



# Peace Prints



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January 2013

## Gulf Coast Council 2012 Review

By David Scheinman

**Special points of interest: Ryan's Pig Roast in July**



### Coming Events:

Annual Meeting  
January 27, 2013  
4-7 PM

January 19th  
Project Blazingstar-  
see page 3

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2012 was a very successful year. In addition to our board meetings and monthly reconnects and happy hours, here is a chronological review of our activities, events, accomplishments, and news:

- On Jan 21 12 RPCVs planted trees to reforest McGregor Park. We joined at least 100 other volunteers from local companies and community groups.
- Our AGM was held on January 22. Over 40 RPCVs turned up for our meeting and dinner. Heather Siemert (Fiji) and Kate Simpson (Botswana) were elected to our Board. John Blake (Afghanistan 1971-74) donated a new Epson slide projector to our group. He gave a presentation about the 50th Anniversary in DC using the projector.
- On Feb. 2 five RPCVs and one future PCV (already accepted) recruited for Peace Corps at Rice University's annual career fair. We were extremely busy and fielded questions from many interested students. There were two career days – one for technical opportunities and the other for social ones. Around 80 organizations participated.
- On Feb. 18 we donated \$385 to buy textbooks for a school in Ukraine. This was a PC Partnership project coordinated by Jeremie Heflin of McAllen, TX.
- Carrie Ratelet (Western Samoa 1981-83) current acting PC Director, visited us as Assistant Director on March 20. Twenty RPCVs and spouses met her and her staff for a pleasant and informative dinner at the Chelsea Grill.
- Ernie Zaremba (Tanzania 1964-66), videographer of the Peace Corps Family Album, interviewed seven RPCVs on April 7. This is Ernie's retirement project. He travels coast to coast in a huge bus interviewing RPCVs. Find Ernie's videos here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/erniezaremba>.
- Our annual fund raiser was held at David Scheinman's house on April 29<sup>th</sup>. We were entertained by musicians from Westside HS and raised \$700 for the PC Partnership Program. This year the food brought by RPCVs from their countries of service was excellent. We had between 60-70 guests.
- Heather Siemert organized a "Marsh Mania" event on Galveston Bay with the Galveston Bay Foundation in May.
- From May 18-20 10 RPCVs camped out in Sam Houston State Park



- On May 6 President Ryan Gorczycki resigned to attend Duke University. He was replaced by VP David Scheinman. Jesse Santos (Papua New Guinea) joined the Board and was elected VP.



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## 2012 Review Continued

- On May 14 a friend of Kate Simpson asked Kate to inform our group that RPCV Larry Feliz (Philippines late 60's) had died suddenly in Kingwood. David Scheinman represented us and attended the wake that evening.
- Paintings by kids from Botswana living with AIDS were presented at the Jack Meier Gallery by Ed Pettitt (Botswana). The paintings were sold to benefit an adolescent AIDS clinic being built in Botswana by Baylor University. After PC, Ed worked for the Baylor AIDS program in Botswana and is currently enrolled in the Master's of Public Health Program at UT in Houston. He will return to Botswana with Baylor after completing his studies.
- On May 31 three RPCV's including recruiter Erin Curtiss participated in a panel discussion on grass roots organizing at the Conference for International Education (NAFSA) held in Houston at the George Brown Center. Around 50 conferees attended the session. That evening we held our happy hour at Little Woodrow's and invited conference attendees.
- On June 28 we hosted a nomination party at Chacos Restaurant.
- On July 14 Wes Johnson (Paraguay 2005) advertised an interesting position for Noble Energy in Equatorial Guinea. It was for a Social Responsibility Supervisor. Anyone respond?
- On July 15 David Scheinman hosted a going away pig roast for outgoing President Ryan Gorczycki. 60 + RPCVs and friends attended.



- On July 26 the American Council for International Education advertised for a local coordinator.

- On Aug. 31 John Blake was appointed to the NPCA Southern Tier Governance Board.

- In September David McCormick (Belize) joined our Board.

- On Sept. 19 David Scheinman presented a lecture at the UT School of Public Health about his work with traditional healers and AIDS in Tanzania

- On Sept. 21 Scheinman gave a talk at N. W Sunset Rotary Club's Peace Marathon on Peace

### Corps Today

- On Nov. 9 videographer Bruce "Pacho" Lane (Columbia 1963) met with around 10 RPCVs at Mi Publeto Restaurant
- In Nov. Ed Pettitt addressed the Sunset Rotary Club about his work with pediatric AIDS in Botswana. A Rotary Club in Botswana has supported this program.
- On Nov. 17 Heather Siemert organized a group to assist the Whistlestop Prairie program in maintaining a natural plot of prairie grass in Hermann Park. This will be a recurring monthly event held on the third Sat. of each month. All RPCVs are invited to this fun and very worthwhile activity. Around 10 RPCVs participated.
- On Dec. 8 David and Kasia McCormick (Senegal) hosted our annual Christmas party. It was a terrific party that lasted from 6 PM to around 2 AM. Around 60 RPCVs and guests attended.
- On Dec. 15 the Whistlestop Group met again at Hermann Park and had lunch together afterwards. Around 10 RPCVs showed up for another fun session.



