



MNRPCV News

*Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
Serving RPCVs and the Community*

Winter 2002

2001-2002

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Mission Statement

*To serve Returned Peace Corps
Volunteers and the community
by providing service to others
and fostering appreciation of
cultural diversity.*

The Corner Board

by Kriste Ericsson

Returning to Paraguay

Not everyone has the chance to go back to a place to finish a job that felt incomplete. Last summer I eagerly took the chance to return to Paraguay to work as a botanist and environmental educator. It had been 13 years. I had never wanted to leave. I loved the people, the country, my work, but was evacuated for medical reasons.

Two years afterward I returned to Paraguay for a week-and-a half, seeing old friends and laying ghosts to rest. It was wonderful! I wanted to stay longer and work, but doubted many agencies would provide funding with my medical record. I didn't even want to ask. Finally, in 2001 I had the funds and opportunity to go on my own.

On May 13th I landed in Paraguay, and was met by Felicita Areco, my host during part of my Peace Corps service, and the Ayala family, my hosts during training. It was great to see them! Felicita offered to host me again for three months in Asuncion, the capital, where I would work. The Ayalas were a bit disappointed I wouldn't be staying with them again in Guarambare, a town about 35 km from the capital, but I assured them I would visit often.

I had originally worked as a botanist with the National Biological Inventory of Paraguay, now the National Museum of Natural History. My current goal was to organize my collection of 760 pressed dried plants to be used for scientific study in the Museum. The collection had been kept intact and was mounted while I was gone. The specimens just needed labels.

The Missouri Botanical Gardens typed many of the labels, and sent them before I returned to the U.S. Most of my old friends were still at the museum. We were all a little grayer, "a little fatter"! - but they were just the same. And I

made new friends. But only half my time was spent at the Museum. The other half I spent presenting environmental education programs to communities scattered around a proposed national park, the Reserva San Rafael, with Nancy Lopez de Kochalka, from the Ministry of Agriculture.



The Reserve's purpose is to protect the largest remnant of Interior Atlantic Forest in Paraguay, once the dominant type of forest in South America. This is a daunting project because of limited government funds and because many campesinos (country people) in need of a cash crop illegally exploit the valuable timber.

Development along the major river bordering the Reserve also poses a threat as it impacts surrounding wetlands. The wetlands act as a buffer zone to the forest, a source of clean water, and a habitat for a myriad of species of subtropical plants, birds, fish and animals.

The country's vast wetlands are threatened by the construction of a new hydroelectric dam, and a proposed rice industry. Paraguay's forests have been reduced from the 25% of their original cover 13 years ago to 8% today.

The Paraguayan scientific community is very concerned, but the government wants to balance environmental concerns with economic wants and needs of the people, including the burgeoning rural population.

This trip renewed my concern for Paraguay. It tested me differently than during my original Peace Corps experience, teaching me that there are still ways in which I can learn to adapt or adjust to another culture.

When I was a volunteer I was evacuated just six months shy of my term of service, but couldn't return within one month as required by Peace

Continued on Page 2



Peace Corps Update

by Kriste Ericsson

Peru — October 22, 2001

In response to President Alejandro Toledo's election day statement of interest in Peace Corps returning to Peru, an initial assessment is being made of the program opportunities, its security environment and conditions. From 1962 to 1975, Peace Corps worked in Peru on programs in agriculture, education, fisheries, forestry and earthquake reconstruction programs. Then President General Juan Velasco Alvarado felt that the development work could be effectively continued by local citizens.

Zimbabwe — November 20, 2001

Peace Corps temporarily suspended its 10-year old program in Zimbabwe, due to the country's failure to provide work permits for volunteer teachers. Peace Corps will reassess the safety situation with the intent to re-open the program when a more stable climate returns.

World AIDS Day — December 3-5, 2001

World AIDS Day at the Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters focused needed attention to a devastating epidemic and recognized the efforts of Peace Corps staff and Volunteers to train community members on HIV prevention, address issues of prevention and awareness, and help families learn to care for relatives and friends stricken with AIDS.

