

MNRPCV 2014 Small Grant Recipients Selected!

Anne Kanyusik Yoakum, Bangladesh 1998-2000, MNRPCV President

Thanks to the great fundraising efforts of MNRPCV Members throughout the year, I am thrilled to announce that MNRPCV was able to fund five small grants! Additionally exciting is that all five of our grant recipients are currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers from throughout Minnesota. MNRPCV awarded \$4182 in grants for 2014.

Jamielle Lamson-Buscho, PCV Albania 2012-2015, from Mankato, MN, was awarded \$870.00 for her project *Higher Education for Albania*. Our MNRPCV grant will go to acquire and make available information on higher education to students in the region. In cooperation with the Korca Regional Directory of Education, Jamielle will create new resources that potential students will be able to take from a traveling help desk regarding exam test dates and locations; the location of translation offices for official documents and transcripts; how to pick the right school; where to find and apply for scholarships; a terminology overview/translation sheet that explains vocabulary, short hand, and acronyms; and a time line for applicants including estimated regional due dates for tests scores, applications, scholarships, and visa applications. In addition, the grant will fund a "test prep library" where interested students can borrow a variety of different test preparation books to prepare themselves for the different standardized tests they will need to take in order to study abroad.

Mark Mahon, PCV Morocco 2013-2015, of Bloomington, MN, was awarded \$1000.00 for his project *Boudnib Madrassah Mohtalifah Toilet Construction Project*. Our MNRPCV grant will purchase materials that will allow the community to build a toilet that will serve approximately 300 students at a public school in central Morocco on the edge of the Sahara desert. The new toilet is needed to improve sanitation and public health in the community. This project has the strong support of the local community, who will be providing volunteer labor to support the construction.

Britt Molde, PCV South Africa 2013-2015, from Eden Prairie, MN, was awarded \$1000.00 for her project *Girls on the Go & Boys on the Move: Youth Sports and Leadership Program to Combat HIV/AIDS, Teen Pregnancy, and Substance Abuse*. Our MNRPCV grant will support a sports leadership pilot project that will recruit 8 student leaders from Malatse High School in Lefiso to be trained on facilitation techniques, behavior change models and life skills curriculum. These youth ambassadors will then lead weekly life skills building and sporting activities after school for a total of 40 boys and 40 girls for a period of four months. The project will focus on targeting the issues of HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy and substance abuse using adapted curriculum from Peace Corps and Peace Corps' South African partners, Grassroots Soccer, Zazzi, I-ACT and Brothers for Life. In addition, the grant will also allow Britt's partner organization, YAPSO, to purchase a projector to show movies for the community at a minimal fee and to sell snacks to generate income and provide funding for the project after the PCV's service ends.

Tracy Skluzacek, PCV Nicaragua 2013-2015, of Cold Spring, MN, was awarded \$312.00 for her project *Piano Lessons in El Rama, Nicaragua*. Our MNRPCV grant will fund the purchase of an electric keyboard and lesson books in Spanish so that piano lessons can be offered by a Peace Corps volunteer in a municipality where there currently are no opportunities to study music and learn to play the piano. The project will create an alternative extracurricular activity for youth in the community and open up opportunities to those who may not have the chance to

study music otherwise. Tracy will also train community members to teach piano, so that the program is sustainable and continues after her Peace Corps service ends.

Brad Weiss, PCV Peru 2013-2015, of Austin, MN, was awarded \$1000.00 for his project *VALOR (VidaAmbienteLagunaOrgulloReforestacion)*. Our MNRPCV grant will support engaging children and young adults in environmental education and advocacy in Pomacochas, Amazonas, Peru, an ecologically sensitive area that has been devastated by deforestation and development. This project will build on an existing environmental education program in the community by providing start-up funding to an environmental club. The club will engage youth around environmental issues by purchasing a weather station and video camera, which club members will use to create environmental public service announcements in cooperation with the local television station. In addition, through this project, Brad will further the Peace Corps First Goal youth engagement initiative!

Congratulations to our 2014 grant recipients and thank you again to our wonderful MNRPCV Members who worked hard throughout the year to fund these exciting projects!