE TO RICH

By RPCV Kaye Thompson, CHED 08

You're coffee in the morning
 Hot chocolate at night
 The rock that we lean on
 When things aren't quite right.

You're the apple and banana
 When we're hungry at noon.
 You'd give us a ride
 Or sing us a tune.

You're the face of kindness
 That gives us such cheer
 When we come limping in
 These scraggly volunteers.

You're the harbor of safety
 When we're sad and broken down.
 Can't imagine our life
 Without you in this town.

Your place in our hearts
 Is there to stay.
 Wishing you a life
 Full of love laughter play.



PCV Life



A Place of Self Reliance

By RPCV Barbara Bradford, CHED 08

They come from all over Lesotho. Some are physically disabled, some are mentally disabled and some are deaf. They come from the lowlands, the highlands, the rural and the urban areas of Lesotho. Some have large families and some are orphaned. They all come to Itjareng Vocational Training Center for 2 years to learn a trade.

Itjareng, which means "place of self reliance," offers many vocational workshops. The students can choose from metal shop, carpentry, sewing, leather works or agriculture. All of the students attend sessions in computer science, literacy, sign language and math. They hope that at the end of the 2 years they will learn a marketable skill and be able to find a good job or start a business.

I came to Itjareng in August of 2008. I saw so much unrealized potential. I had a wish list of tasks and a head full of dreams. I spent the next nine months trying to learn the local language and integrate into the community. I had many inspirational moments and great ideas that no one was inter-



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ested in. I visited the workshops and the office on a daily basis. Everyone was friendly to me, but they offered nothing for me to do. Finally, just as I felt I could no longer tolerate the boredom and frustration, I was rescued by the kitchen manager, Me'Mkhotso. She wanted to know how to bake American bread. I spent my time helping where I was needed, in the kitchen.

One day when I was sitting at the table sipping tea with Me'Mkhotso, I said that I would like to make muffins and maybe some of the students would like to bake some with me. Just like that I had an idea that everyone liked. And so it began – the first bake and sell class at Itjareng.

My first class was composed of fifteen of the thirty students at the center. I will never forget that day. I had taped a huge piece of butcher paper on the wall and wrote a simple muffin recipe on it with a felt pen. I had the ingredients and utensils lined up on the table. I eased my nerves by reminding myself that the interpreter would be there to help with the Sesotho and sign language.

I had a moment of panic when I searched the group of faces for the interpreter and realized there was none. It was just me and about fifteen people and that we didn't speak the same language. I pointed to the first line that read, 3 cups of flour. I then held up a measuring cup with one hand and three fingers with the other hand. I pointed to the pile of ingredients on the table and shrugged my shoulders. I kept repeating these gestures. I wasn't sure what to expect. Would they just keep staring at me? Would they start laughing at me? Would they just talk amongst themselves and wander off somewhere? They surprised me when they jumped into action. They enthusiastically formed a search party and located the flour. I then handed them the one cup measure and literally taught them measuring and mixing techniques with the hands-on method. With my hand on top of their hand I taught them the needed techniques. I was relieved that they accepted my odd method of teaching. We worked our way down the recipe in this manner, line by line. Two hours later we sat around the table eating the best banana muffins ever made.

I continued this method over and over again. I taught two classes a week. I mixed the disabilities evenly. Usually I would choose two of each disability. It was amazing to watch them work together. Sign language was the chosen language because all could communicate with that. I studied sign language and became much more successful in learning to sign than I was in speaking Sesotho.

In the year that followed they learned to follow written instructions by using teamwork to produce a quality product to sell for a profit.

By May of 2010, they were preparing and selling baked goods and platters of sandwiches to workshops in the Lesotho capitol city of Maseru. They have earned enough money to buy some audio video equipment that they have been wanting. The best part is that they can do it all by themselves.

A reflection on the Men who have Sex with Men Global Forum (MSMGF) pre-conference titled "Be Heard!", International AIDS Conference, Vienna, 7/19/2010

By Darrin Adams, RPCV, ED 07, Guest blogger for the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission

Blog Post #1 – “What you are doing is a gesture to transform the world,” said Michel Sidibé, UN-AIDS Executive Director, in his opening remarks for the Be Heard! MSM Global Forum pre-conference on July 17.

