



Email: novarpcv@gmail.com	Website: www.novarpcv.org	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/NoVaRPC

Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

March 11, 2022

Dear NOVA RPCV,

As we begin 2022 with better tools to help us stay healthy and safe during the almost two years of enduring the Covid-19 pandemic, we realize that we still need to take precautions to avoid catching and/or spreading Covid. We were fortunate in 2021 to be able to have two in-person general meeting gatherings, many outdoor social and community service events, virtual gatherings, and experience a new program on Anti-racism.

We began 2021 with Charlaine Loriston continuing in her role as President of NOVA RPCVs while working remotely in a new position for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In July, as Charlaine was preparing to move to Atlanta, I transitioned back as acting President for the remainder of her term. This February 12th, 2022, we are electing a new President of NOVA RPCVs.

The year of 2021 began with hope as Covid-19 vaccines became available to people 65 and older and people with compromised immune systems. By summer, vaccines were more readily available to the general adult population within the U.S. In conjunction with a larger population being vaccinated, the number of Covid cases declined in Virginia which provided opportunities for greater in person activities. This included two general meetings which included our delicious potlucks in August and November. Special thanks to Sara Holtz and family, and to Dick and Anita Popp for hosting the general meetings and potlucks. Special thanks to Elaine Staab for organizing many social activities such as biking, hiking, canoeing, outdoor summer happy hours to keep our current members connected and to bring in new members. And we are eternally grateful to Erica Brouillette for continuing to coordinate our service projects such as the Reston trail cleanup and the Reston Multicultural Festival.

Taking into consideration that there are not any Peace Corps volunteers currently serving overseas, we expanded our selection donation criteria to include non-profits from Northern Virginia with an international focus for providing grants from our charitable gift giving funds. We were able to provide funds to the National Peace Corps Association's sponsored non-profit Water Charity program. Special thanks to Steve Cristofar for leading the selection committee and to Janna Marchione for handling the Madison Wisconsin calendar sales to help provide funds.

In 2021 we began a virtual Anti-racism program, a series of seven virtual dialog sessions with 20 committed participants. The participants had the opportunity to think about, discuss and take selective action to support anti-racism at the individual, interpersonal and institutional level, concluding with final reports of their choice concerning institutional racism. The reports can be accessed on our website. Additionally, our group was nominated for the Loret Ruppe Award during the 60th Anniversary of Peace Corps. Special thanks to Mary Jo Smrekar for co-leading the Anti-racism program with myself and to Sue Ries Lamb for loaning her experiential curriculum as the basis for our Anti-racism program.

Our NOVA RPCV Board continues to evolve with new officers bringing their talent and experiences to our affiliate group. We welcome our new President, Lisa Martin, new Secretary, Rachel Howard, and our new webmaster Sara Hwong to the NOVA RPCV Board. We greatly appreciate their energy, time, and support. As some of the Founders of NOVA RPCV transition out, no words can express the gratitude that we hold for you. NOVA RPCV is 9 years in operations because you always showed up and volunteered when we needed you the most. Thank you for this amazing foundation in which the new Board can build upon. We hope to make you proud.

“Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” – President John F. Kennedy

NOVA RPCV exemplified, in many ways, what it means to do for our country by continuing to engage in matters of civil and health advocacy, racial and immigration equity work, and giving back to Northern Virginia.

Sincerely

Jean Wintemute
Acting President
NOVA RPCVs

Board of Directors 2021

Jean Wintemute

President &
Anti-Racism Program Co-
Director

Mary Jo Smrekar

Vice President &
Anti-racism Program
Co-Director

Akshay

Deverakonda

Secretary

Dick Popp

Treasurer

Don Boileau

Advocacy Coordinator

Erica Brouillette

Community Service
Director

Elaine Staab

Social Events Director

Sarah Samuel

Membership and
Communications Director

Charlaine Loriston

Immediate Past
President

Sara Holtz

Youth Engagement and
Education Director (Third
Goal)

Randolph Adams

Oral History Project
Coordinator

Steve Cristofar

Charitable Gift Giving
Committee Director

The Mission of the Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

To support Returned Peace Corps Volunteers residing in the Northern Virginia area

To promote a better understanding of the people of countries in which our RPCVs have served, the Third Goal of the Peace Corps

To continue making the world a better place through community service and offering small grants for community development projects, and

To advocate for the needs and goals of the Peace Corps and Peace Corps community.

