

Message to our President on Feb. 7th, 2014

Hi David,

Whew! The weekend brings a bit of respite from the last three weeks of nonstop activity. We hit the ground running once we arrived back in DC on Tuesday and had a number of events through the rest of the week.

Thanks again for organizing a great group event in Houston and for opening your home to David and me, thereby saving the NPCA a few dollars on our budget and giving us the opportunity to get to know each other better. We enjoyed our brief stopover in Houston and the warm hospitality of your home. When you are in Maryland, *mi casa es su casa*....

Here's some talking points for you, organized according to our strategic objectives:

Goal 1 - Enabling members and member groups thrive:

Increasing membership - the NPCA is committed to helping member groups expand their outreach and thereby increase their membership by promoting and supporting your activities. We've seen that the commitment is reciprocal, as several groups have established goals of 100% of local membership also be NPCA members. NPCA can send out email blasts, post on Facebook and otherwise enable your use of our database to reach prospective members. We are striving to increase member benefits such as product discounts and seeking a data sharing agreement with Peace Corps that will provide us the contact info for COS'ing volunteers.

Strengthening member groups - we work to increase group capacity, primarily through the group leaders network, which is essential to exchanging best practices and cross-strengthening of member groups. We just kicked off our series on "A Purpose-Driven Group" which drew over 30 participants. The group leaders forum at Peace Corps Connect, June 5-6 in Berkeley, is a great venue for community building. NPCA can also provide small (up to \$500) education grants to member groups for Third Goal activities such as community fairs, film fests and other outreach events. Another good example is the way we facilitated the Ebola Relief Fund for three member groups to raise funds (\$60K) and support projects in West Africa.

Supporting volunteers in transition - NPCA works on several fronts to ease the transition to, from and well beyond Peace Corps service. Through the Employers of National Service (EONS) initiative, we are working with member groups to identify public and private sector entities that will commit to hiring national service veterans such as RPCVs, thereby creating pathways to employment. We work with these employers to establish awareness campaigns, hiring targets, and point preferences. NPCA is working with PC to provide RPCVs with national service credentials. We are in the process of upgrading our Mentoring Program, which will further assist RPCVs with employment opportunities. We are also working with Health Justice for PCVs to support RPCVs with health issues in their transition after service.

Goal 2 - Helping the Peace Corps be the best that it can be

Increasing federal appropriations - Peace Corps cannot advocate for itself, so this is a crucial role of the NPCA, and directly involves members and member groups. We encourage RPCVs to become NPCA members if for nothing else to support the NPCA's advocacy efforts. The member groups sign on to an annual letter to the POTUS requesting a higher budget based on factors such as increased volunteer applications and country requests for PCVs. We then meet with the OMB team that is responsible for preparing the President's budget for PC and substantiate our request (the FY 2016 POTUS budget increasing the PC budget by 8% can be attributed in part to NPCA efforts). Through our annual National Day of Advocacy (March 5, 2015), RPCV citizen advocates lobby members of Congress to increase federal appropriations in the House and Senate budgets.

Improving PC policy - Again, PC cannot advocate for legislation, so the NPCA plays a vital role in making the Peace Corps experience better through improved policy. Legislative victories in 2014 included the Peace Corps Equity Act, which provides an equity fix for female PCVs who were previously excluded from certain medical care that is provided to all other branches of national service. For 2015, the NPCA will seek to address several issues, including loan forgiveness and an extension of Non-Competitive Eligibility (NCE) for RPCVs, to be commensurate with length of service and deferrable in cases of disability, academic pursuit and other factors.

Increasing private sector resources - NPCA has worked to secure supplemental resources for PCVs, such as 1,000 Android Nexus 7 tablets donated by Google for distribution to PCVs in 2014. This year we are forging partnerships with no less than a dozen private sector entities to advance PC and NPCA development impact objectives, with the vision for establishing a Peace Corps Foundation that will ultimately serve to leverage private sector resources for both PCV and RPCV projects. Our partnership with Water Charity, for example, enables a quick start, as we launch a new program in Mexico that will give RPCVs the opportunity to serve as technical advisors.

Increasing PC visibility - NPCA is collaborating on a documentary about the Peace Corps that will serve to raise the PC cachet. We also market and sell PC-branded paraphernalia via our online merchandise store. Jointly with the PC, we hold PC night at Nationals Stadium, which we would like to replicate in other cities where we have member groups.

I hope that is sufficient. I have copied David Fields in case he has something to add. This email will also serve me as a draft follow up to the other groups we visited, so let me know of any comments or questions.

BOTTOM LINE: The NPCA is all about you - our community. We were founded by, are driven by, and exist for, the Peace Corps community.

Cheers,
Glenn

Glenn Blumhorst (Guatemala 1988-91)
President, National Peace Corps Association

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