Sidibe set the tone for this one-day event for over 300 MSM, LGBTI and allied advocates, leaders and participants. Morning and afternoon sessions focused on the theory and practice in MSM and LGBTI HIV prevention, care and support.

Again and again, “Be Heard!” was emphatically pronounced with such force, calling us to stand up and, well, be heard. But what does it look like to “be heard”?

For me, it is not limited to marching and rallying with posters and chants nor is the phrase exclusive to activists who are loudly expressive in their call for equal rights.

Being heard can be found in those still, small moments like coming out to that first person or bringing a friend to a local support group meeting for LGBT people.

I had my own “Be Heard” moment in the Vienna airport when I arrived. While waiting for a friend's plane to land, I began chatting with a man at the arrival gate about the International AIDS Conference that we were both attending. We were as different as night and day. He was from Ethiopia and worked with a Faith-Based Organization in educating churches about HIV prevention and eliminating stigma. I told him that I work with Men who have Sex with Men, otherwise known as

MSM, and other sexual minorities in HIV prevention.

After hearing this, he sat there. And he sat there. And sat there, looking down, deep in thought. I knew he was processing what I just said and I gave him the time and space to do work out whatever he needed to work out in his head.

“I don’t understand MSM,” he finally replied, “Why do men choose that behavior?”

I answered that I could choose to have sex with women but I would be betraying my own natural sexuality, lying to myself, my partner and everyone else around me. So I choose to be with men as a way of honoring myself and others.

He sat and assumed his thinking position. Then he looked up at me and responded, “It is like HIV stigma. The culture and church don’t like it so they discriminate. That is not right.”

He then continued to say that he will go to the MSM sessions at the Conference so that he can learn more and share with others.

In a four minute, private conversation, one heart was changed. His mind still struggled with the understanding of the behavior yet he still empathized with MSM as human beings.

In that quiet, personal moment, I was heard.

Blog Post #2 – As I walked into the Vienna AIDS 2010 LGBT BBQ, sponsored by COC Netherlands and Schorer, I was struck by how many people from the conference were all in one place who also happened to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. The diversity that is the International AIDS Conference was represented there – queer people with a diversity of nationalities, accents, languages and dress.

My friend and former colleague, with whom I worked in forming an LGBTI support group and MSM/WSW research in Lesotho, was there and one of the first things she said to me was, “There are so many gay people here, all in one place. It reminds me of your going away party when you left Lesotho.”

She was referring to a party I threw and to which I invited every LGBT person I knew as well as their friends and friends of friends. I not only wanted people to remember me, but I also wanted to give back to the community that had accepted me and included me with such open, welcoming arms. At my event in Lesotho, people could be who they are, with no toning down and nothing hidden.

And that party was popping! Over 200 people showed up, some I knew, some I didn’t, but it didn’t matter because it was not just a party for them or for me, it was a party to just be. Without any sort of gay club or community center in Lesotho, that time and place was slotted for them to shine.

And that is exactly how I felt at the Vienna LGBT BBQ. It was like we all took off our shrouds and burdens and masks, heaved a sigh of relief and had a great time with no pretense or worry. I don’t know for sure if these kinds of community events are standard fare for most of the people who were there. But given, that there were party-goers from countries where LGBT people are raped, murdered, imprisoned, whipped, beaten, ostracized and a host of other inhumane offenses and rights violations, I can imagine that the BBQ was a rare haven for those brave advocates.

What will it take to create such spaces in the countries we live and work in? Health and human rights is just one aspect of it, but changing a law does not mean that society instantly changes with it. It’s an important step yet it’s just one of many that need to happen.

Take for example, South Africa’s constitution that protects LGBT people from discrimination while also affording the right to marriage equality. Yet, from what I witnessed myself in South Africa, homophobia and stigma are still rampant in the townships and villages (and even in urban areas). Hearts and minds are still catching up with the laws.

So while we wait for laws to change through our own advocacy, appeal to people’s hearts and then their minds will surely follow.

