

KHOTSO

March 2013

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Message from the Country Director



CHED10 Kelly Anderson outside the Mohale's Hoek Prison.

As usual I'd like to start out by highlighting visits to Volunteers that I made during the previous month. February's visits included: CHED 10 Kelly Anderson; ED 12s Aparna Jayaraman and Heather Mangan; CHED 12s Beth Pagan and Philip Drew; and ED 13s Morgan Nees Van Baalen, Rachel Edmonds, Kim Arent and Laura Johnson. A couple of my friends from the US (including one who is a retired Marine colonel) accompanied me to Aparna and Kelly's sites and then told me how proud they are of the work that Volunteers do on behalf of the American people. I certainly am too!

Reminders and Announcements

Small Grants: All community projects that involve funding through a Volunteer must be done through PCPP or VAST. Funding sources like www.GoFundMe.org and Water Charities are not allowable for Peace Corps Volunteers according to PC policy. If you have questions, let us know. (If you've partnered with Water Charity before, it's ok, but please don't do so again.)

Coverdell World Wise Schools: PC/L ranks below other posts in terms of percentage of Volunteers participating in WWS, and we'd like to improve that. It's a great goal 2 and 3 activity that we highly encourage. Despite what I said to the ED 13s during PST, don't be shy about getting reimbursed for stamps. If you have any questions, contact nate Clement.

Bystander Intervention: Have you used the Bystander Intervention training provided to you during PST or an IST to help prevent a potentially bad situation? If so, PC would like to hear about it. At the end of this Khotso is a flyer from PC/W with a link you can use to tell your story.

Victim's Advocate: Peace Corps is committed to providing support to Volunteers who are victims of sexual but recognize that sometimes they may not want to report an incident. Be reminded that Volunteers can contact the Victim's Advocate if they have been a victim of sex-

ual assault even if they choose not to report the incident to Peace Corps Lesotho staff. (victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov)

2012 Annual Volunteer Survey Results:

PC staff are analyzing the results of the 2012 AVS, and again wish to thank all who completed it last year. (We had a 100% response rate!!!) Overall, PC/L's results were better than 2011 and met or exceeded global and/or regional results. Here are a few highlights: *Where we're doing pretty well* (1) 54% of Volunteers reported that PST was effective or very effective in preparing them to work on project goals and objectives. This compares to 31% in 2011 and 41% in the Africa Region. (2) 71% of Volunteers reported that IST was effective or very effective in preparing them to work on project goals and objectives. This compares to 41% in 2011 and 47% in the Africa Region. (3) 85% of Volunteers reported that their primary project work transferred skills to host country individual (adequately or better). This compares to 76% in 2011 and meets PC's global target for this indicator. (4) 78% of Volunteers reported adequate or better satisfaction with their site selection. This compares to 69% in 2011 and the global target of 76%. *Where we can improve* (1) 42% of Volunteers rated their satisfaction with health care as adequate or better. This compares with 47% in 2011 and the global target of 93%. (2) 54% of Volunteers reported that they believe they are meeting project objectives considerably or exceptionally. This compares to 59% in 2011, and 51% for the Africa Region. (3) While we saw improvements compared to 2011, we fell below global targets for safety and security training, Volunteers feeling safe where they live and work, and Volunteers reporting that they are promoting a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served. We hope to continue to work on all of these areas and will be soliciting input from Volunteers on how we can do so. The AVS Report can be found on SharePoint.

Keep up your great work!

Kathy

Editorial Staff

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All other staff and PCVs who contribute

From the Editor

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. Remember that it is your responsibility to read the Khotso Newsletter for updates from Peace Corps Lesotho.

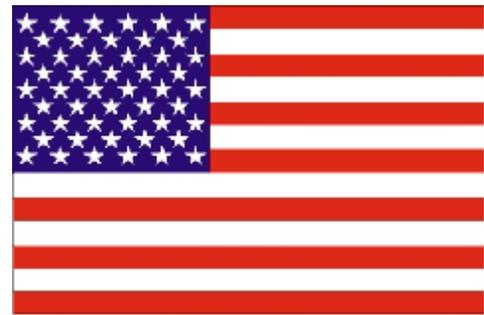
The editorial staff would like feedback from PCVs regarding the content. It is our desire to provide you with information that is useful, helpful, and encouraging. We would appreciate receiving constructive feedback from you.

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 & STAFF BIRTHDAYS

Birthday greetings go out to the following Volunteers and staff!