Latvia — December 13, 2001

Peace Corps Acting Deputy Director Lloyd Pierson announced the closure of programs in Latvia in September 2002. After 10 years of success and cooperation, Latvia has developed the necessary local manpower to sustain the type of assistance currently provided by the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was one of the earliest sources of American support for the post-Soviet Baltic states. Volunteers served as mid-level professionals where local manpower was not sufficient. In Latvia, volunteers focused on teaching English as a Foreign Language and in assisting small businesses and non-governmental organizations to improve management techniques.

Digital Donations — December 14, 2001

For the second year, the AOL Time Warner Foundation in partnership with the Peace Corps recently presented Peace Packs to 38 Peace Corps Volunteers in 21 countries around the world. Peace Packs are grant awards of one to two computers, software, a printer, up to two years of Internet connectivity, and various peripherals such as digital cameras, scanners and zip drives. The packages are intended to strengthen the Volunteer's work and to combat the digital divide. The awards are based on advancement of development goals, sustainability, involvement and commitment of the local community where the volunteer serves. By next year the partnership will have awarded more than 120 Peace Packs valued at about \$1,000,000.

Nigeria RPCVs — December 31, 2001

Dave Hibbard and Roger Landrum, both from the first wave of Nigeria RPCVs, are leading an effort to redefine the role for the Peace Corps in the world through new Congressional legislation. This "New Mandate" would include more imaginative harnessing of the cultural and career expertise of RPCVs. Initial commitments were made to introduce new legislation in the House and seriously consider holding Senate hearings.

Wisconsin Peace Corps Forefather — January 15, 2002

A founder of the "Peace Corps" idea, U.S. Congressman Henry S. Reuss, 89, from Wisconsin, died in California of congestive heart failure. While others had talked about "youth service" as early as 1904

Corner Board - Continued from Page 1

Corps. I had developed a sleeping disorder, later to be diagnosed as bipolar disorder, or manic depression. I was partly responsible — boyfriend problems — but that can happen anywhere. I asked for counseling but the Peace Corps office in Asuncion wasn't set up for it. I was losing sleep, which worsened with cycles of insomnia until eventually I started hallucinating. Eventually I became paranoid and shut myself in my house for three days. When my friends dug me out I was sent stateside.

Back in the U.S. I responded well to treatment and medications. But it takes a long time to rebuild self-confidence after being diagnosed with a psychological disorder. I flitted from job to job, working in nature centers, taking seasonal research positions, working as a park ranger in the national parks. Finally I settled back down in Minnesota.

Now, I am searching for support to return in September 2003, to study the wetlands around the Rio Tebicuary River with members of the Paraguayan scientific community. I would like to get to know the people in the countryside around the Reserve, and learn enough of the beloved native tongue, Guarani, to understand their jokes! In the meantime, I am back in Grandy, Minnesota, working my two (or is it three?) odd jobs, and preparing to study a local wetland with the members of the Isanti County Environmental Coalition. Life is full.

2002 Peace Corps Calendars are sold out

If you really, really still want one, try www.rpcv.com, or send an email to mailcalendars@yahoo.com.

Peace Corps Update — Continued

at the Universal Peace Conference in Boston, Reuss and Hubert Humphrey both proposed the idea of a government service "Peace Corps" in the late 1950s. In 1957, Reuss, then a member of the Joint Economic committee, traveled to Southeast Asia and came upon an UNESCO team of young teachers working at the village level. He then inspired Humphrey to introduce a Senate bill in 1960 to send volunteers to underdeveloped areas to combat poverty, disease, illiteracy and hunger.

Vasquez nomination — January 16, 2002

Gaddi Vasquez was nominated for Peace Corps Director on July 26, 2001. On December 14 the full membership of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee met to discuss his nomination and for the first time in Peace Corps history, votes were cast against a nominee for Peace Corps Director. On January 15 a letter from Founding Director Sargent Shriver was read into the Senate Record explaining his vision for the future of the Peace Corps and reasons for his opposition to the nomination of Vasquez. A vote could take place anytime after January 23rd when the Senate reconvenes.