New Board of Directors 2022

Lisa Martin

President

Mary Jo Smrekar

Vice President &
Anti-racism Program
Co-Director

Rachel Howard

Secretary

Dick Popp

Treasurer

Don Boileau

Advocacy Coordinator

Erica Brouillette

Community Service
Director

Elaine Staab

Social Events Director

Sarah Samuel

Membership and
Communications Director

Sara Hwong

Communications and
Web Manager

Sara Holtz

Youth Engagement and
Education Director (Third
Goal)

Randolph Adams

Oral History Project
Coordinator

Steve Cristofar

Charitable Gift Giving
Committee Director

Jean Wintemute

Anti-Racism Program Co-
Director

FINANCIAL SUMMARY & STATEMENTS

Takeaways

NOVA RPCV collects membership dues to help fund PCV projects. Donations are welcomed throughout the year. We are always looking for fundraising opportunities to support more programs abroad and in Northern Virginia.

NOVA RPCV is a debt free organization!

Description	Revenue	Expense	
Initial Balance			\$2,801.89
Bank Fee - Checks		(\$20.00)	
Silk Start		(\$200.00)	
Calendars	\$750.00	(\$375.00)	
Membership	\$585.00		
Wreath Laying Ceremony		(\$633.66)	
Water Project		(\$500.00)	
Subtotal	\$1,335.00	(\$1,728.66)	(\$393.66)
Total			\$2,408.23

MEMBERSHIP & COMMUNICATIONS

2021 had a net decline in active members in NOVA RPCV. While we gained many new members, several more did not renew during the year. It has been speculated that the loss of American jobs due to the global pandemic led to reprioritization for our members. We hope that this trend will change as the conditions of the pandemic improve.

- Membership (as of January 2022)
 - o 83 Active members (down from 86 on February 2021)
 - o 52 Expired in 2021
 - o 37 joined in 2021
 - (28 with membership “first year free” and nine as “contributing members”)

NOVA RPCV continued to use Silkstart (www.novarpcv.org) for communicating with members. Our Facebook page is also used to inform members and the public of our activities.

- Silkstart
 - o Sent 17 messages to members during the last quarter of 2021
 - o Sent six messages in January 2022
 - o Held elections completely online
 - o Updated our website, as needed, to highlight the current work of NOVA RPCV
 - o Added all board meetings and membership meetings to events calendar so that members have more access
 - o Color-coded the Events Calendar for members to distinguish NOVA from other RPCV group events
 - o Updated our Service Projects page to include support for Afghanistan Refugees, a new activity for NOVA RPCV in 2021
 - o Created new web pages for
 - § 2022 Elections
 - § Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Novarpcv@gmail.com and other communication avenues

- o We used Google services to create membership focused surveys to assist with operational changes and document member community activities
- o NOVA RPCV continued to use Zoom Video Communications to host virtual meetings

Website	www.NOVARPCV.org
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/groups/NoVaRPCVs
Email	novarpcv@gmail.com

ADVOCACY REPORT

NOVA RPCV ADVOCACY REPORT 2021

Major Activities

1. During the early spring five meetings were held with our Congressional Delegates' staff people as part of our annual Peace Corps week (Senators Kaine and Warner --Representatives Weston, Beyer, Connelly). Each group had representatives from our Affiliate group and people in the respective jurisdictions.
2. Members participated in letter writing on various issues during the year taking advantage of our national organization's computer system.
3. As part of the 50th year celebration sent a letter in the Burke Connection newspaper on the 50th Anniversary celebration as part of a national effort to have local papers have opinion pieces published about Peace Corps.
4. Internal Advocacy. Our chapter co-hosted the reception after the flower laying ceremony for President Kennedy at the National Cemetery. Several of our members received much praise for this work.

