



**Peace Corps Connect – Denver, CO
Affiliate Group Network Annual Meeting (AGNAM)**

August 4, 2017

Josef Korbel School of International Studies #1150

University of Denver

2201 S Gaylord St, Denver, CO 80208

1. Call to Order – *Maricarmen Smith-Martinez, Affiliate Group Network Coordinator (AGN-C)*

Welcome and introduction: The Meeting was called to order at 1:04 PM MT by Maricarmen Smith-Martinez.

2. Member Group Voting Delegates – *Maricarmen Smith-Martinez, AGN-C*

Establish Eligible Voters List:

Barbara Busch, Peace Corps Community for the Support of Refugees
 Beth Ahlstrom, Seattle Area Peace Corps Association (SEAPAX)
 Bill Ferguson, Friends of Togo
 Carol Belanger, Peace Corps Friends of DR Congo
 Catherine Onyemelukwe, Connecticut Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
 David Fields, Friends of Ghana
 Debbie Manget, Atlanta Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (AARPCV)
 Elaine Lim, Friends of Micronesia
 Ellen Arnstein, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers for Environmental Action
 Fran Bowman, Sacramento Valley Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
 Frank Yates, Central Missouri RPCVs
 Greg Polk, New Mexico Peace Corps Association
 Hayley Freedman, Friends of Mozambique
 James Hitchman, RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison
 Jean Parcher, Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
 Jim Hershey, St. Louis Peace Corps Association
 Judith Madden-Sturges, Committee for a Museum of the Peace Corps Experience
 Katy Hansen, Iowa Peace Corps Association
 Kay Dixon, Inland Northwest Peace Corps Association
 Kim Herman, Friends of the Dominican Republic
 Kirsty Morgan, Kansas City Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Association
 Kyle Gifford, Friends of Armenia
 Lie, Northern California Peace Corps Association (NorCalPCA)
 Manuel Colon, LGBT Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (LGBT RPCVs)
 Marc Dysart, Friends of Guinea
 Michael Anderson, Friends of Malaysia
 Mirella Shannon, Full Basket Belize
 Molly Fessler, Share Your Service
 Pat Wand, Friends of Colombia
 Sarah McMeans, Peace Corps Alumni Foundation for Philippine Development
 Terry Dougherty, Friends of Afghanistan
 Tim Resch, Friends of Morocco
 Tom Wegs, Friends of Ecuador
 Tony Agnello, Peace Corps Alliance for Intercultural Understanding (PCAIU)

Approval of 2016 minutes: The motion to approve the minutes of the 2016 AGNAM was made by Kim Herman and was seconded and carried.

3. Affiliate Group Network Introductions – Various

Participants introduced themselves and the Affiliate Group(s) they represented. NPCA Staff and Board Directors were also introduced.

4. Proclamation of Peace Corps Connect Days – Jamie Van Leeuwen, Office of Governor Hickenlooper

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado worked with the Governor of Colorado to recognize the 2017 Peace Corps Connect conference. In celebration, Governor John Hickenlooper proclaimed the period between August 4 and August 6 as Peace Corps Connect Days. On behalf of Governor Hickenlooper's office, Jamie Van Leeuwen, Senior Advisor, delivered the proclamation. ([Read more.](#))

5. NPCA Leadership Town Hall – Glenn Blumhorst, NPCA President

President Glenn Blumhorst emphasized the critical role of the Affiliate Groups in the Peace Corps community. The President highlighted organizational updates in the NPCA Strategic Plan and outlined new opportunities available to members and Affiliate Groups.

NPCA Pillars

- **Bigger, Better Peace Corps**
 - The year started off with a flat line budget and there is now a risk of proposed cuts in the amount of \$12 million. The NPCA Advocacy team is working with Advocacy Coordinators to coordinate the #ProtectPeaceCorps campaign.
- **Affiliate Group and RPCV Support**
 - SilkStart was introduced as a platform to support affiliate group needs in technology, communications, member management, and more.
 - The Committee for the Museum of a Peace Corps Experience engaged in a retreat session prior to the Peace Corps Connect conference to formulate their strategic plan in person, increasing awareness of the group and generating donor enthusiasm.
- **Community Impact**
 - The Community Fund is active and supporting various projects, including initiatives from current Peace Corps Volunteers (via Peace Corps Partnership Projects, or PCPP), RPCVs, and organizations such as Water Charity.

