

KHOTSO

April 2010



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Message from the Country Director



Kathy and PCV Adam Santos at Quolaqhoe

I hope you all had a relaxing holiday wherever you spent it.

As I write this message, I am looking out my office window at a rainstorm. I have noticed during storms in Maseru that often the sky above is dark while in the distance you can see bright blue. As if to illustrate, I just saw two bolts of lightning with a full rainbow as a backdrop. This image sums up the month of March for me as it was mixed with both wonderful and awful events. The high points were accompanying Ntate Clement to visit several Volunteers in the Butha Buthe district, spending time with the ED 10 group during their Phase III training, attending sessions at the Diversity Camp and a youth camp in the stunning Tsehlanyane Park, and getting to know more Volunteers and staff. A somewhat unexpected high note was sharing the Seder dinner with several Volunteers and a few staff during Passover. The food and fellowship were great.

As you can imagine, the low points were the security incidents that befell three of our Volunteers. Fortunately, the Volunteers are okay, but the incidents were serious and indicative of the "critical crime threat" that Maseru poses. I hope you all are thinking about or have already begun to take precautions for your own personal safety, especially when in Maseru. Do not walk alone if you can avoid

it. Never walk after dark. Take taxis. Be vigilant at all times. I repeat these reminders as much for myself (and my husband who loves to walk) as I do for all of you. Another low point was losing one of the ED 10 group as Mary Warichalet decided to terminate early. We wish her well.

As the Peace Corps cycle continues, in April, we look forward to feting the CHED 08 group at their COS conference and preparing for the new CHED group that will arrive in June. In addition, staff have scheduled several site visits, and I hope to visit a few of you at your sites. I'll also be planning my "public transportation site visit," which will probably take place the first week in May. If you think your site is particularly challenging to get to, let me know. I may check it out.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you for your hard work, but particularly the ED 10 group for the enthusiasm they showed about their first 3 months at site, all the staff and Volunteers trainers who helped make the Phase III training a success, the staff and Volunteers who participated in the ED PAC meeting, the Volunteers and staff who helped clean up the VRC (which had been identified as a "fire hazard" by our regional safety and security officer) and anyone I may have missed.

Keep up the great work and take care of yourselves.

Khotso,
Kathy Jacquart Dill
Country Director

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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.

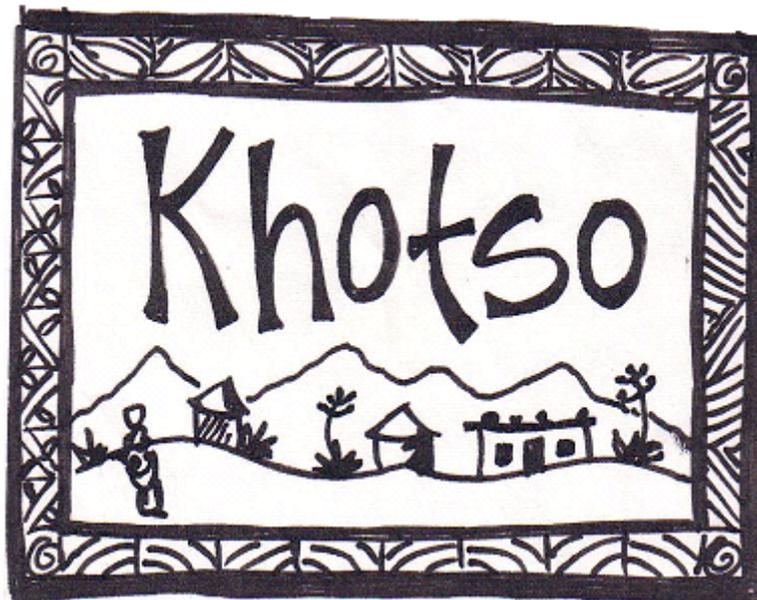
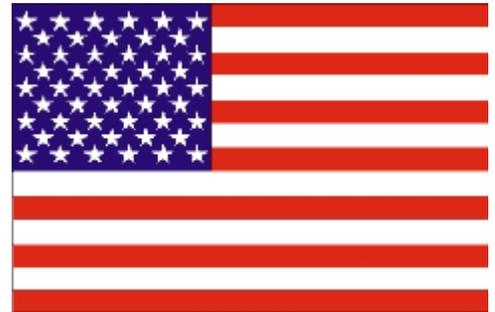
The editorial staff would like feedback from PCVs regarding the content. It is our desire to provide you with information that is useful, helpful, and encouraging. We would appreciate receiving constructive feedback from you as to whether the information contained in this newsletter met your needs.

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.