CHARITABLE GIFT GIVING REPORT

During 2021, the Charitable Gift Giving Committee recommended and received Board approval for a donation of \$500 to the NPCA-sponsored [Water Charity program](#), which allows currently serving and returned Volunteers to submit proposals for a water or sanitation project on behalf of their country and community of service.

WHAT NOW SINCE THERE ARE NO VOLUNTEERS SERVING?

The group arrived at a shared consensus to focus on local organizations for now with local gift giving; this would be more practical with no Peace Corps Volunteers in the field and would help to promote our name/reputation locally.

Charitable Gift Giving Committee is currently open to suggestions for small projects outside of Virginia PCVs work while Peace Corps volunteer deployment is on hold. Please send your suggestions to novarpcv@gmail.com.

THIRD GOAL REPORT

Third Goal: To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans

To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans, Community Service led four trail cleanups.

Events to share PC experience:

- Girl Scout World Thinking Day- Live love laugh, Peace Corps experience in Togo. Shared 3 goals of PC, PC sectors, PC countries. Webinar with teen Girl Scouts
- Girl Scout World Thinking Day- Peace Corps & Togo. Learned about PC, tried on Togolese clothes, carried water, played drums, wore babies on our backs
- Center for International Studies and Languages (CISL) at C. D. Hylton High School, Woodbridge VA. Webinar for teen students. Live love laugh as a PCV in Togo
- Girl Scouts World Thinking Day Party. Virtual event. Shared PC experience in Togo and peacebuilding. Webinar

To learn more on how to participate, email **Sara Holtz** at sh12sh34@gmail.com.

HOW TO REPORT THIRD GOAL ACTIVITIES

NOVA RPCV members are encouraged to report Third Goal activities to the Peace Corps at <https://rpcvportal.peacecorps.gov/profile/outreach-activity/>

Facebook crowdsourcing is currently underway to identify NOVA RPCV Third Goal activities. Please email novarpcv@gmail.com to report your activities to NOVA RPCV Third Goal Director, Sara Holtz.

COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORT

NOVA RPCV volunteers served a total of 460 hours in 2021

Old Trail Drive & Natural Areas Trail Cleanup

Our wonderful volunteers came out to pick up trash and recycling materials on our adopted spot along one of the many walking trails in Reston, including along Soapstone Dr., near Glade Pool. We volunteer on a quarterly basis, rain or shine, and have a blast catching up with each other and meeting new people. Come check out our organization's signs on either side of the trail. In 2021, we safely volunteered together using gloves and grabbers (as always), but also by maintaining distance from each other in an outdoor environment.

Refugee Welcome Kits Packing Party

Save the dates for our VIRTUAL donation drive to help refugees in our area, from March 1-31, 2022 – stay tuned for details.

Fun fact: World Refugee Day is June 20 each year.

Reston Multicultural Festival

Our Reston Multicultural Festival Booth was another success. While there were fewer visitors likely due to the ongoing pandemic, we had lots of visitors place pins in our maps and some took photos at our photobooth. Several people were interested in joining our group, as well as information on applying to join the Peace Corps. It was a beautiful day and our assigned spot was perfect! A big THANK YOU to all who helped with materials and served on the day of the festival.

Thank you for your service!

SOCIAL EVENTS REPORT

NOVA RPCV has offered several virtual and in-person events this year to RPCVs. In the Winter of 2021, we offered several virtual events including: a virtual game night with Peace Corps Jeopardy and charades, a virtual music night with sharing of music from Peace Corps countries, and a virtual cooking event with sharing of foods from Peace Corps countries. In the spring of 2021, we held our first in-person event which was a hike at Burke Lake Regional Park. At least 25 RPCVs attended in masks, eager to get out again and socialize. We also had a biking event on the W & OD trail to Purcellville in the spring. In the summer of 2021, we offered 2 kayaking events, a music event, and happy hours at Lake Anne in Reston.

NOVA RPCV has also worked together with other Peace Corps affiliates to plan social events. RPCV/W and NOVA RPCV hosted a joint happy hour in Old Town Alexandria in August. In the fall we held what has become a tradition, our annual fall hike at Great Falls with RPCV/W Hikes. We also held a biking event on the Mount Vernon Trail in Alexandria.

