



AFFILIATE GROUP NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING (AGNAM)

via Zoom

September 18, 2021

Call to Order – *Hannah Wishart, Affiliate Group Network Coordinator, NPCA Board of Directors*

Welcome and introduction: The Meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM Eastern by Hannah Wishart.

Hannah reviewed the priority objectives for the Affiliate Group Network (AGN):

- To connect affiliate groups and to share best practices
- To provide group leadership with direct insight into NPCA capacity-building initiatives, projects, and opportunities
- To keep groups connected throughout the year

Participants introduced themselves by name and Affiliate Group(s) representation via the Zoom chat.

Welcome to New Affiliate Groups – *Anne Baker, NPCA Vice President*

Attendees honored a number of affiliate group founders and leaders lost over the last year with a moment of silence.

We welcomed the two newest groups that have joined since the last meeting: The Friends of Moldova and Global Allies Program: Partners Ending Poverty with RESULTS.

Member Group Voting Delegates – *Anne Baker, NPCA Vice President*

Anne Baker confirmed that 31 affiliate groups were officially represented with a voting delegate in attendance.

Eligible Voters List:

1. Terry Dougherty (Alliance for Intercultural Understanding)
2. Loren Hintz (Amigos de Honduras)
3. Suzanne Marks (CDC Peace Corps Work Group)
4. Leo Cecchini (Ethiopia & Eritrea Returned Peace Corps Volunteers)
5. Terry Dougherty (Friends of Afghanistan)
6. Jay Sztuk (Friends of Fiji)
7. Joseph Permetti (Friends of Kenya)
8. Sarah Morrison (Friends of Liberia)
9. Jonathan Pearson (Friends of Micronesia)
10. Duane Karlen (Friends of Nepal)
11. Amy Wilson (Friends of Niger)
12. Jim Clark (Friends of Nigeria)
13. Maggie Reuter (Friends of Paraguay)
14. Kim Herman (Friends of the Dominican Republic)

15. Brett Serwalt (Friends of Vanuatu)
16. Jo Link (Full Basket Belize)
17. Ken Patterson (Global Allies Program: Partners Ending Poverty with RESULTS)
18. Jessica Szalawiga (Kansas City Area Peace Corps Association)
19. Patricia Wand (Museum of the Peace Corps Experience)
20. Denise Guzman (Northern California Peace Corps Association)
21. Mary Jo Smrekar (Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers)
22. Kim Dixon (Partnering for Peace: Friends of Peace Corps and Rotary)
23. Jeanette Gottlieb (Peace Corps Iran Association)
24. Caroline Mackenzie (Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Hawaii)
25. Renee St. Jacques (Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Northeastern New York)
26. Tony Agnello (Returned Volunteers of Buffalo, NY)
27. Cortney Copeland (RPCV Alliance for Ukraine)
28. Evelyn Ganzglass (RPCV Oral History Archives Project)
29. Angelique Moss (RPCVs & Friends at USDA)
30. Kate Schachter (Returned Peace Corps Volunteers for Environmental Action)
31. Kathleen Corey (Women of Peace Corps Legacy)

Approval of 2020 minutes: The motion to approve the minutes of the [2020 AGNAM](#), which had been circulated electronically in advance, was made by Caroline Mackenzie and seconded by Jeannette Gottlieb, then approved with one abstention.

NPCA Leadership Town Hall – *Glenn Blumhorst, NPCA President and CEO*

Glenn Blumhorst reviewed the three main pillars of NPCA's work, highlighting particular initiatives that impacted affiliate groups:

- Help the Peace Corps be the best it can be
- Empower members and affiliate groups to thrive
- Amplify the Peace Corps community's global social impact

Jonathan Pearson introduced the annual affiliate group sign-on letter to the President of the United States in support of Peace Corps' budget and invited groups to add their signatures. Groups have until October 20 to sign onto the letter.

Arianna Richard shared the recent work of RPCVs for Environmental Action and led a presentation around "Knowing Your Why" to prompt discussion of purpose driven work in Affiliate Groups.

Loret Miller Ruppe Award Nominee Presentations – *Hannah Wishart*

Five affiliate groups were nominated for the annual Loret Miller Ruppe Award for Outstanding Community Service. The award honors outstanding affiliate groups for projects that promote the Third Goal of Peace Corps — "strengthen Americans' understanding about the world and its peoples" — or continue to serve host countries, build group spirit and cooperation, and promote service. Eligible projects include those completed within the past two years or ongoing for at least three years. The purpose of the award is to recognize the great work that NPCA's groups are doing and to generate ideas that other groups may emulate in their communities.

In a new approach this year, the nominees were invited to make a presentation on their work, followed by breakout sessions to allow for further sharing. The winner will be announced at the Peace Corps Connect virtual conference next week. The five nominees:

- Ethiopia and Eritrea Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
- Full Basket Belize
- Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
- Peace Corps Community for Refugees
- RPCVs and Friends @ USDA

Sharing of Best Practices/Lessons Learned with Ruppe Award Nominees

Following the presentations, attendees split into breakouts with the nominees for additional questions, sharing of lessons learned and exploring how other groups might benefit from this work. Voting delegates submitted their choices (up to two votes were permitted) for the award.