**April**

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| De Lucia, Nancy | April 7 |
| McKeen, Emily | April 7 |
| Essue, Andre | April 16 |
| Griffin, Edward | April 25 |

May

| | |
|------------------|--------|
| Vonholtum, Megan | May 4 |
| Nosler, Merrill | May 13 |
| Santos, Adam | May 15 |
| Waggoner, Haley | May 17 |
| Lobrow, Karolina | May 18 |
| Cuevas, Victor | May 19 |
| Viola, Gregory | May 20 |
| Griffin, Carol | May 30 |

June

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Mohr, Jonathan | June 3 |
| Stone, Taralyn | June 6 |
| Evans, Nicole | June 7 |
| Schmale, Allison | June 9 |
| Erdeg, Irena (Limpho) | June 10 |
| Malone, Kevin | June 15 |
| Enriquez, Rocio | June 17 |
| Warrichaiet, Mary | June 19 |
| Parker, Karrin (Lebo) | June 21 |
| Smallwood, Tricia | June 21 |
| Anhalt, John | June 25 |
| Murphy, John | June 27 |

CoS'ing PCV Yard Sale

I'm COSing May 27th, so it's time to sell some of my shizz. Let me know if you want anything

Vodacom Edge Modem (works w. macs) comes with sim card data activated : R550.00

Solar Shower : R100.00

Yoga Mat : R70.00

Hammock : R100.00

Jansport 70L+ Travel Backpack : R1,000.00

Nike Exercise Band : R40.00 Guest

Bed Mattress : R150.00

Email me tricia.smallwood@gmail.com or SMS me @ 59540039.

PCV Trish Smallwood

EARTH DAY

April 22 is Earth Day!

Let us know how you celebrate it.

Take lots of pictures and send some to us. We would like to send them to Peace Corps Headquarters.



PCV News Corner



Staff Birthdays



April

Tsatsi Sefefo April 19

May

Ralintoane Majara May 2
Makhauta Mokone May 26

June

Lereko Mofokeng June 15

Peace Corps Lesotho Holidays

April

April 2— Good Friday (US, LS Holiday)*
April 5— Easter Monday (LS Holiday)*

May

May 1— Workser’s Day (LS Holiday)*
May 31— Memorial Day (US Holiday)*

June

No holidays this month.

*PC Lesotho remains closed on this day.

Education Corner

By Clement Lephoto

We have just completed Phase III training for the ED ‘10s and judging by the level of enthusiasm at this workshop, we are confident that these Volunteers are returning back to their posts to further apply themselves for the benefit of their communities. I would like to specifically like to thank those who contributed towards the staging of this event, our core team of Volunteers, Brett, Gwen, John, Meg, Ro and Vic and many others who facili-

tated variety of sessions. The trip to Merrill’s site was well received and we invite you to take a look at the pictures of the remarkable KEY hole garden. ‘Flowers’ to Merrill, Nick and Oscar for putting this together.

Over the next two months I will be on the road visiting the ED ‘10s and simultaneously checking on a few potential sites for ED ‘11s. A few volunteers have approached us

about some sites that could need some help... We will entertain some suggestions!

Changes in the ED Calendar

I had indicated that I will be on vacation for two weeks beginning mid April...this is no longer the case. Please see the updated schedule above. In the next mailing we will include the June-July calendar and most likely I will take a few weeks in July!



Staff Corner
Education Corner



ED10 Phase III keyhole gardening session



Khotse



ED10 Phase III



Education Corner



PDM Workshop with supervisors



NGO Fair



*Health Corner, Safety
and Security Corner &
Admin Corner*

Health Corner By Dr. J & M'e' Mantiti

In the USA, 5.5 million people per day use a non steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). It is the most commonly prescribed drug and most consumed over the counter medication. The commonly consumed ones amongst volunteers is Ibuprofen, aspirin and on rare occasion naproxen is used. These medications are very useful when used appropriately for indicated painful condition. However, if they are consumed indiscriminately they have serious side effect and long term complications.

Common indications for these analgesics are:

Pain relief (Moderate); Fever; Anti-inflammatory effect (e.g., sprain and swellings); Migraines; Painful menstruation

Some of the adverse effects that have been documented of use of NSAIDS are:

Upper Gastro-intestinal tract

(GIT): causes gastric erosion; Lower GIT: Bleeding, perforation, obstruction, ulceration, symptomatic diverticular disease, relapse of inflammatory bowel disease; Renal function; Life threatening dehydration; interstitial nephritis (idiosyncratic); Cardiovascular adverse effects; Indirect: Salt and water retention; Fatigue, light-headedness, decrease in perceived muscle power, hallucinations; Asthma; in aspirin sensitive individuals Blood dyscrasias; effect on energy metabolism

It is important to avoid overuse or abuse of these medications. If you need to use them for long period of time let be recommended by your PCMOs or healthcare provided at your site. For mild pain with strains or swelling involving tendon, muscle or ligament we recommend you start with Tylenol and Ice. And contact us as soon as you can.