NOVA RPCV was asked by NPCA and honored to host the Wreath Laying Ceremony at President John F. Kennedy's gravesite for the 60th anniversary of the Peace Corps. Peace Corps Director Carol Spahn, NPCA President Glenn Glumhurst, and 3 congressmen were in attendance. It was a rainy afternoon, but the ceremony and reception had approximately 50 people.

Our quarterly potlucks have also become social events. In the summer we had a picnic in Sara Holtz's driveway and played a Peace Corps game. In the fall we had a Thanksgiving potluck and at least 40 RPCVs were present. There was a presentation made on supporting Afghan refugees at Fort Pickett.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

In response to the global evacuation of over 7000 volunteers, NOVA RPCV offered the following services:

Mentoring Program

In partnership with RPCV/W, NOVA RPCV offered career development solutions with our new mentoring program coordinated by Randy Adams, NOVA RPCV veteran mentor.

- The program offers training and resources to members who wish to be mentors to RPCVs,
- Matches prospective mentees with NOVA RPCV mentors based on career goals, industry, and more

Requested support from RPCVs may include

- Career planning and development,
- Job search processes such as resume writing, networking, and career exploration
- Mock interviewing, and
- Assisting currently employed RPCVs with career impacting decisions.

If you wish to be a mentor and receive training contact Program Coordinator, **Randy Adams** at r.a.adams@mac.com.

Seasoned mentors may also connect with the following to find a mentee in need:

- RPCVJOBS https://www.facebook.com/groups/rpcvcareers/mentorship_application
- RPCV/W <https://www.rpcvw.org/mentoring>
- NOVA RPCV NOVARPCV@gmail.com

ANTI-RACISM PROGRAM

The events of 2020 such as the horrific murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd by police officers, combined with the disproportion of COVID-19 deaths by People of Color, called for Peace Corps and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to:

- Educate ourselves and increase our awareness of interpersonal and institutional racism,
- Work towards taking action to combat racial inequity, and
- Build an inclusive, diverse, and equitable society.

Jean Wintemute, Immediate Past President of NOVA RPCV and Mary Jo Smrekar, Member-at-Large Board Member petitioned the NOVA RPCV Board to offer an anti-racism program to NOVA RPCV. The program consisted of a series of seven dialog sessions during which participants were provided opportunities to think about, discuss, and take selective action to support anti-racism at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional level. The program is based on a series of Anti-Racist Dialog sessions developed by Sue Ries Lamb, an international leader in organizations development and experiential learning.

The program began January 2021 with 20 participants in a private Zoom meeting. Each participant committed to participate in the seven sessions, each lasting 1.5 hours, to be held over a 3-month period, on Sunday evenings. Preparation for the sessions required one to two hours of reading articles, watching related videos, thinking about and, in some cases, writing responses to exercises or assignments prior to the session. In addition, participants continued to share reflections, discuss, and offer additional resources to further the anti-racism conversation in a private Google Groups sharing platform.

All participants of this program have been profoundly impacted and expressed this in statements like "I had no idea" about white culture and the dominance and implication and impact it has for people of color. They see themselves and their lives with a new perspective and recognize the meaning of white privilege. In December we conducted a survey with the NOVA RPCV participants, and all expressed affirmative examples of whether they have taken actions to continue to become more anti-racist at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels.

NOMINATIONS and ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In August 2021, NOVA RPCV received word that our program had been nominated for the NPCA Loret Ruppe award. Jean Wintemute and Mary Jo Smrekar presented a short

PowerPoint to the Affiliate Group National Meeting during the 60th Anniversary of Peace Corps Connect Conference. Unfortunately, we did not receive the award.