Networking Roundtables

Hannah Wishart introduced the next set of roundtables, designed to allow attendees to network and discuss the opportunities, challenges, questions and lessons learned that different types of groups face. Attendees self-designated their roundtable of choice as follows:

- a. Country of Service Groups
 - i. Recent/Current (17 attendees)
 - ii. Older/Past Countries of Service (14 attendees)
- b. Geographic groups
 - i. Small membership (5 attendees)
 - ii. Large membership (7 attendees)
- c. Cause-related/Workplace/Affinity groups (16 attendees)

Wrap-up and Next Steps – *Hannah Wishart, AGN-C*

Hannah shared some of her insights and observations from today’s discussions and from the weekly Affiliate Group Leaders Lunches and invited participants to offer their “aha” moments or key takeaways.

Adjournment – *Hannah Wishart, AGN-C*

Kim Herman moved and Lee Hendricks seconded a motion to adjourn, which was approved. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm ET.

APPENDIX: Key Takeaways from Roundtables

Cause affiliates/Workplace affiliate groups (WAGs)

Major Topics covered:

- Inter-group collaboration
- Inter-group communication
- Advocacy

Key Takeaways:

- Peace Corps Community for Refugees (PCC4R) and Friends of Afghanistan have worked together, RPCVs for Environmental Action (RPCV4EA) and PCC4R have worked together—what would help other groups to do the same? What can NPCA do to facilitate collaboration like this?
- How best can affiliate groups communicate with each other to enable group collaboration?
 - Community newsletter (Affiliate Group News), perhaps include a section that lists group events according to priority
 - Each group designate a liaison to be in charge of communicating with other groups
- Can NPCA do anything to facilitate this communication?
 - Best practice for groups would be to attend monthly Community Builder (SilkStart) training hosted by Ella Dowell. They are also recorded. Being savvy in SilkStart use can help groups better communicate with one another.
 - Affiliate group lunches every week are a good start, but they are under attended and groups don't necessarily want to attend more meetings.
- What are best practices for affiliate groups concerning advocacy? How do we bridge people from service to advocacy?
 - PCC4R has very active team that pairs with NPCA to get national message out, also has an active communications team who is active on social media.
 - Focused messaging that is economic rather than long paragraphs of appeal can help engage people who are overworked and have little time.
 - Work with NPCA advocacy team, you may be able to receive a template or plan that can be tailored to your cause.
 - A best practice from RPCV4EA is hosting advocacy action teams including letters to the editor training, approaching congressional legislators to act on specific issues, and getting op-eds published.

Country of Service groups (Recent)

Major Topics covered:

- Keeping group members engaged
- Finding stable leadership

Key Takeaways:

- How do you engage members who are very geographically dispersed?
 - RPCV Alliance for Ukraine hosts virtual town hall twice annually, coordinates with PC Ukraine, stays active in racial justice and equity front.

- Variety of different events to appeal to different groups
- Committees are a good way to engage members, people are more willing to serve on committees than the board
- Themes for meetings/happy hours are more successful
- Mini reunions in person/virtual with cohort training groups
- How do you get a stable board?
 - Have someone train under another person for a period of time and then take over position.
 - Make a personal ask
 - Look at who is coming to events and engaging with groups
 - Gretchen from NPCA board willing to talk with folks interested in treasurer role

Country of Service (Past)

Major Topics covered:

- Problems/issues for groups
- Recruitment strategies
- Member engagement

Key Takeaways:

- What problems do groups have?
 - Discouraged and disappointed with corruption and current political state
- Strategies to recruit new people?
 - People interested in your country, Fullbright scholars
 - Host-Country Nationals
 - Developing relationships with like-minded organizations
 - Spouses/Children of volunteers
 - Friends of Niger sent detailed surveys that got new board members
- Engagement within membership?
 - With newsletters, have a goal for open rates, if a decent number of people don't open, send an email just to those who didn't open to get a marginal increase
 - Helps to send out early in the morning, e.g. 6 am EST on Mondays
 - Virtual conferences—have found that more people attend since going virtual
 - Send annual email to encourage people to become members
- Money/membership
 - For some groups, if you want to be a voting member you have to pay, otherwise you're just a member
 - Peace Corps Iran Association sends annual fundraising letter

Large Geographic Groups

Major Topics covered:

- 3rd goal activities
- Member events

Key Takeaways:

- 3rd goal activities/refugee support
 - Friends of Afghanistan (FoA) contact wants to train Afghan refugee women in midwifery
 - Sharing information in NPCA networks helps increase awareness
 - Mandy Manning (RPCV who was National Teacher of the Year 2017-2018) to make statement in support of Afghan evacuees
 - Canadian model tries to match five families with one refugee family, FoA wants to do the same

- Member events
 - Northern California Peace Corps Association (NorCalPCA) starting to have in-person activities, seems that most groups are doing mostly outdoor activities
 - All California groups have worked together for partnered advocacy work, NorCal partnering with local rotary group
 - Affiliate group Leaders Lunch every week