March

Tanabe, Anri – 6
 Letsella, Bernard – 15 (Gardner)
 Kary, Andrew – 16
 Schultz, Anne – 18
 Chaillé, Lyndsey – 21
 Anderson, Kelly – 24
 Thornton, Gerad – 29
 Brewer, Anne – 30

April

Severson, Teresa – 4
 Vincent, Caitlin – 7
 Sefefo, Tsatsi – 19 (General Services Assistant)
 Pitikoe, Selloane – 22 (APCD CHED)
 Fisher, Caitlin – 21
 Johnson, Laura – 25
 Forté, James – 26
 Perry, Christian – 27
 Simmons, Lewis – 30
 Wickland, David – 30

PEACE CORPS LESOTHO HOLIDAYS (Office closed these days)**March**

Moshoeshoe Day – 11 (LS Holiday)
 Good Friday – 29 (LS Holiday)

April

Easter Monday – 1 (LS Holiday)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND STAFF TRAVEL

Mar 4	Kathy on site visits in Leribe
Mar 4-6	M'e Malitaba and M'e Mamokola on site visits in Morija, Mafeteng, MH
Mar 12-14	Ntate Clement on site visits and site identification in Berea and Leribe
Mar 12-14	Kathy on site visits in Quthing and QN
Mar 19-21	Kathy on site visits in MH
Mar 21-27	ED 13 Phase III Workshop
Mar 31 – Apr 14	Kathy on Leave
Apr 2 – 5	Victoria on Leave
Apr 8 – 11	Clement on site visit
Apr 15 – 18	'Malitaba on site identification
Apr 22 – 25	Ntate Clement on site visits to BB, Mokhotlong, TT
Apr 22-26	HY 13 PST TOT
Apr 28 – May 4	Kathy on site visits in TT, QN and Mokhotlong
Apr 29	M'e Malitaba on site visit in Mafeteng
Apr 30	Me' 'Malitaba on site visit in MH

Duty Officer Schedule

March 1 – 7	DPT
March 8 – 14	CD
March 15 – 21	DMO
March 22 – 28	APCD ED
March 29 – April 4	APCD CHED

STAFF MEMBER OF THE MONTH – Eunicia Nkoro, Training Center Manager

'Me Eunicia is recognized for going above and beyond the call of duty to assist a Volunteer following a car accident in which she injured her arm and leg. 'Me Eunicia not only helped the Volunteer with her basic personal needs, she also reassured and counseled the Volunteer and tried to lift her spirits during this trying time.

ADMIN CORNER by Jim**Living Allowance Survey**

I am very happy to report that through a "flurry" of last minute submissions we exceeded the required 75% return rate to do anything about the living allowance. The next step is for the Admin Section to do a "Market Basket Survey" in all ten districts. If the data support an increase, we will make a request to PC HQ. It doesn't mean that it will be automatically approved, but we at least have a basis for the request.

Medical Bills

Some PCVs have reported receiving medical bills (and occasionally phone calls) from medical providers asking for payment. I want to assure all of you that we do pay our bills on time and have sufficient funds to cover any medical situation or emergency. From time to time a medical provider does not associate the PCV he is providing a service to with Peace Corps and thus pursues payment with the individual. If this happens to you please contact me or 'M'e Victoria (not Dr. Victor or 'M'e Itumeleng) as soon as possible so we can straighten it out. I promise it will be dealt with immediately.

2012 Income Tax Filing

Copies of your 2012 W-2 form from Peace Corps were mailed to whomever you designated back home to represent you in your absence. I have duplicate copies in my office. If you would like a copy, let me know and I will scan and e-mail a copy to you. Federal income tax filing help is available on the PC web site or via e-mail at taxhelp@peacecorps.gov. Check your state web sites to understand your state tax filing requirements.

Heating Allowance

Starting in April (through September), all Volunteers will receive an addition M85.00 per month in their Living Allowance to help defer some of the extra costs of heating during winter.