Join the MNRPCV!!

Are you reading more now but enjoying it less? Are you tired of the supermarket tabloids that have nothing beyond the headlines? Do you need something to sink your teeth into? COME ABOARD - join the MNRPCV. We have an award winning newsletter* MNRPCV NEWS published four times a year and a regular update MNRPCV HAPPENINGS that makes for a good evening of reading (if you are a slow reader). Enjoy yellow journalism at its best.

*almost

contact: Keith Pearson, membership chair
phone: 612-789-3851
Email: keith.pearson@juno.com
mail: MNRPCV, PO Box 6413, Mpls. MN 55406

MNRPCV Members Note:

As a member you should receive not only this quarterly MNRPCV Newsletter and monthly MNRPCV Happenings, but also the 3/1/61 newsletter from NPCA and the NPCA Worldview magazine. If you are a member but don't receive these, or if you would like to join, please contact our Membership Chair.

We look forward to welcoming you as a continuous supporter of the Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the National Peace Corps Association.

Celebrate the Snow Moon at Carpenter Nature Center.

Friday, March 1 starting at 7:00 PM. Guided **full moon snowshoe hike** on the grounds of the nature center with warm drinks to follow. \$5.00 reserves your spot and a pair of snowshoes. Call the nature center directly to make your reservation. Calling early to reserve your spot is advised as it is popular and fills up quickly.

Carpenter Nature Center, 12805 St. Croix Trail South, Hastings, MN 651-437-4359

Contact Shannon 651-665-0123 aishannons@yahoo.com with any questions.

International Women's Day Panel Discussion March 9.

Sarah Morari, RPCV, is seeking interested RPCVs to participate in a **Women In Development** Panel discussion at the 7th Annual **International Women's Day** on Saturday, March 9, 2002, at the St. Paul Student Center located on the University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus. The RPCV Panel discussion will be at 11:00am.

If you are interested in participating on the panel or would like additional information, please contact Sarah Morari, RPCV, at morari@usfamily.net, 763-503-9512 (home) or 952-525-2589 (work).

Membership Form

If you are interested in joining our group, please send in the following membership registration form.*

Yes! I want to be a member!

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Home Telephone _____
e-mail _____
Work Telephone _____
Country/Years of Service _____

- Annual MEMBERSHIP (includes both NPCA and MN Local Group membership) \$40 FOR INDIVIDUAL/\$55 FOR FAMILY
- INCLUDE JOB HOTLINE (listing employment opportunities in the U.S. and abroad) \$30
- INCLUDE OVERSEAS POSTAGE (if applicable) \$20

TOTAL PAYMENT: \$ _____
 MY CHECK PAYABLE TO THE NPCA IS ENCLOSED

or

PLEASE CHARGE MY CREDIT CARD:

MC VISA
EXP. DATE _____ CARD# _____
SIGNATURE _____

*Note: You may also join online at <http://www.rpcv.org>.

NPCA, 1900 L Street, NW Suite 205, Washington, DC.
20038 fax 202/293-7754 phone 202/293-7728