## Heather Event Highlights—Volunteer Efforts

By Heather Siemert

### **Marsh Mania, Galveston Bay Foundation, May 2012**

RPCVs joined efforts with hundreds of volunteers to plant over 25,000 stems of smooth cordgrass, restoring 4 acres of wetland habitat in Baytown, Texas.



### **Project Blazingstar – Whistlestop Prairie, Hermann Park Conservancy, 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday**

RPCVs are getting their hands dirty at Hermann Park each month, discarding invasive plants and planting native prairie species to rebuild a small piece of Houston's once abundant native landscape – the Tallgrass Prairie. Those who participate enjoy a refreshing stress-free atmosphere and much laughter with other volunteers, all while supporting a local project.

Join us!!! Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday each month at Hermann Park, 8:30 – 11:30.

Next event: **January 19**. Contact Heather Siemert at [heatherjean82@gmail.com](mailto:heatherjean82@gmail.com) for more info.

**Volunteers  
overseas...  
volunteers back  
home.  
RPCVs**



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## President's Outlook for 2013

I was elected President on May 6, 2012 to succeed the departing Ryan Gorczycki. Ryan was a terrific leader and I want to build on his accomplishments.

**Short Bio:** I was an agricultural extension agent in Nepal from 1973-76. My post was in the Himalayas near the Tibetan border. After experiencing many ups and downs, I eventually focused on planting apple trees. I was subsequently a PC recruiter during the summer of 1977 in Chicago. In 1980 I went to Tanzania on a USAID contract. I was one of five members of the Farmer Training Project. In 1984 I remained for a few months to carry out a consultancy for the Dutch. Those few months stretched into 21 years working as an independent consultant. I also was a co-founder of the Tanga AIDS Working Group (TAWG) which focused on treating AIDS patients with herbal remedies supplied by a local traditional healer. I've lived in Houston since 2004.

### Prospects for 2013

We are a diverse group of RPCVs. Our approximately 220 members range from being in the first groups that went to Ethiopia and Columbia to a couple that just returned from Rwanda. Our common thread is that we all served in the Peace Corps. Hence our members are drawn from many religions, beliefs, and political orientations. Consequently the only political policies we support are those that strengthen and expand Peace Corps.

However, many of us have retained the idealism that launched us into becoming RPCVs. To help nurture that idealism, the GCC should be a clearinghouse for activities and participatory projects that may appeal to many of you. For example, Paul Dewey (Mongolia) is the executive director of Big Brothers and Sisters of America. They have around 1500 kids awaiting big brothers or sisters. The Partnership for the Advancement and Immersion of Refugees (PAIR) helps children of political refugees navigate our bewildering culture. They also need volunteers.

Peace Corps and the British VSO are the only two international volunteer agencies that provide only manpower and no other inputs. Hence many PCVs piggyback on organizations that have assets but require manpower. Our model should be similar in that we'll pass along interesting opportunities that cross our screens.

Last year a few members asked me about retirement strategies. Being a temporarily retired geezer, they asked how I managed. I'd be happy to help organize a meeting to help younger members plan for a long and secure retirement. The secret ingredient is time. Compound interest works its magic during the last few years when what you saved becomes significant and a 15% annual gain is finally impressive in real dollars.

Last year we posted a few interesting job opportunities. I'd like to see more of these. I'd also like to collect the names of trusted professionals – doctors, dentists, lawyers – that we have used and trust. Let's make life easier for newcomers and those of you shopping around.

I receive requests for speakers. If anyone wants to be a speaker, please email me from our web site with your preferred topic or expertise.

We can also organize Speakers evenings drawing from our own talent pool of RPCVs. Did you know that Joe Acaba (Dominican Republic) is a NASA astronaut, lived on the International Space Station, and is the first astronaut of Puerto Rican origin? The Bill Tilney (Ethiopia) met Emperor Haile Selassie and was mayor of El Paso? Please contact Heather if you have a story to share. These profiles and others are on our website under Profiles.

We'll continue with our monthly re-connects and happy hours. These are great opportunities to meet old friends, make new ones, and get the latest on what it's like being a PCV in the 2000's. We'll try selecting venues where it is easy to roam around, party style, and mingle.

We'll also continue our monthly participation in Hermann Park and will look for other recurring projects. Please submit any ideas to Heather.

It is a privilege to be your President. Best wishes for a fruitful, happy, and prosperous 2013.