Health Unit Reminders:

Always come to Maseru with your passport anytime you are authorized to come in for Medical because you might be required to travel across the border for care.

Always travel with your medical prescriptions, birth control pills or medication you use regularly from your medical kit when ever you are coming to Maseru or leaving your site. The Health Unit does not have an endless supply of medicines.

Cancellation of Medical appointments: if you are not going to be able to keep an appointment we made for you, please notify us a day before the appointment to allow us tie to cancel such appointment without being billed.

The season flu vaccines is not yet available once it is available, we shall notify you via SMS. For those yet to get their Swine flu vaccines, please contact us ASAP.

Safety & Security Corner By Ntate Thamae

Emergency Action Plan – In March we conducted an obligatory test of our EAP communication system. The test entailed attempting to contact all Volunteers without the use of cell phones. (Thank you to all who complied with the test (or tried to).) Only a small number of Volunteers were successfully contacted and responded to the message correctly. The test highlighted several areas of weakness in our system, including inadequate training of some Volunteers, staff, and DSRs; total

absence of landlines at many sites; incomplete or non-existent site locator forms and many others. Unfortunately, a few Volunteers refused to comply with the test. Although this is grounds for administrative separation, we decided not to penalize them but rather learn from the experience and try to fix what's broken. Ensuring that our communication system works is essential to ensuring your safety in case of an emergency. Be warned that another test is in the offing and

we expect everyone to comply.

If you have not turned in your site locator form, do so immediately!!!

Counterfeit R200 Notes – Be aware that people have received fake R200 notes from ATMs in Maseru and Bloemfontein. Check your cash immediately. If you think you got a fake note and you are at a bank, you can try to complain to the management. It may or may not work.

Admin Corner By Rich Carlson

Big News!!! Peace Corps/Washington has approved an increase in the Volunteer Living Allowance for Peace Corps/Lesotho. Based on the Living Allowance Survey completed by Volunteers and a Market Basket Survey conducted by staff, the living allowance will increase 14% retroactive to April 1, 2010. We had originally estimated 10% and are pleased that PC/W approved this higher amount. Your monthly allowance will increase from M 1,743.50/month to M 1,992.00, (i.e. M 248.50 increase per month).

STAFF CALENDAR

Please note that all dates are subject to change. Staff will try to inform affected Volunteers of any changes as soon as possible. The Health Unit had scheduled medical site visits in April. Unfortunately, some of these are being cancelled for various reasons. Volunteers will be contacted about these changes. The CHED calendar will be sent later.

April

April 6-9 – P&T and other staff: Training Design and Evaluation workshop at Training Center

April 12-16

Clement: 4/12 - Mabuleng SS, 4/13 - Mokhotlong ECCD, 4/14 Mashai LCE and Thaba Tseka HS, 4/15 - Katse HS and Malibamatso SS, 4/16 Leribe ECCD

Jimi: 4/15-16 – Butha-Buthe HIV Resource Planning Meeting and St. Dennis High School

April 19 – 23

CHED 08 COS conference in Malealea: 4/19-21 (various staff out of the office to participate)

Selloane: 4/16 on leave

Clement: 4/21 – Semonkong, 4/22 - Likalaneng

April 26 – 30

CHED PST TOT

Clement: 4/26-28 – Mafeteng, Mochales Hoek, Quthing

May

May 1-31 – Rich on leave and attending AO conference

May 3-7

Clement: 5/3 – Site development Berea and Leribe, 5/4 – Malithuso HS and Sebetia PS, 5/5 - St. Theresa HS and Fobane SS, 5/6 – Qholaqhoe HS, 5/7 – Linokong

Jimi: 5/6-9 – Butha Buthe HIV Library Resource workshop

May 10 – 14

Masechaba: 5/11-13 – PST village survey

Jimi – 5/12-14 Annual Leave

May 17 – 21

Jimi at PEPFAR conference

Clement: 5/17 - M'Hoek ECCD and Mekaling, 5/18 – Moyening HS and Holy Trinity, 5/19 – Mphaki LCE, 5/20 – Hlalele SS

May 24-28 – Victoria at AO conference

June

June 1 – 'M'e Malitaba returns from maternity leave.

