



RPCV West Michigan Newsletter

Events and News from 2014

Good food and good friends. Good friends and good food. This is how West Michigan RPCV started and ended yet another successful year.

March 8th began the year with the International Potluck where RPCV's get together with current applicants, invitees and those interested in applying to come together and share information, stories and, of course, food from around the globe. The International Potluck serves as a "Welcome Back" and a "Send Off" for volunteers recently returned and preparing for their journey. During the 2014 International Potluck, we screened a preview of the movie "Posh Corps" by RPCV Alan Toth. The movie focuses on the lives of volunteers in South Africa and how rapid modernization has significantly changed the Peace Corps experience as well as the divide between urban and rural communities. With comments from one of our own returnees from South Africa, John Clemo, we reflected on the depth of experiences we all shared and compared technology such as short wave radios to mobile phones and blogs to paperback books.

In June, Tom Appel attended the NCPA "Peace Corps Connect" conference in Nashville and was able to report back to RPCV West Michigan about the experience. September had plans of a beach picnic get together on Lake Michigan, but sadly was cancelled due to weather. While RPCV members were disappointed, they made up for the missed event by showing up for the International Restaurant Dinner at Zeytins, a Turkish restaurant in Ada.

RPCV'S OF WEST MICHIGAN IS ESTABLISHED TO HELP RETURNED VOLUNTEERS NETWORK LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY, TO CONTINUE VOLUNTEERING WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL SERVICE PROJECTS AND TO PROMOTE GLOBAL EDUCATION AND UNDERSTANDING IN WEST MICHIGAN

The year ended with the Annual Meeting and Holiday Potluck where officers were re-elected, updates were shared and good food was once again shared between RPCV's of West Michigan.

Lenore Bonilla, Secretary

Work Days

Overall, I think 2014 was a productive year in terms of local work projects undertaken by W Mich RPCVs. We assisted Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF) on April 26th and again on May 3rd with several of its properties in terms of outside cleanup, pruning, weeding and spreading mulch. Eleven volunteers helped out in April; six or seven, in May.

On September 26th, we helped RPCV Joel Skok of Forever Green Transplanting Service with the planting of a tree in the inner city near EastTown on behalf of Habitat for Humanity of Kent County. Joel generously provided a mid growth sugar maple and use of his tree spade, benefiting a new family in the Habitat for Humanity house. Two volunteers assisted Joel with that effort.

On November 1, we assisted Well House, an emergency shelter familiar to older W Mich RPCVs who had worked on projects there in the early 90s. We provided property cleanup and interior painting of its recently renovated house intended for handicapped persons. Ten volunteers braved the chill to help out.

Tentative work projects for 2015 include several in spring with ICCF again and a fall project with Well House, hopefully in early or mid October.

Ken Schilling, VP and Work Projects Coordinator

Giving

Our group gave \$200 towards NPCA Ebola Relief Fund goal of \$20,000 which was dispersed directly to need based organizations in Ebola affected countries. More info on the project can be found at www.NPCAEBolaRelief.org.

Our group supported current Peace Corps Volunteer Projects in Andasibe, Madagascar. using a renewable Eucalyptus wood burning oven in a bakery which serves the local and tourist markets.

Other News

Billy Smith's wife Nancy passed away in September. We remember her in all that she gave to others in time and energy and joy.