Joke of the Month

As I read back through the Admin Corner section above (and previous ones as well) I realize that although the information is useful, it is pretty "dry" so I have decided to "close" this offering (and subsequent ones) with a Joke of the Month. Here goes...*An optimist looks at a half-glass of water and says it is half full. A pessimist looks at a half-glass of water and says it is half empty. A Peace Corps Volunteer looks at a half-glass of water and says, "Yeah, I could totally take a bath with that."*

GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY ANNOUNCEMENT by Eric

Consider supporting the youth with whom you work in participating in the largest service event in the world, Global Youth Service Day, April 26th-28th, 2013. GYSD is awarding small grants of

\$500 to support youth-led service projects around the world that address a demonstrated community need or issue. Volunteers may partner with youth to create or support projects that address everything from health and HIV/AIDS, environmental action, malaria, gender, education, earth day activities, school safety or food security. They have very good resources to help walk youth groups through all stages of identifying, developing, implementing and communicating about their service project in a number of different languages. The application deadline is March 10, 2013. Visit the [Global Youth Service Day website](#) for more information and to access the online application form. Thank you!

ED CORNER by Dr. Lephoto & M'e Malitaba

ED 13 Phase II & III

We have received the majority of the Phase II assignments and for those who have not submitted any, please do so ASAP. Please also submit your suggestions for Phase III training. You can call, text, email, send by letter or directly communicate your ideas during site visits. **The Phase III workshop is scheduled for March 21-27.**

VRFs

Thank you all for submitting your VRFs on time. Right now we are reading your reports and you can expect the feedback anytime from now.

Site Visits

Site visits for ED13 are underway and so far we have covered almost 50% of the Volunteers. We are striving to visit all of you before Phase III.

Results

Results of the 2012 JC and COSC for schools where we have placed Volunteers can be found on Sharepoint. If you would like the results sent to you in an email, contact 'me Malitaba. Unfortunately, we do not have the Std 7 results.

'Likolo li butsoe joale, mohoma temeng Baithaopi.' Khotso.

CHED CORNER by M'e Selloane & M'e Mamakhetha

Khotsong baithaopi! Thanks to all who submitted their VRF on time!

CHED 12 HIV/AIDS Capacity Building and the PDM

The two regional workshops went very well! We appreciate the commitment and participation of you and your counterparts. It was also encouraging to see your positive attitudes and collaborative spirit! We urge all of you to continue to work on your Sesotho – it makes a huge difference in the nature of your Peace Corps experience.

Site Identification for the Health Youth (HY) 13

Thanks to those who have sent us tips on potential sites for the HY project. If you have heard, seen and/or identified a vibrant group or organization working with youth, and that could make good use of Volunteer skills, please give us a shout.

Training Design and Evaluation

Shortly we will solicit letters of interest from Volunteers interested in being a Resource Volunteer during the HY 13 PST. Selected RVs will participate in a TOT, April 22-26.

Gold Star Activities

Kelly Anderson (CHED 10): kapa *Refiloe* is using sporting activities to introduce stretching tips and cardio exercises. Together with her host organization, the Lesotho Correction Service, she meets at 3pm to participate in a variety of activities and sports. She has been on the netball team as goal defender and plays

chess as much as possible with the guards.

Jenny Cain (CHED 11): kapa *Palesa* has turned a hobby into a community project. Every Wednesday she meets with the women who are interested in sewing at the Quthing Secondary School. In these meetings, she teaches them how to hand sew items. They make bracelets, headbands, bags for clothing pins, etc. In order to sustain the project, she has transferred the management of the project to her counterpart who leads the instruction and assists the women when they need further guidance. Not only is she building the capacity of the counterpart in leadership and management skills, she is also empowering someone who is a partially deaf woman, Thandi, who was keen to learn sewing. The women kept requesting a group, so Thandi and Jenny began instructing a hand-sewing class. So far, they have met as a group 3 times. Thandi has realized she can use her new founded hand-sewing skills by making jewelry out of Lesotho's popular fabric called Seshoeshoe. She now sells jewellery and wallets she makes to earn money for her school fees. The future plans for the group include sewing purses and aprons.

Anri Tanabe (CHED 12): kapa *Lineo* is now promoting HIV and AIDS awareness using theater. Apart from her primary job assignment with LENASO, she met a youth who was passionate about starting a theater group with the goal of creating a movie about HIV/AIDS and issues dealing with OVCs. She has been working with him since November to have auditions to find actors, as well as organizing rehearsals along with her neighbor. They have discussed the group goals, HIV/AIDS myths and misconceptions, and worked on some acting skills. Despite the struggles that the group has encountered, they have managed to meet every Friday and Saturday (3 hours a week) since December 7, 2012 with a few consistent members. In January, the youth finalized and printed out copies of the script. Recently, since school started, more people have joined and there is hope to continue forging towards their goal.

HIV/AIDS CORNER by M'e Jimi

Lumelang Baithaupi ba batle!