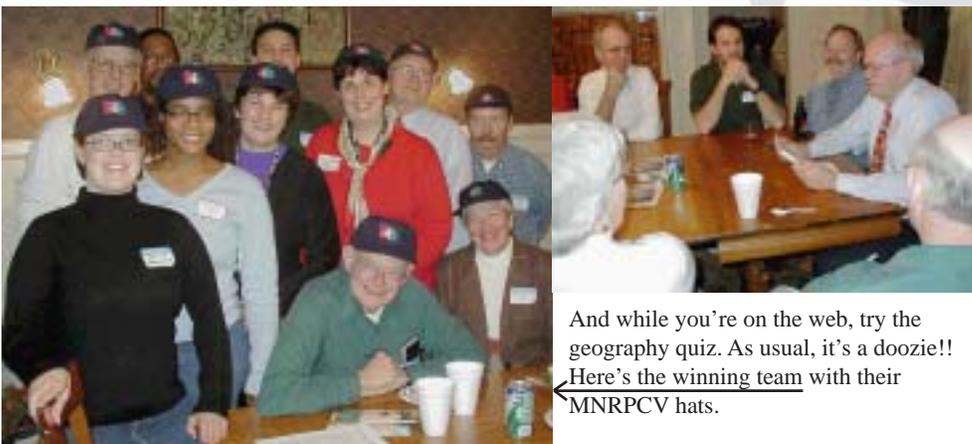


Annual Holiday Party at the Stander's - December 1, 2001

Good food, conversation, more good food, more conversation, topped off by another stellar geography quiz. What could that be, but the **Annual Holiday Party**. This year it was again hosted by Charles and Terri Stander at their St. Paul home.

If you missed it, I'm sure you had good reason and won't let it happen again. If you were there, maybe you're in one of the photos here – or on our web photo album at www.mnrpcv.org/MNRPCVPhotoAlbum.html

Check it out!



And while you're on the web, try the geography quiz. As usual, it's a doozie!!
← Here's the winning team with their MNRPCV hats.





2002 Winter Get Away Weekend



From: "Curt Rahman" <curt@pdaminneapolis.com>
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2001 12:23 PM
Subject: **ski weekend 2002**

We are really excited to announce a NEW LOCATION for the MNRPCV winter get away weekend. This is a really nice place, we have stayed here. They have a new group lodge that will hold 35-40 people in 13 bedrooms. This new location is only a couple miles outside of Park Rapids – very close to Itasca State Park for skiing. It is also a summer resort, so it is right on a lake (snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, skiing, etc.).

The dates are **Feb 22-24, 2002**. We can come in any time after noon on Friday and have the place until 1 PM on Sunday.

Only a check will reserve your spot. Send it now payable to Curt Rahman, 4209 Brown Ave, St Louis Park, MN 55416. The price is a flat **\$55 per person for the weekend, regardless of age.**

Check out this link to see the cabin. It is new this year.

<http://www.woodview-resort.com/cabins/cabin1.html>

Curt Rahman work 952-884-3334
cell 612-207-5411
home 952-925-3118

Social Events

by Shannon Scibilia

It's All Fun and Games

Friday "Game Nights" have been revived and are a roaring success. Thanks to Suzanne, Urbae, and Mary for hosting in January! We hope to continue this event throughout Winter and need some hosts for February and March. It's loads of fun! Hosts provide the location — it's a potluck event so everyone brings an appetizer and their favorite games to share. Group size seems to average around 15-20. Open dates include February 8, 15, 22 and March 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29. If you'd like to host one of these dates, contact Shannon at 651- 665-0123 or aishannons@yahoo.com

RPCVs Gotta Eat!

And why not make it a feast for the senses? Metro dinners (or breakfasts or lunches) are a fantastic way to share your favorite restaurant, get together with other RPCVs and socialize. Recently there have been some fantastic dinners in the St. Paul area but we're looking for hosts in other areas (western Wisconsin, north metro, southern suburbs, etc.) to shake it up. If you've got a hidden gem or neighborhood favorite you'd like to share, playing host is easy. Just pick a time and date, call the restaurant to make sure they can accommodate the group, and email Shannon the details at aishannons@yahoo.com. Then show up and enjoy!

Bowl-O-Rama

Can't bowl to save your life? This is your league!! Call Michael and enjoy your Friday nights! (And I hear their Spring banquet will be on a paddleboat.)

WHAT: Lousy Bowlers League

WHEN: every Friday through April, 7 to 9:30 PM

WHERE: Minnehaha Lanes, 955 Seminary Ave., St. Paul, 651-488-7208.