PCV Life





*News from around the
Peace Corps World*

Peace Corps Response Volunteers Work to Protect and Restore Mozambique Rainforest

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 7, 2010 – Mona Nyandoro of Fresno, Calif., and Herbert ‘Marty’ Sampson of Omaha, Neb., have returned to Peace Corps service as Peace Corps Response volunteers in Mozambique. Nyandoro, who will serve for six months, and Sampson, who will serve for 12 months, arrived on July 6 to begin working with the Gorongosa Restoration Project to protect and restore rainforests in Mozambique’s Sofala Province.

Mozambique’s Gorongosa National Park was once a national gem and a top tourist attraction with a large concentration of wildlife. Recently, non-sustainable agricultural practices on Mount Gorongosa have threatened the health of the park’s ecosystem. Volunteers Nyandoro and Sampson will work with the Gorongosa Restoration Project to establish and manage eight new tree nurseries on Mount Gorongosa. They will also train existing and new nursery staff how to monitor and record their progress and plan a campaign to encourage community participation in reforestation efforts and teach local community members about how to manage and benefit from eco-tourism efforts.

Nyandoro previously served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the West African island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe from 1994-1996 where she supported local efforts to establish a national park and helped the local community benefit from eco-tourism. When Nyandoro returned to the United States, she put her Peace Corps experience to work as an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps team leader, Peace Corps recruiter, and – most recently – as the Director of Development at California State University, Fresno’s School of Education.

Sampson previously served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Puerto Plata Province of the Dominican Republic from 2003-2005. He served as a water resources engineer and managed the local efforts to use only man and animal power to help construct six kilometers of pipeline to provide potable water to extremely remote villages. After this hands-on experience, Sampson received a master’s degree in Sustainability and Environmental Management at Harvard University.

Over 558 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Mozambique since the program was established in 1998. Volunteers in this Southern African nation work in the areas of education, health, and HIV/AIDS awareness. Many Volunteers working on HIV/AIDS prevention and care receive support from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program. Currently, 180 Volunteers are serving in Mozambique.

Peace Corps Response provides opportunities for returned Peace Corps volunteers to undertake short-term, high impact assignments in various programs around the world. Volunteers have the opportunity to serve again by utilizing their skills and experience in places where they are needed the most. Since its inception in 1996, Peace Corps Response has sent over 1,300 returned Volunteers to more than 50 countries. Peace Corps Response service provides returned Peace Corps Volunteers opportunities to obtain career-focused experience while accomplishing tangible results in a condensed period of time. To learn more, go to: www.peacecorps.gov/response.

Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams Visits Macedonia

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 21, 2010 – Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams visited Macedonia July 11-15 for a regional Peace Corps country directors conference and met in Ohrid with Macedonia President Gjorge Ivanov. PC/Macedonia Country Director Stephen Kutzy and U.S. Ambassador Philip Reeker joined Director Williams at Villa Biljana for the presidential meeting.

President Ivanov expressed his appreciation for Peace Corps volunteers and their efforts to promote friendship and cooperation between the American people with the Republic of Macedonia. President Ivanov also announced his intent to honor the

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Peace Corps with the “Order of Merit of the 8th of September” on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 2011 and the 15th anniversary of the Peace Corps/Macedonia program.

“It is my great honor to accept the award recognizing the strong partnership between our Peace Corps volunteers and the people of Macedonia,” said Director Williams. “The Peace Corps was founded to promote world peace and friendship in 1961 and the work we are doing with the communities of Macedonia today truly represents President Kennedy’s vision for public service.”

In Skopje, Director Williams met with Minister of Education Nikola Todorov and Minister of Self-Government Musa Xhaferi. He thanked both ministries for their support.

Director Williams and Kutzy also had the opportunity to visit a Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World), which was organized by 16 Peace Corps volunteers who served as counselors for an ethnically and culturally diverse group of young women ranging in age from 14 to 18. Established in Macedonia in 2000, Camp GLOW helps young women to develop leadership skills, improve their self-esteem, increase their knowledge of women’s health issues, and underscore the importance of respecting and caring for the environment. The project in Macedonia is supported by Youthink, the U.S. Embassy in Skopje, and the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

In addition to Camp GLOW volunteers, the director met with Karen Schaan of North Dakota, a third-year extension volunteer who briefed him on her work with the Ohrid Red Cross and introduced him to her colleagues. While in Macedonia, she has helped computerize an English library and started an English language story hour for local children. Also serving in the Ohrid area are volunteers Benson Siwek of Texas, David Koch, and Adam Pollack. Koch and Pollack are both residents of Silver Spring, Maryland. They had not seen each other since middle school, but were reunited 12 years later in Macedonia, each being placed in the southwest corner of the country.

