

Western MT RPCV Activities Report 2017

Submitted by Dennis C. Bangs



Goat Chase 2017

This past year saw continued enthusiastic participation in the regular potlucks in the Missoula area. Our nearly monthly meetings foster a real sense of family and community, along with the regular newsletters and the updates and reminders via email and the website. The website wmrpcv.com continues to see improvements and use. The Facebook page gets some use as well.

Bunny Sims (Philippines 73-76), continued the task of coordinating the Peace Corps Week presentations in early March in the Missoula area schools. About 15 local RPCVs shared their experiences with many students in the local schools. Several members in other areas of Montana worked with local schools to speak to individual classroom groups as well. Western MT RPCV members continued to make presentations to schools and community groups throughout the year as well as help out with the Peace Corps Representative on the U of M campus with tabling and other events.

In the spring of the year the NOM potluck, or ‘send off’ party was hosted by Mary Younger (Cameroon 74-76). This is the party where the newly nominated volunteers are invited to share an evening with local RPCVs exchanging stories and experiences. This is a great time to meet the newly nominated volunteers and cheer them on as they get ready for their upcoming assignments. Through the U of M Peace Corps representative Terri Nichols and the recruiting office in Seattle we gathered together and shared our stories and experiences with the newly nominated volunteers who are getting ready to begin their service.

Like always, the Goat Chase Retreat in June was the big event of the year as well as our annual meeting. Once again we had a good turn out and enjoyed the camaraderie of our group and the special location on the shores of Flathead Lake.

The monthly potlucks continued during the summer, with a July gathering at the home of Tony Hoyt (Liberia 67-69/ Guatemala 74-75) and Michelle on the banks of the Jocko River.

The August potluck returned to Jackie Johnson's (Nicaragua 2000-01) flower-filled back yard. The weather cooperated nicely that evening as well. In September Diann Stewart (Uzbekistan 2004-05) hosted the potluck which included the presence of the campus Peace Corps Rep., Alexandria Smith. The October potluck/Halloween Party took place at the home of Bruce and Bunny Sims (Philippines 73-76), which involved a nice drive in the country for most of us. And once again the most well attended potluck was the Christmas party hosted by Jim Burchfield (Guatemala 73-77) and Melissa MacKenzie (Costa Rica 81-84)



Welcome to Montana

September saw the arrival of the new Peace Corps representative on campus, Alexandria Smith. Some of our members welcomed her and the Seattle recruiters at a local establishment. In October the WMRPCV group once again had a presence at the Jeannette Rankin Peace Center Peace Party and fundraising event.

The international calendars from the Wisconsin group continue to be our main fundraiser. With the hard work of many of our members, we once again sold 325 calendars. The Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers donate the proceeds from the calendar sales each year to local humanitarian efforts across Montana as well as around the world. One of the local international groups we have been supporting is "Missoula Medical Aid" which has been taking medical brigades to Honduras since hurricane Mitch in 1998. The calendar sales are one way to meet "The Third Goal" of promoting a better understanding of people in other parts of the world on the part of Americans while assisting with development and educational projects. Not only do the calendars themselves get the word out about Peace Corps, but this is also our only fundraiser, without which we wouldn't be able to support the many fine projects we do.

The members of the Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers are a committed, compassionate group, involved in numerous local and international humanitarian projects. Over the years a wonderful sense of community has developed, always welcoming new members and other people interested in Peace Corps.