Contact Michael Smith 651-683-0197 or w.mike.s@ix.netcom.com





Community Service

by Jared A. Erdmann

Minnesota Public Radio's Winter Membership Drive Feb. 20 to March 1

Help contribute to this essential and informative radio station from Wednesday, February 20 through Friday, March 1, 2002. If we go as a group MPR will give honorable mention to the Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Come spend time with fellow RPCVs and assist your local community. Please contact me AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you are interested so I can set a time and day when most of you can participate. Those not available at that time can volunteer individually and we'll be with you in spirit. That said...*seguimonos con la lucha!* Please contact Jared Erdmann 612-824-6732 jared_erdmann@hotmail.com
For information about MPR call 651-290-1212 or 1-800-228-7123.

Jeremiah Program — May 2

On Thursday, May 2, 2002 from 6:15 to 7:45 p.m. we will volunteer with the Jeremiah Program to help prepare a dinner for approximately 40-50 people (half of whom are under the age of 5) and help with a short period of child care in the nursery. If you would like to help and get to know some really special people,
Please contact Jared Erdmann 612-824-6732 jared_erdmann@hotmail.com

Volunteer Organizers — March 1 and other dates

For those of you who enjoy organizing group volunteer activities, I welcome assistance in all forms. Since I personally cannot attend all activities, I would appreciate hearing from those of you who can facilitate or organize activities for future reference. If you have unique and creative ideas for group volunteer activities, I welcome your input. I am currently searching for a fun, group volunteer event for the weekend or week of March 1, National Peace Corps Day.
Please contact Jared Erdmann 612-824-6732 jared_erdmann@hotmail.com

National Peace Corps Association Update

by Deb Most

About the time you get this newsletter, I'll be returning from the NPCA Board meeting in Tulsa, OK. The big news is that NPCA is still planning the Forty Plus One Conference June 20-23. Please watch the NPCA web site for details of the conference. www.rpcv.org

This year several new Country of Service groups have formed:

- El Salvador
- Sao Tome e Principe
- Swaziland
- Ecuador
- Turkmenistan
- Romaina

There are now more than 16,000 members, an increase of about 4500 for the year. MNRPCV's membership has increased to over 430 members, the largest since I have been on the board. Many new members are recently returned. This is really exciting for us and it's great to see all the new faces at our events.

The NPCA is also encouraging groups to continue with grassroots advocacy efforts. We will try to start an MNRPCV Advocacy Committee. The first meeting will be Monday, February 11 at 7:00 p.m. at Starbucks in the Galleria Mall of Edina. If you are interested in being involved, please feel free to contact me at 612-798-5859 or email me at debmost@prodigy.net.

Speaker's Bureau Update

by Maureen M. Smith

If you're like me, you love blabbing about your Peace Corps experience - the friends you made, the food you ate, the languages you learned, the places you lived, not to mention the work you did. Speaking to a classroom full of school kids is an ideal way to share your memories. It's surprising how easy it is to talk to the kids. You go home knowing you helped some young people learn a little about the world.

When I've spoken to classes, some students have asked really intelligent, insightful questions, such as what's most difficult about returning home. Some asked really embarrassing questions, such as what African women do during their periods. From seeing pictures, some have learned the names of my close friends from Cameroon or even plants - coffee trees and millet stalks, for example. I usually show slides, which I love looking at anyway.

You can bring pictures, handicrafts, clothing or other souvenirs from your country of service. You can let them pepper you with questions. You need no public speaking skills. The local Peace Corps recruitment office has materials you can use in a presentation. For each talk given, the Minnesota recruitment office provides funds to MNRPCV for community service and other activities. Usually talks are arranged according to teacher needs, but you can initiate a presentation at a school if you like.

For more information, please contact Maureen Smith at 612-378-7072 or mmswriter@earthlink.net.

Treasurer's Report

By James N. Riess

Hope you all are having a great 2002! The MNRPCV bank account has a balance of \$19,245.77 as of January 11, 2002. Since the USBank interest rate is quite low, the MNRPCV Board has asked me to check into a new program being developed by NPCA to loan money to the Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA), an anti-poverty organization and a provider of financial services to low-income families. The foundation invented the "Village Banking method" of credit delivery.