June 4 – CHED 10 PST begins

Staff Announcements**DUTY OFFICER SCHEDULE**

| From | To | Duty Officer |
|-----------|-----------|----------------------|
| 5-Apr-10 | 11-Apr-10 | Clement Lephoto |
| 12-Apr-10 | 18-Apr-10 | Charles Miller |
| 19-Apr-10 | 25-Apr-10 | Kathy Jacquart Dill |
| 26-Apr-10 | 2-May-10 | Deepak Pullanikkatil |
| 3-May-10 | 9-May-10 | TBD |
| 10-May-10 | 16-May-10 | Masechaba Mapena |
| 17-May-10 | 23-May-10 | Thamae Mpiti |
| 24-May-10 | 30-May-10 | Clement Lephoto |
| 31-May-10 | 6-Jun-10 | Charles Miller |
| 7-Jun-10 | 13-Jun-10 | Kathy Jacquart Dill |
| 14-Jun-10 | 20-Jun-10 | Deepak Pullanikkatil |
| 21-Jun-10 | 27-Jun-10 | Richard Carlson |
| 28-Jun-10 | 4-Jul-10 | Masechaba Mapena |



Staff Announcements

POLICY CHANGES

Staff have been working on updating the Volunteer handbook to align Peace Corps/Lesotho's policies with general agency policy and those of neighboring countries. Several changes reflect input from the VAC. Updated handbooks will be distributed to all Volunteers soon. In the meantime, below is a summary of some of the changes. More details are included in the handbook. Unless otherwise indicated, these changes are in effect as of April 1, however, we will have a 30 day "grace period" in order to disseminate the information.

Whereabouts/Out-of-Site Notification – Two principles apply here: 1) Your work is primarily at your site therefore leaving site should be limited, and 2) PC needs to know where you are at all times so we can get a hold of you in case of emergency. For day trips during a workday, you must request authorization from your supervisor. For day trips on the weekend, you must *inform* your supervisor or someone else on your site locator form. Day trips do not require approval from PC staff or notification. For overnight trips during workdays for any reason, you must request authorization from your supervisor and your APCD. For overnight trips on a weekend, you should *inform* your supervisor or someone on your site locator form and *request approval* from your APCD. APCDs know who does and does not have regular cell or internet access and special accommodations can be made for them. For all other Volunteers, approvals should be requested by e-mail or text at least 3 days in advance. Volunteers found to be out of site excessively for any reason may be denied approval.

Leaving Lesotho for any reason – In case of emergency, PC/Lesotho must report to other posts (including South Africa) when our Volunteers are going to be in their country even if it's for one day. Therefore, prior approval by the APCD and CD is required. Volunteers living near border towns may seek prior approval for multiple days trips (e.g., if a South African town is the closest place to shop) but still must notify the APCD when they leave and when they return. Overnight trips out of the country, unless as indicated below, require the use of annual leave.

Annual Leave – Annual leave must be requested 14 days in advance and requires approval from your supervisor, APCD and, if out of the country, the CD. If you can't send the leave form to the office 14 days ahead of time (i.e., because you do not have access to a fax or scanner and won't be in Maseru), provisional approval may be given by the APCD by text or e-mail and the signed form submitted as soon as possible before your leave. Anyone abusing this flexibility may forfeit the privilege. Leave without Allowance can be granted for emergency circumstances (e.g., death of a family member) or "life changing events" like a last minute wedding of a sibling. LWOA is not for vacations.

First and Last 90 Days of Service – To integrate and wrap up, Volunteers should be at their sites during these periods. This is standard PC practice. During this time, Volunteers may leave their site: for PC-approved work-related or medical reasons or for day trips to the camp town or to another Volunteer's site to assist with a project (the whereabouts notification policy described above must be followed). In the last 30-90 days of service Volunteers may take annual leave for one long weekend but otherwise annual leave may not be taken. During the last 30 days of service, Volunteers should limit absences from site to PC-approved medical or administrative trips.

Bloemfontein – As recommended by the VAC, Volunteers will be allowed one "free" overnight weekend trip (Saturday and Sunday) to Bloemfontein per year of service. This must be approved by the APCD ahead of time. You will not have to take annual leave for this trip. If you add days to it, however, you must take leave for those days.

Maseru – Unless you have to be in Maseru for work-related reasons, you should avoid it. The recent crime incidents should give you a clue why. That said, throughout the year, you may need to come to Maseru to take care of work-related or personal business that you can not do from your site or the camp town. Volunteers from districts other than Maseru will be authorized (with prior approval from the APCD and supervisor) one 3-day (2 night) trip to Maseru per quarter. You have funds in your living allowance for this trip and therefore it will not be reimbursed. This trip should be used to take care of grant-related tasks, shopping, vacation preparation, etc. Volunteers do not have to use this trip if they don't need to and any Volunteers abusing this privilege (i.e., coming into Maseru too frequently) will lose it. Note that this trip may not be used to corral a bunch of Volunteers for a party. It is strictly to take care of business.

Training Center – We are working on streamlining the reservation process but have not finalized it as we expect to hire new staff whose responsibilities will likely include training center reservations. In the meantime, reservations should go through the APCD with adequate advanced notice. The Duty Officer should be contacted only in emergencies.

VRC – VRC hours are 6:30am – 5pm Sunday through Saturday. Under special circumstances, Volunteers may request permission from their APCD to stay after 5pm but no later than 10pm and will have to take a taxi when they leave.