Community Q&A

- Question: Friends of Malaysia inquired about the new administration's approach to Peace Corps.
 - Response: Peace Corps is not a high priority to the administration; however, Peace Corps has strong interim leadership to continue forward. Acting Director Sheila Crowley will be speaking during the conference.
- Comment: St. Louis Peace Corps Association noted that financial support of NPCA is critical and encouraged RPCVs to engage as Mission Partners and Shriver Circle members.
- Question: Northern California PCA inquired about the best contact for groups at NPCA.
 - Response: Anne Baker is the primary point of contact for affiliate groups. Ella Dowell supports inquiries and issues related to SilkStart.
- Comment: Friends of Morocco recognized the Legacy Fund endowment.

- Response: The Legacy Fund endowment is an excellent opportunity to pledge gifts to NPCA for long-term growth and sustainability.
- Comment: Peace Corps Alliance for Intercultural Understanding noted that the AGNAM is the best opportunity for networking among groups.

6. **Community Builder Platform** – Elizabeth (Ella) Dowell, NPCA Community Technology Systems Coordinator

Ella Dowell, introduced via video due to a cancelled flight, presented the NPCA Community Building Platform, powered by SilkStart. She explained the Affiliate Pro Plan available for affiliate groups and provided a summary of its benefits as an all-inclusive, online group management system customized specifically for NPCA's affiliate groups. Video testimonials from the Health Justice for Peace Corps Volunteers and Cincinnati Returned Peace Corps Volunteers were presented.

Ella informed attendees that meetings to discuss and demo the platform could be arranged throughout or after the conference, and she encouraged groups to complete a [SilkStart Interest/Needs Survey](#) online. A brief question and answer period followed the presentation.

Resources:

- The [NPCA Community Building Platform SilkStart One Pager](#) handout provides additional platform details.
- The [NPCA Group Affiliation](#) handout details additional benefits and pricing information for the platform.

7. **Peace Corps Leadership** – Ashley Bell, Peace Corps

Ashley Bell, Peace Corps Associate Director for External Affairs, addressed the group as a Peace Corps appointee. He detailed his role as head of External Affairs, in which he would oversee Peace Corps' Offices of Communications, Congressional Relations, Gifts and Grants Management, and Strategic Partnerships and Intergovernmental Affairs.

8. **World Café Sessions: Cause Initiatives and Opportunities to Bolster Groups** – Various

To provide an opportunity for group leaders to learn directly from NPCA and Peace Corps about recent initiatives, projects, and campaigns, the group divided into smaller segments that focused on announcements about specific topics:

- **Cause Initiatives**
 - Museum of the Peace Corps Experience
 - Share Your Service: A Story-Based Approach to Social Justice
 - Peace Corps Community for Refugees
- **Peace Corps Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services**
- **Opportunities to Bolster Your Group**
 - Advocacy: #ProtectPeaceCorps
 - Community: RPCV Support Network
 - Impact: Community Fund

Following the roundtables, facilitators from each group shared a discussion summary, including lessons learned from affiliate group experiences or interesting ideas from the discussion. The topics discussed, as well as the summary presentation, are presented below.

9. Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing – *Maricarmen Smith-Martinez, AGN-C*

To provide an opportunity for Affiliate Group leaders to collaborate with other groups and share lessons learned, challenges, and best practices, the AGN-C facilitated an open forum discussion.

