

# Western MT RPCV Activities Report 2018

*Submitted by Dennis C. Bangs (Ecuador 1970-72)*



**GOAT CHASE – JUNE 2018**

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. At the beginning of the year it was decided to discontinue the newsletter and focus our communications toward the website and email. The WMRPCV website [www.wmrpcv.com](http://www.wmrpcv.com) continues to see improvements and use.

Bunny Sims (*Philippines 1973-76*) continued the task of coordinating the Peace Corps Week presentations in early March in the Missoula area schools. Numerous local RPCVs shared their experiences with many students in local schools. Several members in other parts of Montana also worked with area schools to speak to individual classroom groups. Western MT RPCV members continued to make presentations to schools and community groups throughout the year as well as help out with the Peace Corps Representative on the University of MT campus with tabling and other events.

The International Food Fair and Cultural Festival returned to the University of Montana in the spring and the WMRPCV group helped out at the Peace Corps information table, sharing stories and information with the many people who were interested in Peace Corps. Later on in the spring of the year the “Send Off” party was hosted by Lynne (*Ethiopia 1968-70*) and Otto (*Ethiopia 1968-69 and Ghana 1969-70*) Koester. The newly nominated volunteers from the area were

invited to share an evening with local RPCVs, exchanging stories and experiences. This was a great time to meet the newly nominated volunteers and cheer them on as they get ready for their upcoming assignments.

The annual Goat Chase Retreat in June was the big event of the year as well as our group's yearly meeting. We had a good turn out and enjoyed the camaraderie of our group and the special spot on the shores of Flathead Lake. In addition to the fun and great food, this year featured a change in future leadership for the group. Long serving president, Dennis Bangs, announced his upcoming retirement. After a focused discussion a committee was formed to lay out a plan going forward for a new leadership picture.

In July, at the annual potluck picnic on the Jocko River at Tony (*Liberia 1967-69 and Guatemala 1974-75*) and Michelle Hoyt's, the newly formed committee presented the group with a plan for moving forward, including the development of a survey of the membership to follow. The summer continued with potlucks and discussion of the leadership changes on the horizon.

September saw the arrival of fall semester at the U of MT and a new Peace Corps Representative on campus. Kevin Dietle who served in Lesotho, South Africa, and the Philippines, enthusiastically embraced his position and got involved in the WMRPCV community. Several members of our group helped out in a couple of recruiting events. In October, a group of WMRPCV members attended the annual Jeannette Rankin Peace Center's 'Peace Party' and fundraising event, representing the WMRPCV organization in the local Peace community.

The sales of the International Calendars from the Wisconsin RPCV group were again the main fundraiser for the WMRPCVs. We sold 300 calendars and were able to contribute to a couple of Peace Corps projects headed by Missoula area volunteers as well as donate funds to numerous local charities. Some group members also purchased calendars to donate to local educators who were excited to have them in their classrooms.

The year ended with a holiday party at Jim Burchfield (*Guatemala 1973-77*) and Melissa MacKenzie's (*Costa Rica 1981-84*) home, which featured a tribute to outgoing president Dennis Bangs. The future of the WMRPCV group looks bright, with the new leadership team of Jim Burchfield as president, Mary Younger (*Cameroon 1974-76*) continuing as Secretary/Treasurer, a potential vice-president and various committees taking on specific tasks.