The Peace Corps staff acknowledges your hard work in HIV/AIDS among your Basotho communities. I just want to remind you of the goals of PEPFAR while we are immersed in HIV/AIDS work. The US Government set out an HIV/AIDS priority policy of "Achieving an AIDS Free Generation". Peace Corps as an Agency embraces this goal, which aims to achieve the following:

- ◆ No children should be born with HIV infection.
- ◆ Adults should live successfully with HIV.
- ◆ Overall work should be directed to reducing HIV incidence in our country.

How do we support this policy as Volunteers in our community work?

- ◆ Inform pregnant women where to find services to prevent mother to child transmission.
- ◆ Mobilize and encourage targeted community members for HIV/AIDS counseling and testing.
- ◆ Identify already existing programs and work with them.

I hope that you all received The Peace Corps HIV/AIDS Awareness 2013 calendar. This calendar highlights internationally recognized days of awareness that can provide opportunities to address HIV and other community health issues. Please take a look at each month and commit to engaging in at least one of the activities for that month!

Please find bellow contacts for Health District Services:

District Senior Child Welfare Officers – IVC Issues
 Government Public Health Care Nurses – (PHNS)
 Christian Health Association of Lesotho (CHAL) Public Health
 Care Coordinators

DISTRICTS SENIOR CHILD WELFARE OFFICERS

NAME	DISTRICT	CONTACTS
Boetile	Quthing	57255313 / 57098878 / 22750498 / 231 / boetilenchee@yahoo.com
Bernice Manamolela	Mokhotlong	63247160 / 22920497 / smaksb@yahoo.com
Mantoa	Mafeteng	58733990 / 22226003 / mansejake@yahoo.co.uk
Ntebo	Leribe	63235995 / 22401106 / 22400725 / ntebzamohai@gmail.com
Molisana	Butha-Buthe	58787181 / 22461620 / mokhoabomolisana@gmail.com
Jane	Qacha's Nek	63266948 / 22950208 / 054 / 506 / 22950051 / kgiane@yahoo.com
Horoto	Thaba-Tseka	62002064 / 22900211 / 511 / sghoroto-
Phomolo Mohotlane	Mohale's Hoek	58409209 / 22785987 / 988 / mohotlaneps@yahoo.com
Matebello Marite	Mafeteng	63010502 / 22700208 / matebel-lomarite@gmail.com
Mabataung	Berea	62006484 / 22500437 / patmmok-hathili@yahoo.com

GOVERNMENT PHNS

DISTRICT	NAME	CONTACTS
QACHA'S NEK	MATEBELLO TSIKI	58904964
QUTHING	LIKELELI NKHAPETLA	58726418
MHOEK	MAMPE MAKHABANE	63019967
MAFETENG	MATHEBANE TSOAKO	58071095/2270 0208
MASERU	NTHATISI LEROTHOLI	58864571
BEREA	MOIPONE LETEBA	58866573/6365 7715
LERIBE	MPHO KHUTSOANE	62992149
BUTHA-BUTHE	MAMPESHE SELEBALO & MAJANE MAHAPANG	58711159 & 58404488/ 22460210
MOKHOTLONG	NTSEPENG TSITA	22920213/6317 0632
THABA-TSEKA	SUZAN RAMAKHUNO-ANE	22900511/211
LFDS	M.PHOMANE	22322329

FROM THE P&T SECRETARY Ntate Mohale Letsatsi**Leave requests**

As we are approaching Easter Break I know most of you are planning on out-of-the-country vacations. Just a gentle reminder when filling out the leave request – please ensure that full and complete travel itinerary information is provided, such as lodging information (hotel or host name), city and country and most

CHAL PHC COORDINATORS

HOSPITAL	NAME	CONTACT NUMBER
ROMA	LIPUO LENKA	58997094
SCOTT	ELLA RAMATLA	58793996
TEBELLONG	MALEKHANYA	58584250
PARAY	MAHLAPE TEFO	22900256/436
ST. JAMES	LEE	22900254/52500 700/ 62003003
SEBOCHE	MOKHANTSO MOHALABA	63107740
MALUTI	ADEL MOSAASE	58910527/22540 203/802/803
SEMON-KONG	AGNES MAKHELE	63107740

importantly the contact number of your hotel or host. If a complete itinerary is not provided, there will be a delay in processing your leave requests. Let's plan our trips well ahead of time and submit all necessary information on your leave request.