Standards of Conduct – The VAC asked whether we had a standard of conduct for staff. It turns out that other posts have "Reciprocal Standards of Conduct," which is signed by the CD (on behalf of staff) and Volunteers. We have incorporated these standards into the Handbook.

Dress Code – Out of respect for your fellow Volunteers, PC staff and guests, all Volunteers are expected to be neat, clean, professional and culturally appropriate when at the office, training center during training events and workshops and other venues during such events. In gen-

eral this means no shorts, no flip flops or sneakers, no jeans (except nice ones on Friday), no tank tops, collared shirts for men, skirts or nice slacks for women. A dress code is included in the current handbook (updated May 2009), and many Volunteers follow it. Those who do not will be asked to change.

Washing Machine at Training Center – Because many Volunteers were overloading the machines and causing them to break on several occasions, the washer and dryer are off limits to Volunteers. The VAC has proposed that Volunteers collect money to purchase a washing machine and pay for water usage. We are waiting to hear from PC/Washington about whether we are approved to make needed renovations and repairs to the training center. If we are, staff will explore the possibility of installing a washing machine purchased by Volunteers. In the meantime, buckets for washing clothes have been placed at the training center. That said, however, Volunteers should not be traveling into Maseru with the sole purpose of doing laundry at the training center.

CHED 08 Exceptions – Due to the World Cup in June and July, Peace Corps/Washington is allowing certain exceptions for the CHED 08 group (as well as groups from other neighboring countries COSing during this period). For example, early COS is being granted more liberally than normal and Volunteers are being allowed (if not encouraged) to COS before the World Cup. For all other Volunteers, PC/W has reiterated the policy that Volunteers are expected to complete their service and those not wishing to are invited to terminate early. Leeway within 30 days before or after the official COS date is allowed.

Staff Announcements
&
PCV Life



PSN Update
By PCV Allison Schmale

General Updates

Hello fellow Lesotho Peace Corps Volunteers!

First of all we are accepting nominations from volunteers for people they want on PSN. If you know of someone you can talk to, can trust, and would be a good addition to PSN shoot any PSN member an SMS with your nominations. Volunteers can nominate people up to April 30th. Put careful thought into who you want to nominate. Or if you, yourself, really want to be on the committee you can ask someone else to nominate you or you can nominate yourself. At the next, quarterly PSN meeting all the nominations will be considered and a final list will be passed on to the Peace Corps administration, they will then approve people to be on the committee. After that the nominees will get a SMS asking if they would like to be on PSN, at which point the volunteer can either accept or decline the invitation. Please if you have any questions on this process; contact a PSN member for more information.

Second bit of business is that our most wonderful PSN member, Karen, has taken time to develop a vacation resource folder to be used by fellow volunteers, as vacations are considered a pivotal outlet for stress relief. Please feel free to use the information (please return it to the folder though!) as well as add to it any recommendations and how-to for traveling in and around this amazing continent. I think that is it for business.

Under Pressure

Now it's time to talk about emotions, everyone's favorite topic. I know when I first considered Peace Corps and then went through the application process and took the plunge and arrived in Lesotho, I was very okay, I would even go so far as to say enthralled about not having to peep a word about my emotions to another soul for two years. My thought was, if I am in Lesotho, I'm going to be put out in the middle of nowhere, nobody asking me to open up about "how I felt with my experiences that day" and most likely with no cell service, so not even mother dearest could get in contact with me. After one and a half years, I am seeking, actively looking out for the next poor sap who asks me how I'm doing, because depending upon the day, they could get a shower of unexpected emotions from me. That's what the pressures and stress of being a volunteer in Lesotho can do to an ordinarily aloof person.

As I begin to look back on my service, I am seeing a consistent pattern of stress and what causes it. Maybe it is my Catholic guilt that causes this, but I am noticing that much of my stress comes from the pressure I put on myself. I have found that I put pressure on myself in so many instances. It comes from wondering what I should be doing on my free afternoons that could save Lesotho from AIDS instead of drinking my 12th cup of tea for the day and reading *Twilight* for the second time around. Or I will feel the pressure of making sure every last detail of a presentation is perfect when in the back of my head I know it really doesn't matter because nothing ever goes the way it is supposed to here. Or I constantly go over interactions I've had with Basotho to determine if what I said was comforting or properly representative of my job here. I just torture myself with these details because when you are here with little else to do, torturing yourself with the details is often better to do than nothing. So pressure happens.