Placing a portion of our funds with this group would give us a higher interest rate as well as help some of the world's poorest families so they can create their own jobs, raise household incomes and improve their standard of living. For more information regarding FINCA, check their web site at <http://www.villagebanking.org>

APRIL 10 GRANT PROPOSAL DEADLINE

Are you aware of a project that you feel MNRPCV should support with funding? In January, the Board approved a budget of \$2,000 for grants. The guidelines for Grant proposals can be found on the MNRPCV web site at <http://www.mnrpcv.org/grantProposal.html>

The proposal should be no longer than two pages and highlight needs addressed, feasibility, local involvement, funding requirements, cost projections and plan for administration. All proposals should be submitted by April 10, 2002.

Mail proposals to President of MNRPCV
P.O. Box 6413
Minneapolis, MN 55116



New RPCV Profile

By Keith E. Pearson

At the holiday party in St. Paul, Juan Christiani, RPCV-Honduras, had just been back to Minnesota for ten days. He worked on small business development from 9/99 to 11/01. He was assigned to the town of Jacaleapa — about one and a half hour's bus ride east of the capitol of Tegucigalpa. He was the first business volunteer and only the third volunteer in the community.

Honduras, in the heart of the banana belt in Central America, is a mountainous, rugged country with a lot of grassy areas and short vegetation as a result of deforestation. It has a tropical coast on the Caribbean side. Days

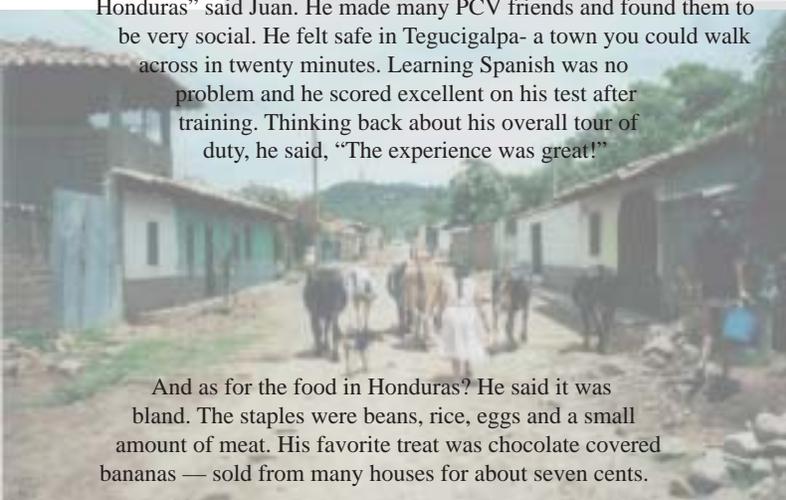
are hot and humid and nights are cool. The small country has the largest number of PCVs in the world.

Juan was first assigned as a small business development advisor at a secondary agricultural school, Instituto Reynaldo Salinas. After a frustrating first year, the Peace Corps director suggested looking for a new assignment. Juan then got involved in teaching business practices to people who made paper out of natural materials — leaves, plants and sugar cane. This was a much more satisfying project. Juan felt he had helped developed good business operations that benefited his students.

During his two years in Honduras, Juan had a variety of living situations. During training he lived with an extended family in Tegucigalpa. During his first school year he lived with his site mate in an adobe and stucco home, just a ten minute walk from school. He had electricity for a stove and a light, no indoor plumbing and an undependable water supply. He spent his second school year in a new one-room guest house built of adobe and stucco just off of the main house. He lived by himself but shared the yard with rabbits and chickens which were always running around.

He said there were good people in his town who were talkative and interested in his life back in the USA. "I feel attached to the people of Honduras" said Juan. He made many PCV friends and found them to be very social. He felt safe in Tegucigalpa- a town you could walk across in twenty minutes. Learning Spanish was no problem and he scored excellent on his test after training. Thinking back about his overall tour of duty, he said, "The experience was great!"

And as for the food in Honduras? He said it was bland. The staples were beans, rice, eggs and a small amount of meat. His favorite treat was chocolate covered bananas — sold from many houses for about seven cents.



