

ReConnections

A monthly newsletter of the West Cascades Peace Corps Association

westcascadepca.org

www.facebook.com/RPCVEugene

Upcoming Events

Thurs. Jan. 8: From 6:30 to 8:30 pm the Book Group will meet at the home of Gary Cornelius to discuss the book *Monique and the Mango Rains* by Kris Holloway. Gary's address is in the membership directory. All are welcome!

Fri. Jan. 9th: Head over to Falling Sky on Blair for RPCV Happy Hour at 8 pm!

Sun. Jan. 11th: The WCPCA board will meet at New Day Bakery from 6-8:00 pm. All are welcome!

Mon. Jan. 26th: Join RPCVs at Food for Lane County warehouse (770 Bailey Hill Road, Eugene) to help package donated food from 6-9:00 pm.

Fri. Jan. 23: Join fellow RPCVs for beer and conversation at Hop Valley at 8 pm!

February 2015: Look for a survey in your inbox next month! Give feedback on WCPCA activities, events and communication!

New Year, New Newsletter!

Happy 2015! The New Year is sure to bring us all new opportunities and new adventures. It also brings a (somewhat) new Board for WCPCA and a new newsletter. You can check out the 2015 Board on page 2. As you look through this short first 2015 edition of the newsletter, think about what you'd like to see and read about. We'll be sending out a survey to WCPCA members so that we can work to make the newsletter a useful, entertaining and interesting addition to your inbox. Thanks for reading and Happy New Year! - *Denise Silfee (Thailand '11-'13)*



December's Holiday Potluck: Food and Presents!

The December potluck was held at the home of Tom and Nancy English. Members who attended sampled food from all over the globe: from the Middle East to Latin America, chicken to chickpeas! Members also played trivia to win mini-four packs of



2015 Board Members

Board President: Julia Harvey
(Tonga 1990-1993)

Vice President: Juliet Bender
(Mexico 2009-2012)

Treasurer: Patty MacAfee
(Cameroon 1989-1991)

Secretary: Gary Cornelius (South
Africa 2012-2013)

At large members:

Wayne Thompson (Peru
1964-1966)

James Cloutier (Kenya
1964-1966)

Denise Silfee (Thailand
2011-2013)

Laurette Garner (Madagascar
2004-2006)

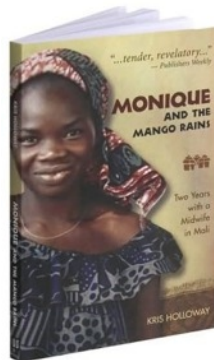
We're still looking for a Board member to be the membership chair to manage new and current WCPA memberships. If you're interested, please contact Julia Harvey or attend the next Board meeting on Jan. 11th!

wine, and engaged in a Dirty Santa gift exchange with the theme of "Peace Corps Survival" that allowed for stealing other people's presents. The members present proved to be extremely polite, and toilet paper was observed to be a unifying survival tool across regions and years of service. It's nice to know some things haven't changed! Other popular Peace Corps survival gifts included: books for all of that down time, a map of Mongolia, toys and games from Mexico, beer from Thailand and a particular scarf from Ghana, to name a few.



Peace Corps survival: PB&J and Budweiser.

Book Group: PCV Memoir *Monique & the Mango Rains* by Kris Holloway



The WCPA book group has chosen the memoir *Monique and the Mango Rains* by Mali RPCV Kris Holloway. Holloway served from 1989 -1991 and decided she wanted to write about her friend Monique after she learned that Monique had died in childbirth with her fifth child in 1998. For the seven years between the end of Holloway's service and Monique's death, the two kept in touch through long letters and cassette tapes. Holloway returned to Mali with the intention of collecting more information and writing about her friend's death.

Holloway credits her friendship with Monique with giving her a "new perspective on what it means to be a woman" in an interview posted to the author's website, www.moniquemangorains.com. The book group will be meeting on Thursday, January 8 from 6:30 - 8:30 pm at the home of Gary Cornelius to discuss. Gary's address can be found in the member directory. All are welcome to join!

Eugene Area RPCV Continues Work in Guinea

RPCV Sandra Belson (Samoa 2000-2003, Guinea 2012-2014) sent a recent update about her continued work in Guinea, along with two photographs from recent work there:

“I served two Peace Corps Response assignments in Guinea from 2012 to earlier this year as an Environmental Governance Advisory and as a specialist in Environmental Education. I am now returning to Guinea as a Winrock International Volunteer to set up and teach an English course for 4th year students at the *Institut Supérieur Agronomique Valéry Giscard d’Estaing de Faranah*. I will be leaving for this four-month assignment at the beginning of January.

One of the things I am doing to help out the local Guineans is to take back donated laptops, digital cameras, cell phones, tablets, iPods, etc. to help bridge the communication/technology divide. If any WCPCA members are upgrading computers or devices, I would gladly take the old one back with me so a Guinean can give it new life. I’ve attached a photo of the founder/teacher of an elementary school using my laptop. You may contact me by email at psbelson@yahoo.com.

Thanks for your dedication and all that you do to help spread peace and understanding in Eugene and throughout the world.”

Check out the RPCV Eugene Facebook page over the next four months for updates on Sandra’s work!

WCPCA Funded Project Thank-You Note

This past summer the WCPCA Board provided funds to Erin Hatlestad, an agricultural Volunteer in Paraguay for a gardening project that helped install 17 family gardens, one biodigester, and provided materials that went towards the construction of three composting latrines. Erin has worked in Portland and Bend and shared a lengthy thank-you letter with WCPCA, portions of which are excerpted here:

“With the range of experience in gardening [in the community] we collectively compiled a series of workshops that taught basic organic, bio-intensive and permaculture gardening techniques. We touched on everything from the basics of soil structure, composting, and watering, to the more technical—integrated pest management strategies, companion planting, and food preservation. By the end of the project, 21 workshops were presented that covered everything from starting and maintaining their garden,





to taking advantage of all of the produce through food preservation, as well as seed saving for future production.

For the past 3+ years Peace Corps Paraguay has been developing the biodigester system that works best in the Paraguay ecosystem and the resources available here. A biodigester is a system that collects and converts organic material into “bio-gas” to be used for cooking. Bio-gas can be produced with most any organic material, however it is most commonly managed using animal manures. The benefits of bio-gas production include a reduced dependency in firewood for cooking

(thus reducing deforestation). It can also be used as the majority cook on a wood burning stove. The gas is not pressurized nor explosive and is therefore safer than propane tanks, and home-produced gas is free in comparison to the expensive propane tanks and refills. In addition to all of the gas benefits, this continuous flow system releases up to 50 liters of fantastic organic fertilizer on a daily basis.



From a very heartfelt place, these families and I thank you. Thanks to you, they are consuming more vegetables and salads, extending their growing season, improving familial nutrition, spending less from their humble earnings, using a clean bathroom rather than squatting in the rain and parasites, and cooking on a sustainable gas stove. [The community members] wanted to share that their lives have improved through this project, they have learned a lot, are empowered to continue working to better the community, and really enjoy having a new productive social outlet. Thank you!”



The WCPCA Board regularly receives requests to help fund projects being implemented by current Oregon Volunteers. If you are interested in learning about what projects are currently being reviewed, or help make decisions on what to contribute to and how much, feel free to attend any Board meeting and weigh in.

If you know a currently serving Oregon PCV, encourage them to contact the WCPCA with funding requests for their projects or to send us pictures and an update from the field!