Open Discussion

- **RPCVs for Environmental Action:** Since Peace Corps Connect (PCC)—Nashville in 2014, the group has aimed for sustainability at PCC conferences, so the carbon offset program is up and running this year in Denver. The group worked with University of Denver to determine what could be done to make the conference as clean as possible.
- **Minority Volunteers:** There is interest in creating a diversity committee at the national level to help groups better encourage diversity participation and representation.
- **Hostelling International (Partnership):** There is interest in bringing and opportunity to host Third Goal activities at Hostels nationwide.
- **Affiliate Group Representation:** There is an interesting balance of Affiliate Groups at the AGNAM: Country of Service, Geographic, and now the new Cause-related and Workplace Groups. All are well represented.
- **Advocacy:** The 20k+ applicants who could not serve represent such a loss. Is there anything NPCA can do?
- **Peace Corps Connect:** The PCC sessions could possibly be broadcast/webcast. Could this expand the reach and participation? Go virtual with some or all parts of PCC!
- **General:** As an alumni group, what is the thing to which RPCVs are most attached about their Peace Corps experience and values? The issue/cause related groups might be the strongest draw!
- **AGNAM:** The AGN could have subgroups to work throughout the year. One subgroup could meet on diversity issues, another could work on membership issues, etc. Subgroups could report progress at the next AGNAM!
- **AGNAM:** Long ago, there were regional meetings of geographic groups to facilitate more targeted discussions in caucuses. These were productive, and they were easier to coordinate and attend than national events. Perhaps these events could make a comeback?
- **General:** How is the larger community engaging with various identity groups? There are Facebook groups for various RPCV identity groups, but are others reaching out and connecting through the channels and platforms that already exist?

10. Conclusion – *Maricarmen Smith-Martinez, AGN-C*

The AGN-C thanked all AGNAM participants for their engagement and acknowledged the NPCA Vice President Anne Baker for her support of the AGN.

11. Adjournment – *Maricarmen Smith-Martinez, AGN-C*

The meeting was adjourned by Maricarmen Smith-Martinez at 5:00 PM MT.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Peace Corps Connect 2017 conference hosts—RPCVs of Colorado—as well as all facilitators, note takers, volunteers, and NPCA Staff and Board.

World Café Discussions – Initiatives and Opportunities to Bolster your Group	
<p>Cause Initiative: Museum</p> <p>Facilitator: Nicola Dino & Judith Madden-Sturges <i>Committee for the Museum of the Peace Corps Experience</i></p>	<p>Topics Discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group had a productive discussion and is thankful for the participation and interest. <p>Summary Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They have gained their first Charter Member (i.e., donor of \$1,000 gift).
<p>Cause Initiative: Refugee Support</p> <p>Facilitator: Barbara Busch <i>Peace Corps Community for the Support of Refugees</i></p>	<p>Topics Discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aims of the session were to reiterate the group's three goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To involve RPCVS in support of Refugees both in the US and overseas and in advocating for them at the local, state and national levels; To share with participants the progress and setbacks in reaching those goals; and To exchange questions, answers, ideas, and suggestions. All aims were accomplished! A particularly lively exchange followed the overview, with some excellent input and suggestions and wonderful expressions of support! <p>Summary Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issues can be overwhelming. Barbara Busch is a great spokesperson and leader. The website is a good resource. Interested affiliate groups should seek ways to serve locally with resettlement agencies.
<p>Peace Corps Office of Third Goal/Returned Volunteer Services</p> <p>Facilitators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keith Honda <i>Peace Corps, Director of 3G/RVS</i> Mariko Schmitz, <i>Program Specialist, RPCV Liaison</i> Meleia Egger <i>Program Specialist, RPCV Liaison</i> 	<p>Topics Discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators hosted a discussion and practical tutorial on how to use the RPCV portal to access Peace Corps resources and keep RPCV data up to date. While demonstrating the portal, they summarized the new Speakers Match request features, noting that it is now possible to select an audience by education level and interest group. By updating their speakers match preferences and address, RPCVs are alerted to opportunities to speak in their area. In discussing various resources that the portal has to offer, it was noted that the portal provides a record of an RPCV's contact information. This allows Peace Corps to facilitate services for retirement benefits, provide presidential certificates and other administrative needs, help RPCVs participate in programs like World Wise Schools and Speakers Match, and receive requests for swag for Third Goal Activities, etc. They talked about the various toolkits and other resources available on the Third Goal page (and the NPCA SilkStart template!!) They chatted about our RPCV newsletters, The Buzz, Dispatch, and how RPCVs can get their events promoted in the Buzz. <p>Summary Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Third Goal Office is always eager to hear ideas about how to better support and work with groups to achieve the Third Goal. They wanted to hear directly