PCV Life

I'm not going to tell you not to put pressure on yourself, it happens, is unavoidable, and in many cases can be helpful. One way to approach it is to learn to deal with the onslaught of pressure we bring on ourselves. We have all been through similar sessions during training where they inform you to handle stress by doing things you love to do. Whether that is drawing, building things, or making up your own choreography to Broadway musical numbers (which some of us do I'm not saying who, but some of us do this), but what it comes down to is that we all have our ways of dealing with stress. Hopefully you came here with an arsenal of things to do to help get you through those stressful days. For me, I have found some peace in routine. While I do love *Twilight* (ahem, and Broadway), it is not my main source of stress relief. Every day, whether it is good or bad, I take solace in knowing at six o'clock in the evening, everything for me is going to stop and I am going to cook myself dinner. I not only love to cook, but I love planning on what I am going to cook, I love shopping for it, and I love taking the time to prepare a meal. Every time I come home from Maseru, I most likely have printed off at least 5 new recipes to try out. Everything about the process helps to melt the stress away. I know exactly what I am doing, I get to experiment with new foods and flavors, the knowledge that I am making good and wholesome food for me to eat, the rhythm of chopping food and hearing it sizzle in the pan, and after all my work I get to sit down and enjoy my food in peace (I lock my doors and read and listen to music). I'm not saying cooking and routine is what you have to do to relieve stress, but try and find something to do each day that you love and can completely lose yourself in and run with. Maybe something like that is worth trying. Maybe it is throwing rocks at other rocks or playing card games, but to find something like that is helpful in relieving stress and forgetting the pressures of the day. Don't be afraid to experiment, I mean I have heard some pretty interesting ways of relieving stress, and personally you have a long way to go before you get weird among the Peace Corps community in Lesotho, so go for it. Believe me; only the Basotho will be watching you and they already think you are weird, so you have nothing to lose.

This following recipe may not sound the healthiest, but it is a comfort food and with a few adjustments it gets a little healthier. However, the suggested add-ins makes it way better, and they still aren't too bad for you as long as you don't eat it like 10 in one sitting. Enjoy!

Healthy Bran Pancakes for One

Makes around 4 pancakes

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup oats

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup bran (available in Maseru, called digestive bran, available in the flour section)

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp baking powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

3 tbs sugar

1 tsp vanilla

1 egg

1 cup buttermilk or sour milk (to make add vinegar or lemon juice to fresh milk)

2 tbs melted butter or oil

Optional add in's: chocolate, coconut, walnuts/pecans/almonds, cinnamon, nutmeg, apple, banana, etc...(may I suggest the combo of chocolate, coconut, cinnamon, and nutmeg)

-Mix ingredients together, using a $\frac{1}{2}$ measuring cup, ladle batter onto a hot and oiled pan or griddle

-Turn as sides begin to brown, and once done enjoy!



TIME AND AGWEN

By PCV Cullen Wade

I had a vivid dream the other night. I was in my house with Thabo, one of my co-workers—I'm not sure why he was there. For some reason we had a car, and we decided to drive up to the top of my mountain, even though there's no road. It was a dark, dark night. We reached the top and got out of the car, then I turned to Thabo and said, "Look around."

Instead of the dark rural landscape, a beautiful city had sprung up before our eyes, complete with soaring steel skyscrapers, lurid neon flashes, and a sinuous black river that twinkled reflections of the city lights. It was Manhattan, Tokyo and Dubai rolled into one, but with the pure beauty only a dream-city can boast.

I have no trouble interpreting this dream. Its meaning, I think, is two-fold. First of all I think it speaks to how I have come to view this place. Where others might see a poor, nothing rural backwater, I see the potential for unlimited growth and development—if only the people will open their eyes. The part of the dream I remember most vividly, the vista aside, was turning to Thabo and saying, "Look around." He couldn't see the city by himself—I had to show it to him.

The other message of the dream, I think, is that Lesotho has pervaded my soul. At the risk of sounding cheesy: I'll never forget what I did here, the people I taught and the people who taught me. Wherever I go, even if I wind up in the City of Dreams, some part of me will always be on that mountaintop gazing at the valley, with a tear in my eye and a friend by my side.

Readjustment Allowance – On March 12, the Director announced that the readjustment allowance will be increased from \$250 to \$275/month of service as of April 1. In addition, extending Volunteers will receive \$375/month.

Bogus Internet Dog and Animal Scams: In response to new reports, the Peace Corps Office of Inspector General (OIG) is again warning the American public to be vigilant against online scams involving pet adoptions from Africa by a person or persons claiming to be affiliated with the Peace Corps. OIG previously warned the public about these scams in June 2009. "Since May of 2009, we are aware of several U.S. citizens and one Canadian citizen who have been victims of a pet scam," said Peace Corps Inspector General Kathy Buller. "We want to let the public know they should be careful in responding to ads for pet adoptions overseas, especially if the ads claim some type of Peace Corps affiliation." Victims responded to Internet ads about dogs allegedly being given away by Peace Corps volunteers in West African nations such as Cameroon. The scam asks potential victims to wire money for shipping costs.

