

Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR 2010

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



Western Montana RPCVs in the U of M Homecoming parade!!!

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.

Tish Herries (Sierra Leone 64-66), 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 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.

Right after Peace Corps Week, 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 recruiter 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 way for us to reach out to other RPCVs and prospective volunteers in the community.

In the spring of the year we hosted a NOM potluck for the newly nominated volunteers in the area. Through the U of M recruiter and the recruiting office in Seattle we gather together and share 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 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.

One of the new events we participated in this year was the Homecoming Parade in Missoula in the fall. Through the efforts of Tenly Snow, the new Peace Corps Representative on Campus, we participated in the Parade. This is the second largest parade in the State of Montana with over 100 groups participating. We had a very active and colorful participation, as can be seen in the picture above, and received a very warm and enthusiastic reception from the crowds lining the parade route.

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 nearly 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 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.