A Public Forum

by Richard Earle

The Returned Peace Corps community in Minnesota now has their own Toastmaster Club. We are dedicated to learning how to "make a difference" by improving our public speaking skills. The Club is comprised of returned Peace Corps Volunteers and other like-minded people with compatible philosophies and interests.

Of course the main thing we need to succeed is an audience! We always look for fresh faces to laugh at our jokes, ponder our perspectives, and help us to make better sense out of what we do and say. Club membership is always a dynamic phenomena: people join the fun, learn how to be an effective public speaker, and then move on with life, which might even involve international travel. Just by showing up at one of meetings you will contribute to a good cause, especially if you have never attended before.

The MNRPCV Toastmasters Club meets twice monthly. Our meetings are open to everyone. Hope to see you there!

WHEN: Meetings on the first and third Thursday evening of every month, from 7-9 p.m. Meetings are scheduled for February 7th and 21st, March 7th and 21st, April 4th and 18th, etc.

WHERE: Fairview Community Center in Roseville, MN, 1910 West County Road B.

DIRECTIONS: Take I-35 to highway 36. Go east on highway 36 to the Fairview exit and turn left (south). Go about two blocks to the stop light and turn right (west) onto County Road B. Drive past the church on the corner to the school on the left. Park in the large parking lot (for free) and walk to the middle door (entrance 2) and see the receptionist for the room number.

INFORMATION: Contact Richard Earle, 952.929.6943, Richard_Earle@msn.com, or Steve Coury at Stephencoury@hotmail.com, 612.870.1091, or Dan Grundtner at danielrg@qwest.net, 651.487.3068.

Do You Have That Recipe?

SEND US YOUR PEACE CORPS RECIPES, FOOD STORIES, PICTURES and NOSTALGIA

We're interested in compiling a WORLD COOK BOOK with recipes, stories, photos, drawings, maps, and other written nostalgia, which we could sell as a MNRPCV fund raiser. We will gather your favorite recipes — you know, the ones that make our mouths water at RPCV potlucks, the ones you learned to make in host countries. It would be cool to have the cookbooks ready to sell at the NPCA Conference in June.

We're thinking simple: black and white, Kinko's-type binding.(But if you either are or know a printer who is willing to donate 4-color or other services, let's talk!!)

That's what we think, now what do YOU think?

If you have recipes, suggestions, comments, photos, drawings, etc. to share, or if you want to be part of this project,

EMAIL or CALL :

Maureen Smith (612-378-7072) mmswriter@earthlink.net



MNRPCV Spring Slide Show and Potluck Dinner

Take a trip around the world and get a peek into other RPCV's experiences without ever leaving the Twin Cities at our annual Spring Slide Show. This year it will again be held at St. Martin's Table on March 15. If you'd like to be included in the show, bring no more than 5 of your favorite slides. Otherwise, just come enjoy the good food, scenes and company. This is a potluck event so please bring a dish to pass (**and it would be a great chance to submit your favorite recipe, story, or drawing for the cook book too!**)*

For questions or more information, contact Shannon at 651-665-0123 or aishannons@yahoo.com

What: Spring Slide Show/ Potluck

When: March 15, 2002

Time: Starting at 7:00 PM

Where: St. Martin's Table

2100 Riverside Ave.

Minneapolis (West Bank of U)

* See story on Page 7.

Winter 2002 Table of Contents

Corner Board - Kriste Ericsson	Page 1
Peace Corps Update	Page 2
MNRPCV Membership	Page 3
Celebrate the Snow Moon	Page 3
International Women's Day	Page 3
Annual Holiday Party	Pages 4,5
Winter GetAway	Page 5
Social Events	Page 5
Community Service	Page 6
NPCA Update	Page 6
Speakers Bureau Update	Page 6
Treasurer's Report	Page 6
Grant Deadline April 10	Page 6
New RPCV Profile	Page 7
A Public Forum	Page 7
PC Cookbook	Page 7
Slide Show	Page 8

MNRPCV

P.O. Box 6413

Minneapolis, MN 55406

