

RPCV's of West Michigan Newsletter



Events and News from 2015 rpcvwestmichigan.org

The Peace Corps visited Grand Rapids with its Smart Car promoting volunteer opportunities at the Grand Rapids Public Library downtown. It also made several other appearances around the area.

left

Vickie Craig and
Nick Haglund

below

Merrilie Benthin,
Meghan Costello (recruiter) and
John Clemo

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



2015 in Review - A Theme of Food and Friendship

Our International Potluck in March was a wonderful time of food and social connections.

On May 9th Peace Corps was represented by a few RPCV's in the Holland Tulip Time Parade on a cold and rainy day.

August 23 was the date of a very rainy Grill and Social. Greg cooked in the garage and we socialized inside in spite of the weather.

November 6 was an ethnic dinner out at Bangkok View Restaurant on 28th St SW, Wyoming, MI. There were some new faces and some new conversations with good food.

The December Holiday Potluck was well attended and we ate well, talked and met new RPCV's. What more can you ask for? The current board will stay on for 2016 with changes coming for next year. The changes at the National Peace Corps Association were discussed. Reports on our membership, back accounts and recaps of the year were shared.

Meeting with active Benin PCV

Peace Corps Volunteer Projects

Ken Schilling, Mark Bryson, Carolyn Chapman with Scotty and myself, met with Ellen Mork recently over the holidays. Ellen is a current PCV in Benin who was home for a short break before returning and finishing her third year as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Ellen is from the Grand Rapids area and has been meeting friends and family and enjoying lots of good eats from around town.

Her work in Benin covers a large geographical area and she meets with a lot of local Benin with her outreach. The one special project that she is helping to make happen this summer is a camp for 60 young Benin women. Camp Success is about motivating, empowering and connecting women for a week long immersion. Only the top two from thirty schools all over the country attend. Our RPCV group supported last year's camp and I hope we can contribute again this year. I know Ellen will share her experiences with the entire group when she returns. You can see a photo and a thank you note from the camp on our website.

[Benin Girls Camp "A Success"](#)

T-shirts

Thanks to Greg and Lisa, who resurrected our old logo from an original t-shirt, we have some great shirts, or really any type of outerwear with our group logo available for purchase. T-Shirts are \$15 each if you pick them up. I can mail one to you for the additional postage. You can see an example of the red and blue shirts at our website.



Kens Report: Two Local Work Projects during 2015:

1. On May 16, we made an effort at improving the landscaping of the passive park associated with ICCF's Family Haven (temporary housing) at 701 Prospect, SE. Eight or nine RPCVs assisted with the effort.
2. On October 17, we assisted Well House (an emergency housing agency) at 600 Cass, SE with erecting on its various properties prepared murals depicting program goals and values. We also helped prepare the agency's multiple vegetable gardens for winter. Six RPCVs worked on this project.

Changes in National and Local Associations

The National Peace Corps Association is transitioning to a new model for membership. The basic level of membership requires no fee. The levels above the basic provide extras including the option of supporting our group in the process.

Our group has chosen to also follow a no fee basic membership level with the understanding that donations through direct appeals, project support or other opportunities will become the norm. This allows everyone to participate and to give what they are able towards this group's activities.



Andy Brown, a RPCV from Thailand, will be stepping up to take on leadership this year. The current board has also brought on Mark Bryson to help with projects and Nick Haglund to help with a special 55th year activity

Michigan RPCV Groups

[All affiliate groups are listed at [Peace Corps Connect](#)]

- Southeastern Michigan Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
([FaceBook](#), [group website](#))
- Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Northern Michigan
([Facebook](#))
- RPCV's of West Michigan
([FaceBook](#), [group website](#), [email](#))
- RPCV's of Kalamazoo
([email](#))

Last Newsletter

I recently found what I believe is the earliest RPCV West Michigan Newsletter that I edited and did layout for in 1997. This one for 2015 is my last one. I think that 19 years is enough.

We used to print them and mail them out to people. Besides the printing (11x17 double fold with an insert occasionally) I kept the address database, printed the labels, added stamps and sent them out. It is a simpler task now of editing, layout and putting the PDF file on the website and simply emailing a link for people to read it if they choose to do so. The costs have shifted, but the work hasn't changed that much.

The newsletter is our documentation to the NPCA of our group's activities, work and outreach every year. Additional tidbits are also posted now on our website, Facebook and Twitter. Things have changed with a much more socially aware online world.

Thanks. We are a strong, diverse group and engaged in helping here and afar and it has been good to share that news.

Peace, Mark Coleman

President, RPCVs of West Michigan