

Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

Activities Report for 2024

January 22, 2025

The year 2024 was a great year for The Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (WMRPCV). In addition to our ongoing promotion of the Peace Corps at the University of Montana and across western Montana, we have continued to support PCV's in the field based on their requests for small donations to assist in the implementation of their projects. Moreover, we have reached out to attract new members to our group and find that our energy and commitment have led to new ideas to encourage our fellow citizens to join the Peace Corps or support its mission.

It must also be mentioned that we support each other. We enjoy the solidarity and learning from our common experience in the Peace Corps. We hold regular potlucks/meetings to recall our experiences and think about how we can be effective community members in Missoula and the other communities where we live. At our annual retreat at Flathead Lake in June 2024, we not only enjoyed our traditional storytelling, bonfires, sampling of international foods, and music, but we hosted and heard the stories of an Eritrean refugee family of six (two adults and four children) who had come to Missoula as part of the International Rescue Committee's resettlement of refugees. The emotion expressed by the family in their gratitude to have a network of like-minded people was deeply moving for all of us.

One of our major efforts has been working with the Peace Corps part time recruiter at the University of Montana to encourage university students to join the Peace Corps. At a career day in October 2024, six of our WMRPCV members spent a day in the campus commons with a table and Peace Corps promotional material, and there were 16 students who offered their names and contact information based on their interest in the Peace Corps. Many more students stopped by to pick up materials, and the university's campus outreach coordinator sustains contact with our group on a monthly basis.

Our group also tries to welcome back recently returned Peace Corps Volunteers who have roots in the Missoula area, and we held a special potluck just recently for a returned Volunteer from Paraguay. Not only were her accounts of her experience inspirational, she brought along several of her friends to the gathering so that they could be introduced to our group and find out more about the Peace Corps. Having a diversity of ages and interests within the WMRPCV has always been one of our organization's goals, and 2024 saw several events where new, young prospective volunteers shared our fellowship.

One particular effort to support an on-the-ground project overseas with connections to the Peace Corps deserves mention. One of our members has maintained close contact over the decades with both community organizations and government officials in Sierra Leone. At our annual holiday gathering this past December, the group heard about an opportunity to support a set of low-tech, agricultural processing facilities that would allow farmers to reap the benefits of adding value to their crops. We took up a special collection to allow this

project to expand beyond its successful, Peace Corps-driven experimental stage, to become more available to other farm families in Sierra Leone. These kinds of long term connections between our RPCV's and their host countries allow for ongoing, targeted, meaningful change in the lives of rural peoples in those places where members of our group have served.

With a solid membership that has experienced some new energy, the year 2025 looks like it will allow us to continue our service to the Third Goal of the Peace Corps – to bring the world back to the United States. We plan on revitalizing the scope of our Ambassadors Program that sends members of our group into the local schools to talk about Peace Corps during Peace Corps Week. We will continue to support recruiting efforts on the University of Montana campus. Even though there are evident challenges to the overseas profile of the United States in 2025, our commitments to peace and unity among nations are undiminished. We look forward to the year 2025 with hope and optimism.

Respectfully submitted,
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WMRPCV President
Website: <https://www.wmrpcv.com/index.html>



WMRPCV GOAT CHASE RETREAT --- 2024