Leave requests signed by the supervisor can be emailed to Imohale@peacecorps.gov, hand delivered to the PC office, or sent by post to US Peace Corps, 5 Bowker road, P.O. Box 554, Maseru 100.

Remember also to get a SIM card of the country you are visiting and text the number ASAP to the Whereabouts phone during the week days and Duty phone during the weekends and holidays.

ICE Resources

I am happy to announce that this week we received a copy of a DVD, **Remote Access: Distant Libraries of the World (2005)** from Peace Corps Washington. This is a 24-minute film that profiles libraries in remote rural areas in Kenya and Peru - including a camel library, a donkey library and a library on the Amazon River. The film is fun and inspirational, especially for staff, Volunteers or community members working on library projects. This film will be shown during your ISTs. Hope you enjoy it!

Kea leboha!!!!!!

PCVs and Counterparts at the PDM workshop

- ◆ Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us to each other.
- ◆ Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you are going.
- ◆ Don't forget, a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated.
- ◆ Don't use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved.

"Wisdom is knowing what to do; virtue is doing it" - Starr Jordan.

Till next time, stay safe and stress-free.

PCV CORNER

PEACE CORPS YEARBOOK

Submitted by Tishina Okegbe and Teresa Severson, ED12, Yearbook Committee

HEALTH CORNER by Dr. Victor

Contacting the Medical Unit

Office: 22313871

Requests for medical supplies: 62866050

Medical Duty Phone: 62851003

ED13 Shots

The final doses of hepatitis A and B shots will be administered to ED13s who have not completed their shot series on 25th March during the upcoming Phase III workshop.

Travel Reminder

Please remember that if you are going to be vacationing (or even passing through) a country where yellow fever is present, you will need to have your Yellow Medical Card with you to show that you have been vaccinated against the disease. If you don't and are travelling back through Johannesburg, you might not be allowed to re-enter South Africa. Save yourself the hassle and arrange to get your card from the PC Medical office in Maseru before you travel.

Mental Health Tidbits

- ◆ Relax your standards. The world will not come to an end.
- ◆ Learn to live one day at a time. Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living one day at a time, you'll live all the days of your life.
- ◆ Everyday, do something you really enjoy.
- ◆ Do something for somebody else.
- ◆ Have a forgiving view of people and events. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.
- ◆ Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best that they can.
- ◆ Pollyanna Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably at least 10 blessings. Count them all!
- ◆ Turn "needs" into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and shelter. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
- ◆ Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do it today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
- ◆ Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.
- ◆ Don't set goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.



Fellow Volunteers,

We are trying to put together a year book. Corny? Yes, but one day you'll look back and cherish it. We want to do it by groups, CHED 12s, ED 12s, etc. Staff, too. In order to do this we would need each of you to submit a picture, dob,



site name, program, your job title and a personal quote (not too lengthy). We will then compile all of these, make it look nice, get it printed and then sell them. We've already scouted the prices for some printers and they are reasonable. They will be in color and less than r50 if we get enough people to go along with this.

Also, we have some superlatives that would be used for each group. If you have better suggestions share those, too. And then nominate people (from your group only). The ones we have so far are:

Who the hell is this person?

Best box-talker

Biggest lightweight

Most likely to never come back from vacation

Best person to talk to

Best decorated house

Crankiest

Most optimistic

Most likely to become a herd boy/girl

Most likely to be involved in a malumu fight

Papa lover

Most injury prone

Most hospitable

Most likely to over pack

Most likely to be in bed by 4:30

Best cook

Most likely to fall off a cliff

Best dressed

Not best dressed

Smelliest (most likely to not bathe for a month)

Class clown

Most likely to go makoonya crazy

Most likely to set a kitchen on fire

Most likely to fall in love with their cat

Lastly, we will have a few pages of candid pictures. If you'd like an appropriate picture included, please forward it along also. Send the picture, information, nominations and/or other stuff to pclsyearbook@gmail.com. We'd like to receive all submissions by March 31st.

Thanks, folks. Please encourage your friends. We want to have as many people contribute as possible to make it a success and we can't do it without you! Hope this works out! We're excited about it.

FROM THE TAP COMMITTEE

TAP Application Forms were sent electronically this week. Please contact Lauren or Tishina at tapesotho@gmail.com with any questions. Completed Application Forms are due to the Maseru VRC by April 19th.