Peace Corps/Macedonia volunteers, ranging in age from 23 to 79, are working on a wide variety of projects related to community development and English education. The Peace Corps began operating in Macedonia in 1996 with a group of seven volunteers. Today, 68 Americans serve the country as Peace Corps volunteers. Since 1996, nearly 400 volunteers have served in these two key program areas in the Republic of Macedonia.

Peace Corps Fellows/USA Program Partners with Clark University

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 15, 2010 – The Peace Corps welcomes Clark University to its Fellows/USA program. Through the Graduate School of Management, Clark University will offer returned Peace Corps volunteers the opportunity to work toward an MBA degree in a variety of concentrations including social change. The social change track is comprised of courses in social entrepreneurship, environmental policy and community development. In addition to classroom work, the Fellows will conduct internships throughout Worcester, Massachusetts, a diverse community where more than 50 languages are spoken.

“This new partnership with Clark University is a welcome addition to our Fellows/USA program,” said Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams. “Peace Corps Fellows who participate in the Clark University program will have the opportunity to apply their talents acquired as leaders in their host communities abroad while further developing their skills to address some of today’s most challenging issues.”

Participating Fellows will receive at least a 50 percent reduction in tuition with the possibility for further merit aid.

“I have a hard time imagining a better partner for Clark’s Graduate School of Management than the Peace Corps,” said Edward Ottensmeyer, Dean of the Graduate School of Management. “This new agreement will bring a group of talented, globally-savvy former PCVs to a business school with an overarching focus on global issues,

environmental awareness and social change.”

The Fellows/USA program offers returned Peace Corps volunteers financial benefits such as scholarships, reduced tuition and university credit in advanced degree programs at 54 participating colleges and universities. In addition to their academic studies, Fellows/USA participants apply the experiences they acquired as volunteers abroad to service projects that benefit underserved American communities.

Peace Corps’ Fellows/USA program started in 1985 at Teachers College, Columbia University and celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. To help expand Fellows/USA into new geographical regions and courses of study, Peace Corps is encouraging all accredited American graduate schools to apply by October 1, 2010 to the Peace Corps Fellows/USA program. More details can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/fellows.

The Clark University Graduate School of Management attracts a diverse student body hailing from more than 30 countries. Clark University is also one of the oldest universities to offer formal graduate programs, and is one of only three New England universities to be a founding member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Teach For America is the fifth AmeriCorps program to partner with Peace Corps in 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 8, 2010 – The Peace Corps and Teach For America have partnered to help recruit the next generation of Peace Corps volunteers and further prepare Teach For America alumni for careers in today’s global marketplace.

“Teach For America provides young Americans the practical skills to be successful and effective educators in our nation’s public schools,” said Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams. “I am excited to have Teach For America alumni apply their commitment to educational equity and excellence to Peace Corps service worldwide.”

Teach For America will encourage its alumni to consider serving in local communities abroad with Peace Corps. The Peace Corps will, in turn, encourage returned volunteers to consider opportunities with Teach For America.

“We are very supportive of the Peace Corps’ efforts to expand opportunities for children and families in developing countries,” said Teach For America CEO and Founder Wendy Kopp. “Serving in the Peace Corps is one important way that Teach For America alumni can utilize their knowledge, skills, and insight to help level the playing field for young people around the world.”

Teach For America is one of the nation’s largest providers of teachers for low-income communities. It joins America’s Service Commissions, City Year, the Corps Network, and the National Association of Community Health Centers as the fifth AmeriCorps program to partner with the Peace Corps. This fall, more than 8,200 Teach For America teachers will serve in 39 urban and rural communities and impact some 500,000 students. Teach For America has more than 20,000 alumni. To learn more about Teach For America, please visit: www.teachforamerica.org.



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