**David Scheinman**  
**President, GCC of RPCVs**

## Board Job Descriptions

### **President**

The President is principal officer of GCCRPCV and serves as chairman of the Board of Directors. He/She presides at meetings of the Board, and serves as an ex-officio member of all committees. The President, with the approval of the Board of Directors, shall create and appoint chairpersons of committees. The President is responsible for the execution of the policies and programs of the Board, and for the administration of the affairs of GCCRPCV.

### **Vice President**

The Vice President shall perform such duties as may be assigned from time to time by the Board of Directors, or the President. In the event that illness or other disability prohibits the President from performance, the Vice President shall have the power to perform the duties that are ordinarily the responsibility of the President.

### **Secretary**

The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that accurate minutes of meetings are taken, approved, and distributed. Is sufficiently familiar with legal documents such as by-laws and makes sure they are available at all meetings; acts as parliamentarian making sure Roberts Rules of Order are followed during meetings. Fulfills any other requirements of an Officer, and performs other duties as the need arises and/or as defined in the bylaws.

### **Treasurer**

The GCCRPCV Treasurer is primarily responsible for tracking revenue and expenditures for the group. The Treasurer tracks calendar purchases to determine the total amount that can be donated to projects in the Peace Corps Partnership Program and manages the bank and Paypal accounts for the GCCRPCV. The Treasurer prepares an annual report to the NPCA on total expenditures and ensures the proper IRS filing is completed to maintain the group's nonprofit status.

### **Fundraiser Chair**

Currently, the Fundraising Chair coordinates the yearly Peace Corps Partnership Fundraiser Dinner which includes asking for participation of members to provide dishes from their country of service and monitoring the numbers of individuals who will attend the dinner. The Chair researches the Peace Corps web site for the Partnership proposals submitted by Texas volunteers. Members vote on the proposal(s) to fund with the money raised. The person filling this position potentially has flexibility to identify other areas in which money could be raised to fund the Peace Corps Partnership program.

### **Webmaster**

Is responsible for updating the website. The person must have some knowledge of website design or web editing software. Must have access to web editing software that allows for uploads (ftp). Being able to convert documents to pdf format is also helpful.

### **Membership/ Data Base**

A good working knowledge of Access or Excel data base is helpful. This person keeps the membership list updated and can provide mailing labels for mail outs and email addresses for email news blasts.

**Special Events** Planning events and helping with publicity are the main duties of this person.

**Archivist** The Archivist acts as the historian for the organization.

**The above 9 positions are voting members of the Board of Directors per our Bylaws. Our Board can have up to 9 positions (see: [www.peacecorphouston.org/pdf/bylaws.pdf](http://www.peacecorphouston.org/pdf/bylaws.pdf))** The general membership votes on the Board and then the Board fills the above positions from the elected people. At the Annual Meeting in January 2013, 3 positions on the Board will be open.

Ken Fraley has been managing our data base/ membership for many years. He has just accepted a Peace Corps contract starting in February. If you might be interested in this position, please email David ([tanga4@yahoo.com](mailto:tanga4@yahoo.com))

**GULF COAST  
COUNCIL OF  
RETURNED PEACE  
COPRS VOLUNTEERS**



**Annual Meeting and  
Pot Luck Dinner  
January 27th, 2013  
4-7 PM**

**FCC Assembly Room  
10840 Beinhorn  
Houston, TX 77024  
832-334-1236**

1 block south of Katy  
Freeway (IH-10) & 1 block  
west of Voss Road  
Assembly Room is off main  
parking lot on Beinhorn

[www.peacecorphouston.org](http://www.peacecorphouston.org)



**Camping Trip, Huntsville State Park, May 2012**

RPCVs enjoyed a 2-night camping excursion within the beautiful piney woods of Huntsville State Park. Some highlights from the trip: Telling campfire stories about bear attacks when a party of wild raccoons were heard snapping tree limbs and branches, sending our then President, Ryan, hauling butt to the car. The fastest some of us had ever seen him move!!! Also, after a long enduring 3-hour hike, Felicia provided a hot meal for us – beans and weenies. The finest camping cuisine ever!



**New Website: Change that .com to .org**

It has taken us a few years but we are finally getting around to making our website reflect that we are a non-profit organization. The old site: [www.peacecorphouston.com](http://www.peacecorphouston.com) is being replaced by [www.peacecorphouston.org](http://www.peacecorphouston.org). Don't worry...we will put a forward on the old website so you can easily go to the new site.

To the right is a brief look at the new home page.

When you have time, check out the website . We have many interesting links to Member Profiles, Mentoring, Jobs, and picture galleries going back many years. You may be featured in a picture and didn't know it.

Your suggestions are always welcome.

Stephanie Wilson, [webmaster](#)