FROM THE DAR CO-CHAIR

Submitted by Jess Wilhelm, CHED 11, DAR Co-chair



The Southern Africa region is full of contradictions, and the statistics back it up. A brief glimpse at the data is enough to experience a range of emotions, even just looking at gender issues. For instance, I can't help but smile when I see that countries in Southern Africa – including Lesotho – stand out for being the only part of the world where women are much heavier than men on average (tell me you didn't notice that.) On a more serious note, Lesotho's great records on women's empowerment can make any viewer optimistic and every Mosotho proud. According to a study sponsored by the World Economic Forum, Lesotho has the lowest "Gender Gap" in all of Africa, it is ranked 14th out of 135 globally.

However, it is not all rosy on the gender front. While women's achievements in education, employment, and health are considerable, the levels of gender-based violence (GBV) in Lesotho – and the Southern Africa region as whole – are in direct contrast to these achievements. The incidence of rape is 2nd highest of all reporting countries at 82.7/100,000 in 2009. Of the more than 88 countries, only Botswana was marginally higher. Rape is commonly under-reported – a "Gender Links" survey in Gauteng showed that only 4% of women raped had reported it to the police – and legal definitions can vary between countries, but nonetheless the Southern Africa region shows alarmingly high incidences of this crime. Data on other forms of GBV in Lesotho are not available, but the "Gender Links" survey suggests more than half of women surveyed had experienced violence from a partner. There is a clear contradiction between women's empowerment in Lesotho, on the one hand, and appallingly high rates of GBV, on the other.

What is the source of this paradox? Cultural views, such as that "lobola" confers ownership over wives, are often blamed. The continued presence of poverty and unemployment coupled with persistent beliefs of women's dependency no doubt keep some women in abusive relationships. Finally, the prevalence MCP and HIV in relations cause tensions within couples that can exacerbate violence against women.

What can PCVs do to counter Gender-based violence in their communities? First, through life skills education, PCVs and their Basotho counterparts can challenge gender norms that tolerate violence against women. This can be through formal in-school life skills, or through community activities that target youth and adults. PCVs should try to include young males to affect culture change in these groups. Empowering support groups for PLWHA and OVCs can enable these organizations to better offer information on healthy relationships and protect children vulnerable to exploitation. Finally, PCVs can network with supportive members of their communities to create a resource for local reporting of problems and allies who can lead discussion in community forums.

What Resources are available for PCVs? At the latest meeting of the DAR committee, Women in Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) explained what resources are available for PCVs who want information or partnerships for addressing GBV. A good place to start would be by contacting Me Jimi or your APCD. From there, WLSA and its paralegals at the local level can offer guidance and suggestions on finding partners. While many NGOs involved with this issue are based in Maseru, there are a number of resources at the district level. These include the local "Gender Focal Points," based out of the District Administrator's office. The Ministry of Gender at the district level and the local police Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU) can also be resources. However, PCVs are likely to need to identify partners within their host communities, which can include chiefs, support groups, health care workers, religious leaders, and school staff. Local participation is a crucial aspect to successful behavior & culture change.

PSN MEDITATION

Submitted by Maggie Day, CHED 11, PSN Member



A basic meditation practice is an easily accessible activity that can provide welcome relief from daily stress. If you've been thinking about starting a meditation practice and have been looking for guidance you can be overwhelmed with options. Books, websites, podcasts even medical centers now offer training on meditation practices. Beginning meditators can find themselves jumping from one method

to the next, ironically committed to a stressful schedule of meditation research and goals. This is such a common problem Buddhist meditation teacher Tara Brach jokes about "Zen and the Art of Reading Books about Zen".

If you find you are working hard to quiet your mind, sit for long stretches or follow a complicated series of stages, you might be starting off on the wrong path. Like the monk who on entering the monastery asked his teacher how long will it would to obtain enlightenment. He was told "Maybe two or three years". When the monk replied, "And if I work extra hard how long will it take?" he was told "Oh, maybe five or ten years".

The secret and beauty of a beginning meditation practice is that it's so easy. Sylvia Boorstein's book "*Don't Just Do Something, Sit There*" gives clear, easy guidance. Sit there; really. Sit. Observe your breath. Relax. Observe you breath again. That's it. You can think, "Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out I know I am breathing out" then shorten it to "in" on the in breath and "out" on the out breath or just notice the breath without naming. You can start with 5 minutes of sitting, gradually increasing to 15 or 20 minutes each day, preferably at a consistent time in a quiet place. If it helps you can inhale through your nostrils and exhale through your mouth, with each out breath consciously releasing any tension held in your jaw, then neck, shoulders, back and hands.