In November we submitted a grant application to NPCA for grant funding for Sue Ries Lamb, an international leader in change management and experiential learning to develop a specialized train the trainer anti-racism program for RPCV's to be offered to all NPCA Affiliate groups as a train the trainer program. Ms. Lamb committed to conduct the training for RPCV selected trainers, develop a trainer manual specific to this program for RPCV's, and conduct another 4 to 6 sessions to review the group process and address any issues that might arise in each session. Upon completion of the training, the RPCV trainers will take their expertise and conduct trainings for their affiliate groups throughout the U.S. We received a total of \$11,000 from the grants, yet not enough to fund the entire program. We continue to search for additional funding and to promote our program to the NPCA Affiliate groups.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

NOVA RPCV Oral History Project Chair, Randy Adams, conducted 25 interviews in 2021. Randy continues to be active in the Oral History project and has been recently invited to join their leadership team.

Interested in being interviewed and/or being an interviewer? Please email Randy Adams, the NOVA RPCV Oral History Chair at r.a.adams@mac.com.

To learn more about the project or how to be an interviewer, visit www.peacecorpsoralhistory.org.

The following is an excerpt from the Peace Corps Oral History project January 2022 Newsletter.

2021 recap

Our numbers are soaring! As of the end of 2021, OHAP volunteers have conducted over 1300 oral history interviews with RPCVs and Peace Corps staff. Of these, about 800 audio interviews, conducted from 1990 through 2019, are archived at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives and Records Administration.

Since June 2020, more than 550 video interviews have been conducted remotely using a web-based digital platform. These are archived at the University of Kentucky Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. The exponential increase in the number of interviews conducted and archived since 2020 would not have been possible without the incredible work of our team of volunteer interviewers and indexers and Nunn Center staff. Thank you!

Goodbye Backlog! When we started conducting interviews remotely, we had a backlog of over 250 people who had signed up to be interviewed. As of this writing, all but 10 have either been interviewed, or are assigned to an interviewer who is in the process of scheduling them. That means we can encourage more RPCVs to sign up without worrying about long delays. Use this link to sign up, if you haven't already - [SIGN UP](#)

We're expanding our reach! Thanks to Their Story, the digital platform we're using for interviews, we no longer have geographic limitations for interviewing. The web based app allows us to interview people throughout the world.

We're making a difference! 2021 kicked off with a very important collaboration between OHAP and the Museum of the Peace Corps Experience to create the Many Faces of Peace Corps video and discussion guide. This video, which includes clips from interviews of PCVs and staff from groups under-represented in Peace Corps has been used to stimulate discussion about issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion. In March, the video was included in the exhibition "[Peace Corps at 60: Inside the Volunteer Experience](#)", hosted by Museum of the Peace Corps Experience and installed at American University Museum at the Katzen Art Center. In September, it was used during the 2021 Peace Corps Connect Conference to anchor the session "[Peace Corps to Black Lives Matter: Striving for Allyship at Home and Abroad](#)". In addition, several NPCA affiliate groups have shown the video and hosted discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion in Peace Corps.

We need your help.

As the number of interviews grows, so does the volume of work in making those interviews easily accessible to the public. A very important step in the process is indexing. Indexing enhances access for researchers by noting and time stamping key topics. The process entails listening to the interview and entering notes into an online application. If you are interested in helping with indexing, and listening to some very interesting interviews in the process, please email us

Links:

Listen to interviews -

[JFK Library collection](#)

[Nunn Center RPCV collection](#)

[Nunn Center Evacuated PCV collection \(COVID19\)](#)

Many Faces of Peace Corps, 60th Anniversary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOmARu6oDnA>

Many Faces discussion activity

<https://www.peacecorpsoralhistory.org/cpages/many-faces>

Save your place in history with Peace Corps Oral History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VD3RF5flgI>

Peace Corps at 60: Inside the Volunteer Experience

<https://www.american.edu/cas/museum/2021/peace-corps-at-60.cfm>

Save Your Place in History: The Oral History Project, Museum of the Peace Corps Experience, and the Peace Corps Community Archives at American University

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUkKHsVmSB0>

From Peace Corps to Black Lives Matter: Striving for Allyship at Home and Abroad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnMmuqGqL6M>

Becoming an Indexer

<https://www.peacecorpsoralhistory.org/cpages/indexing>