

## **Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR 2008**

*Submitted by Dennis Bangs (Ecuador 1970-72), President*

This past year saw continued enthusiastic participation in the regular potlucks in the Missoula area, while Dave McGoldrick (Zaire 86-88) and the people in the Bozeman area chartered their own NPCA affiliated group called the Big Sky RPCVs. 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](http://wmrpcv.com) continues to see improvements and use.

The Emmisary chairperson, Jim Burchfield (Guatemala 1973-77), coordinated Peace Corps Week presentations in late February in the Missoula area schools. About 15 local RPCVs shared their experiences with over 400 students. Several members in other areas of Montana worked with local schools to speak to individual classroom groups. Western MT RPCV members continued to present to school and community groups throughout the year.

One special event took place in the May when Ron Tschetter, the director of Peace Corps, paid a visit to Bozeman and Missoula. He was promoting his new endeavor to recruit more volunteers aged 50 and above. While in Missoula he held two events. The first one during the day featured a presentation to the University of Montana for its continued positive recruiting efforts. The evening presentation included a panel discussion with WMRPCVs who were over 50 years old when they served. Tobie Weist had served in South Africa from 2001-03 and Tom and Ann Jones served in Bulgaria from 2002-04. Many area members of our group were in attendance and contributed to the discussion.

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 Christmas celebration at Jim Burchfield (Guatemala 1973-77) and Melissa Mackenzie's (Costa Rica 1981-84) was a large gathering of people, good food and good fun.

The international calendars developed from the Wisconsin group continue to be our main fundraiser. With the hard work of many of our members, we once again sold 400 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 fall of 2007 brought a new recruiter to the University of Montana campus, who not only was a great recruiter, but a great addition to our group. Kassi Miller (Guatemala 04-06) got many of us involved in presentations that she organized and she came to many of our events. The fall of 2008 brought Michael Bradbury to the U of M campus as the recruiter for 2008-2009. He got off to a good start and is involved in our group's activities as well as doing a lot of recruiting work. Thanks to both of them, numerous forums were held in which RPCVs had a chance to tell their stories and answer questions from curious audience members.

Another local project that one of our members undertook was to create a video of our members at present and in their Peace Corps sites. Garrett Olson (Zambia 2004-06) has finished a rough draft of what he envisions. It can be seen on the website.

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.