How does this work? "We think too much," Zen Master Thich Nyat Hanh says. Our minds are naturally risk averse. They want to keep us alert to that which has or might cause us problems while often letting go of good, beautiful and peaceful thoughts as nice but not worthy of brain time. So while our bodies exist in the present our minds can be working so hard anywhere but, jumping from thought to thought, stewing over past problems or planning the future. This is believed to be an evolutionary tool for our protection but in modern times it can wear us out.

If it's peace and clarity we are seeking a busy mind is no help. Thich Nyat Hahn likens it to the difference between a stone tossed in a stormy sea and a stone tossed in a sea of perfectly

still water; the first disappears and is hard to follow. The other creates a clear “plunk” sound, descends slowly until fading from view or arrives softly on the ocean floor, perhaps creating a slight disturbance of sand then resting quietly, while on the surface a series of concentric and ever expanding rings drift out from the point of entry. A busy (stormy) mind stresses to follow a thought in this way.

We can only live fully, deeply, peacefully in the present moment. By mindfully focusing on your breath, on a body sensation related to the breath such as the rise and fall of your abdomen or chest or the movement of air through your nostrils, you can quiet your mind and engage with the present moment. Often your thoughts will drift away from the breath. When you recognize this, it's an important part of the practice to simply note it and bring your focus back to your breath. Don't get discouraged. As Jack Kornfield says, “Like house training a puppy, you don't beat the puppy if it urinates off the paper, just bring it back to the paper, pet it and speak with encouragement.” Noticing and bring your mind back to the breath, again and again and again will help you start to see the quiet space around your thoughts. It will help you start to become aware of your existence not confined by or defined by thought. When you can spend time with your embodied self in the present moment you will see that you have within you a place of peace, stillness and calm.

If you are interested in expanding your meditation practice or learning more about mindfulness meditation, you could speak with quite a number of PCVs in country who regularly meditate. In addition to Sylvia Boorstein's book mentioned above, I also recommend “*The Peaceful Stillness of the Silent Mind*” by Lama Yeshe, “*Stages of Meditation*” by the Dalai Lama and “*The Miracle of Mindfulness*” by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. I also strongly recommend the *Radical Acceptance* and *True Refuge* books, and free weekly podcasts by Tara Brach, Ph.D. She is a clinical psychologist and western teacher of Buddhist mindfulness meditation. Thanks to Jasmine Smith who turned me on to Tara Brach's teachings. www.tarabrach.com

Finally, if you are dealing with stress related to traumatic emotional or medical issues you don't have to suffer alone. Please speak with a friend, PSN rep or someone in the medical office so you can arrange for professional counseling and help. Stateside you might want to check out the Stress Reduction Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Center for Mindfulness at www.umassmed.edu/cfm.

“In this very moment, no matter what your condition or situation, you have within you all the resources you need for growing, healing, and working with stress, pain, illness, and the everyday challenges you are facing. A growing body of scientific evidence supports the reality of a profound mind-body connection and now recognizes that learning and practicing mindfulness can positively affect your sense of health and wellbeing physically, mentally, and emotionally, while simultaneously offering you a means of discovering a deeper sense of ease and peace of mind.” - Saki F. Sanorelly, EdD, MA, Executive Director, Center for Mindfulness, Director, Stress Reduction Program, Associate Professor of Medicine, UMASS Medical School.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE PEACE CORPS WORLD

Following is an article by a Peace Corps Volunteer. It's included as motivation for those of you who are training for upcoming races or just running for exercise.

Marathon Training Peace Corps Style
By Taylor, PCV/Paraguay, posted on [Marathons+Moderation](#), January 10, 2013

[Peace Corps three goals] are the best way to describe my job as a Peace Corps volunteer, however most volunteers also come to service with a "4th Goal," a personal goal the volunteer hopes to achieve during their service. From reading over 100 books during their time served, to learning the guitar, these goals are diverse. In my case, I got it into my head I was going to train for and complete my first marathon while serving in Paraguay. While I'm happy to report that I achieved my 4th goal last August, I think like most marathon novices I had absolutely no idea what I had gotten myself into. Compound that with trying to navigate life in rural Paraguay and it was quite the journey.

Life in a developing country is exciting, but at times it's also just weird. When in a new culture, things don't always make sense, and that brings a degree of stress. Being active has always been my stress outlet, but when confronted with the reality that there was no local Yoga studio or climbing gym, I knew I had to turn to running as my activity of choice. Life is slower here in Paraguay, so I figured clocking the miles would fill my free time and keep me occupied, but like all marathoners time and motivation were major challenges.