U.S. citizens are cautioned against responding to these ads even if the ad claims a Peace Corps affiliation. The OIG encourages U.S. citizens to look closely at the descriptions within these internet ads, which are often written in broken English. The public may contact the OIG to confirm the authenticity of individuals affiliated with the Peace Corps at oig@peacecorps.gov.

Uganda APCD shares the following about an innovative PCV initiative in Uganda: "Quite a number of our PCVs are working locally with their girls in schools to develop sanitary pads with locally available materials as lack of such protection not only discourages them from playing sports but also compromises their hygiene and keeps them out of school during their menstrual cycle. We have about 4-5 PCVs working on this at their sites." To learn more about similar initiatives by other organizations, check out this site: <http://www.changemakers.com/womeninsport>

Youth Clubs: <http://www.dosomething.org/clubs/resources>. This website includes a number of project and topic resources, including tips for starting a youth club, first meetings, fundraising ideas and others. Also, learn more about issues, including poverty, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, and international human rights. <http://www.dosomething.org/whatsyourthing>

Organizations Working with People with Disabilities: PC/Washington has compiled a list of organizations around the world working with people with disabilities. If you're interested in the list for Lesotho (or any other country), please ask your APCD.

RPCV Lesotho – Africa solar electricity project takes shape at Eckerd College

The promise of cheap power for health clinics in rural Africa sits at the edge of a Florida bay. Lesotho's ruddy mountainscape has just this in common with a strip of grass at Eckerd College: sunlight. That, and one volunteer-minded grandmother, are why experts from four states showed up this month to start work on an experimental low-tech power plant. Mirrored troughs will concentrate the sun's heat on a fluid, creating motion – and electricity. The test site for MIT engineers will help them refine an award-winning solar design already powering one Lesotho clinic.

Why Africa? Why Eckerd?

The answer is Matt Orosz, a 32-year-old doctoral student at MIT. He's an engineer now, but was once a liberal arts student at Dartmouth College. Semesters in Budapest, then Zimbabwe, inspired time in the Peace Corps. He worked in Lesotho, a country surrounded by South Africa where fewer than one in six people have access to electricity.

He burned his hand on a bread oven. The oven used sunlight, with bread sitting in a shiny parabola that concentrated heat. If the Basotho could bake their bread, Orosz thought, he could create power. A solar energy system that didn't rely on glass-covered photovoltaic panels could solve a handful of problems. It could replace polluting diesel generators. It could create hot water that would free women from scavenging in deforested areas for fuel. It would limit theft and damage to delicate shipped-in components.

He needed to become an engineer. He went to MIT and earned two master's degrees. He returned with a team to Lesotho in 2005 to build prototypes of a solar thermal power system that he designed. The system was already grabbing attention. "Nobody designs a miniature power plant," he says.

Orosz won the MIT Ideas Competition in 2004 and 2005. He was a World Bank Development Marketplace finalist. He picked up a couple of fellowships. He started a nonprofit, STG International.

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His work has been funded by the World Bank, National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance, Ignite Clean Energy, the MIT Energy Initiative and the EPA's P3 program.

Here's what was different about his system: First, size. U.S. solar thermal plants can sprawl across hundreds of acres to power thousands of homes. He wanted a miniaturized system, for a single school or clinic, that would provide 3 to 5 kilowatts of power plus hot water. Second, cost. That miniaturization couldn't result in expensive, rare parts. He needed to be able to use parts that were already relatively common to make his system competitive for off-grid Africans who pay 30 to 50 cents a kilowatt hour for diesel or photovoltaic power. Third, simplicity. The best system — one that would take root and spread — would be one the Basotho could build and maintain themselves far from the national power grid. It would provide not just power, but local business.

"If you know how to turn a wrench, you're already part of the way there," said Amy Mueller, 30, another MIT doctoral student who co-directs nonprofit STG.

The earliest prototypes reused car and air conditioning parts: car power steering pumps and automotive AC compressors. Now the "junkyard solar" label is one Orosz and his team are working to shake.

"We don't use any car parts anymore, or even any used parts," Orosz says.

Take the Eckerd test site. Donated solar collectors came from a Hawaiian company, Sopogy. They're anchored in damp sand by German technology — giant Krinner Ground Screws instead of concrete — from a Canadian company that sent an installer from California. A St. Petersburg contractor that's a member of the Florida Green Builders Coalition, Water Oak Development Group, oversaw assembly and installation.

"Every time Matt takes on a new project, he looks for ways to improve the previous one," said Kent Rodahaver, Water Oak's director.

It was the search for a better spot for research and development that brought Orosz to Eckerd. Massachusetts was convenient, but only for the six weeks a year with enough sun. Lesotho, a 35-hour trip, was just too far. Even the Southwest, with plentiful light and space, was a longer plane flight than Florida. And then there was Orosz's grandma. Kay Gendreau, 75, has volunteered at Eckerd for nearly a decade. She loves the campus, the people. She lives across the street. Orosz grew up working in her Massachusetts restaurant. As he searched for a Florida site, Eckerd made sense.

