

Activities Report 2014
Submitted by Dennis C. Bangs
President WMRPCV



Goat Chase 2014

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 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. Through their efforts nearly 1000 students in local schools heard personal stories from Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. 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.

Near the end of March, once again we participated in the University of Montana's International Week. The week culminates with a day of international food and festivities. Our group helps the Peace Corps representative on campus get the word out about the Peace Corps at a special information table. Not only is it a fun, internationally oriented event, it also serves as a way for us to reach out to other RPCVs and prospective volunteers in the community.



'Tell your Story' event on Campus

In addition to the school presentations, Amber Gladny, the Peace Corps Rep. on Campus put together a 'tell your story event' on the campus of U of M, where invited RPCVs shared some of their most memorable stories with the public.

In the spring of the year Lynne and Otto Koester (Ethiopia-Eritrea/Ghana 68-70/69-70) once again hosted the NOM potluck for the newly nominated volunteers in the area. Through the U of M Peace Corps representative 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. It brought together most of the membership for a weekend of fun, camaraderie, and discussion of the group's humanitarian activities.

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 at Jackie Johnson's (Nicaragua 200-01) not only featured her wonderful back yard, but a presentation about the problems faced by Mexican immigrants on the Arizona/ Sonora border.

At the October potluck in Missoula, Tobie Wiest (South Africa 2001-03) shared her recent experience as a Peace Corps Response volunteer in Georgia. Tobie is retired from a career in academia and gave the group a detailed account of the work she was doing with the local people trying to preserve and protect historical archives. She highlighted the work she was doing as well as the opportunity that Peace Corps Response offered for someone of her experience and talent to help out in a very specific scenario. We appreciated her sharing the experience with us and maybe she encouraged someone in the audience to look closer at Peace Corps Response.

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. It is 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 and without it 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.