While I was in my town I had enough free time to get in my miles, but part of life in Peace Corps Paraguay requires frequent travel for work, cultural events, medical, and friendly visits. As I started getting higher in mileage it became increasingly difficult to manage. That's a large part of the reason I went with timed runs rather than mileage when creating my workouts. Instead of a set number of miles to complete, I would have a time goal. 1 hour run, 2 hour run, etc. Furthermore, without access to reliable maps making longer routes was near impossible. If I were visiting a friend, I would literally ask them to point me down a long dirt road and just run out and back. Maybe it's not the most fun run, but it allowed me to keep up my training no matter where I was. (To be honest the long run into the country side and back provided beautiful views and allowed me to see more of the country than I otherwise would have.)

With long dirt roads, I became a complete slave to the weather. Heavy rains would make the roads impassable until they dried out. Sometimes at the first hint of rain I would drop everything and squeeze in a run just because I knew I wouldn't have another chance for a few days.

While in the winter it's the rain I had to battle, in the summer it was the oppressive heat. I swear the sun is closer to the earth down here. For long summer runs 4:30 am wake ups were required to get a good run in before it was too hot to do anything. While it would be cool enough during this time of morning, the street dogs didn't take kindly to a person running through their territory during the pre-dawn hours. On more than one occasion I had to fend off packs of dogs before finally learning which streets were safe. Then there was explaining to my local friends and neighbors exactly why I running in the first place. People would ask if I were training for the Olympics. They just couldn't understand that I was doing this for fun. Even after everyone knows that I ran a marathon, they still are in awe that I'll run for 30 minutes without stopping.

I really didn't think motivation would be so hard. I figured I'd be working out anyways, but marathon training is a different beast. Not only was getting the motivation to run every day grueling, but just the total stress of living in foreign country was starting to get the best of me. I was tired of strange looks and cat calls from locals as I ran. I had started throwing rocks at dogs, which while necessary as I times, never makes you feel good, and knowing that a long run would perhaps be the only thing I would do that day, made lacing up even less appealing.

To combat my lethargy, I made an inspiration poster out of butcher paper on which I would write PRs, and inspirational sayings to try to keep going. It became a great place to remind myself of how far I had come. I must say however, the best motivator was family and friends both here and back home. Locals started to recognize me, and started cheering me when I would pass rather than leer. People from the US sent me quality socks and new running shorts, a book about marathon training, and energy chews. And every time I was on the phone with a friend at home or in Paraguay, they all wanted to hear how the training was going. It made me feel like I had to get my runs in or I would have nothing to tell them.

When the race finally came, I knew I had already achieved my 4th goal no matter the outcome. I didn't run the whole way, having to start walking at kilometer 35. But even then my [friends were] the support I needed to finish. They found me, handed me a cup of *terre*, Paraguay's typical cold herbal tea, and walked the final stretch with me, delivering a cold beer at the finish line.

I was the last person to cross the finish that day, but after all the work I sure as hell felt like a winner.



ED12 Aparna Jayaraman in her Form B Science Class



'me Jimi and ED12 Heather Mangan at the Lerotholi HS Library



How Are YOU Creating an IDEAL World?

Join the **IDEAL Council** this April for activities during Sexual Assault Awareness Month that showcase the comprehensive involvement of Peace Corps Volunteers and staff in increasing awareness of and creating safe spaces to talk about sexual assault issues and gender-based violence, at home and in our countries of service.

Share the Power of Bystander Intervention through Story

The 2012 Annual Volunteer Survey indicated that over 1,000 Volunteers used Bystander Intervention to avoid or minimize the impact of a potentially dangerous situation. Peace Corps would like to recognize Volunteers who used the power of Bystander Intervention to minimize the risk of violence or sexual assault, and keep their fellow Volunteers safe. In an effort to celebrate and learn from your successes, Peace Corps would like to hear about your experience with Bystander Intervention.

If you used your Bystander Intervention training skills during your service, click on the link below to tell your story. You can share your experience anonymously if you want, or provide your contact information and be considered for recognition by Peace Corps. The stories you share will be used during Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities.

Share Your Story with Us!

IDEAL
council

The Peace Corps interdisciplinary team dedicated to sexual assault education, prevention, and help for Volunteers and staff.