	<p>from people and did some good work on looking at the portal and what it can do to support the community. Contact: thirdgoal@peacecorps.gov</p>
<p>Advocacy: #ProtectPeaceCorps</p> <p>Facilitator: Jonathan Pearson <i>NPCA Director of Advocacy</i></p>	<p>Topics Discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest and Buy-in: There was acknowledgement and concern that some people do not want to engage in advocacy, and a recognition for the need to try to get more buy-in. The personal engagement NPCA staff provides by traveling to visit groups can prove to be very helpful in people's understanding of what is at stake and how they can help. • Impact: It was noted that form emails do not have the same impact as other forms of advocacy. That was one reason why NPCA increased outreach through postcard and phone call initiatives. Building more partnerships with other non-RPCV groups who might be supportive of Peace Corps message was also discussed. • Making Connections: Similarly, when a point was raised about difficulty getting access to certain lawmakers, a possible tactic is to discuss this with other fellow RPCVs to see if anyone knows someone who can help them gain access. • Possible Cuts: The possible budget cuts to the Peace Corps were of concern: How can RPCVs step in to help the agency deal with such cuts? • Constituency? Rejected candidates: Is there a way to find people who applied to the Peace Corps and did not get to serve. They could prove to be very helpful advocates. • Country Groups: More consideration is needed in how to further involve and build up advocacy engagement with country of service groups. <p>Summary Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Office meeting are critical, and there is a need to ramp up these regional meetings. It is a key time and the Peace Corps community needs everyone on board. There is an opportunity to expand reach by partnering with other organizations, so groups should consider potential partners to co-advocate. One question to ask: Who knows somebody who knows somebody who knows Congressperson X? Brainstorm the connections and think about meeting with that two degrees of separation person! <p>Participants: Geographic groups including Inland Northwest PCA, NorCal PCA, SEMI RPCVs, and RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison; Country of Service groups including Friends of Armenia and Friends of Dominican Republic; and national groups including LGBT RPCVs</p>
<p>Community: Building an RPCV Support Network</p> <p>Facilitator: Anne Baker <i>NPCA Vice President</i></p>	<p>Topics Discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a focus on mentoring support. • When RPCVs request a mentor through NorCalPCA, the mentoring support committee tries to connect them with up to three people to help mentees determine their needs and then provide support. • The mentoring platform at NPCA is from 2008, and it is being phased out. • Many groups have successful mentoring programs. What does it look like at the group level? Can we share best practices to keep this important service going? • Key point that RPCV mentoring needs can exceed traditional mentoring expectations, going beyond mentoring to "transition re-integration." <p>Summary Presentation</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The network provides a lot of potential. How can groups connect RPCVs with mentors, either professionally or in resettlement? Workplace affinity groups could potentially be utilized in this effort. <p>Participants: Bryant Mason, Friends of India; Michael Anderson, Friends of Malaysia; Greg Polk, New Mexico PCA; Holly Uber, NorCalPCA Mentoring Program; Sarah McMeans, Peace Corps Alumni Foundation for Philippine Development; Beth Ahlstrom, SEAPAX Career Counseling; Michelle Deitrich; Rebecca Hellman</p>
<p>Impact: NPCA Community Fund</p> <p>Facilitator: Rachel Mannino <i>NPCA Director of Development</i></p>	<p>Topics Discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A key interest of affiliate groups and community members is establishing guidelines to apply for support from the Community Fund. Using the fund to leverage additional support from foundation and corporate funders is a high priority. The Community Fund can be used to significantly scale up NPCA’s international development impact, particularly with partnered campaigns like Water Charity and TCP Global. NPCA should design and promote an awareness building campaign for the Community Fund since a lot of people are still confused about what it is and what it supports. <p>Summary Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is some good basic awareness of Community Fund in the AGN and Peace Corps Community at large but little awareness of specific initiatives (i.e., Benevolent Fund, girls’ education, etc.), demonstrating a need to raise more awareness.