When he stood up March 12 for the unveiling of the site's first phase, he thanked her. Gendreau beamed. "He's just a very unassuming kid. We never knew what he was up to until we saw it in a pamphlet somewhere," she said. For Eckerd, its yearlong Africa Initiative made the partnership ideal. "We're happy to help MIT out," president Donald Eastman joked at the unveiling.

The test site won't generate electricity until 2011. That's mostly because Orosz has something he has got to do before he finishes it. One of those fellowships he picked up was a 2009 Fulbright. He had to delay the trip — it was a busy year — but he leaves for southern Africa on March 30. He'll spend 10 months evaluating — what else? — technical, economic and social applicability of solar technology for use in low-income housing.

United States Mission to the United Nations - Office of Press and Public Diplomacy
March 4, 2010

Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Briefing of NGO Representatives, at the U.S. Mission, during the Commission on the Status of Women, March 4, 2010

I just wanted to begin by thanking you all for being here and thanking you for your dedication and participation in the CSW. And more broadly, thanking you for your commitment to the worldwide movement to the empowerment of women and girls. We are so fortunate to have here today my friend and colleague Ambassador Rick Barton and my friend and my good friend and colleague Tina Tchen, from the White House, you got to hear from and will hear more from here. She embodies, in many ways, the President's extraordinary commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls.

He said yesterday in his proclamation, "Our nation's commitment to women's rights must not end at our own borders, and my Administration is making global women's empowerment a core pillar of our foreign policy."

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I can tell you that up here at that United Nations, that is what we are trying to implement, very concretely, every day. And that that is the commitment that I want to just talk for a minutes with you all. And I wanted to start, because we are joined today by members of Girls Learn, The Girl Scouts and The Grail, I want to talk about youth for just a quick second. Our work at the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women is particularly important to your generation.

We are here to work toward a world where women and girls everywhere can fulfill their god-given potential, free of fear, free of want, and with the opportunity to live their own dreams. Many of us here in this country may take those opportunities for granted. But, when women are held back, anywhere, the world is held back. When girls lack equal opportunity and education, nations fall behind and we have seen that sadly, played out in many parts of the world. So, fifteen years after the Beijing Conference, the world can still be, as you all know, a bleak place for far too many women and girls.

Ambassador Melanne Verwee noted yesterday, a decade after the UN established the Millennium Development Goals related to maternal and child health, that an estimated 530,000 women still die every year from largely preventable complications in pregnancy or childbirth. That leaves 1 million children motherless each year, and these children are at increased risk of death within two years of their mother's death. And, I think we all agree that this is plainly just unacceptable. That's why the United States is so proud to sponsor a resolution at this session on the importance of reducing maternal mortality and morbidity, and improving women's health by empowering women.

The United States is also strongly committed to strengthening international action to stop the targeting of women and girls in conflict – atrocities that shock us to our core. Many of those who survive attacks are children, and mostly girl children. That's why the United States drafted and led the adoption, last September, of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1888, which mandated that UN peacekeeping missions protect women and girls from violence in armed conflict and establish a Special Representative to lead and coordinate those lifesaving efforts.

In the UN General Assembly, we joined with many partners around the world to champion the creation of a new United Nations entity to coordinate work on gender issues and replace the old, fragmented structure. This new organization needs to be created swiftly, it needs to be staffed well, and fully resourced. A key component of this will be the prompt appointment of a dynamic, strong, high-level Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director to head this new organization. We are determined to work to ensure the new entity has the vigor, the resources, and the stature that the world's women and girls deserve from this UN system.

The Obama administration is also working with our partners internationally to improve women's welfare through targeted investments in agriculture, nutrition, and health, as well as through programs that empower women to contribute to economic and social progress in their own communities. And we are following through on the commitments that the President made in Cairo to promote access to education, improve literacy, and expand employment opportunities for women and girls in the Muslim world.

We have taken important steps, and you all know that we have a lot more stuff to do. As the President said yesterday, "we are tasked with writing the next chapter of women's history." And that of course means world history.

And we can do that together. We can improve the lives of women. We can lift the sights of all our daughters. We can help build a world in which equality is a reality rather than a rhetorical device or an ideal. Susan B. Anthony put it back in 1872 well, the United States, she said, was founded "not to give the blessings of liberty but to secure them"—founded by "the whole people—women as well as men." This is a truth that we finally, truly need to hold to be self-evident. These are the rights that we really, truly need to make inalienable. And I look forward to our good work here together to work towards fulfilling that universal promise—to build a world in which liberty, equality, and dignity for all women are a birthright, not just a dream.

So I want to thank you again for being here. Thank you for your hard work and your commitment and to the progress that we will make together over the course of these two weeks.