



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

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www.novarpcv.org

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/NoVaRPCV>

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

February 21, 2021

Dear NOVA RPCV,

Despite its rocky start, I wish all of you a Happy and safe 2021! Northern Virginia RPCV is now 8 years old and with age comes much wisdom (and its headaches). The year 2020 was quite a challenge to our small organization as it was for each of us individually. COVID-19 reared its ugly head, partisan politics, once again, divided our nation and for the first time in 60 years, there were no Peace Corps Volunteers in the field.

Despite the roller coaster ride 2020 took us on, NOVA RPCV evolved and today we are a stronger community. We wish to thank all our oldest and newest members for continuing to stand by us as we adjusted to the growing needs brought on by this new environment.

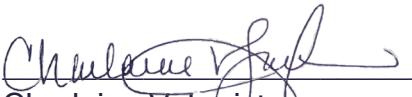
I admit, this Presidency has not been easy. Many plans were laid to rest as the world around us shifted and required a swift response. As one of the few Black members of this predominantly white group, it was equally difficult to balance the emotional toil needless (and countless) deaths of Black women and men took on me with the work that needed to be done for NOVA. Many of you answered my call to raise your awareness or simply get involved. I sincerely thank you for looking within and for your willingness to challenge your beliefs, our systems, and the world around us. As a community of peace makers, friendship, justice, and equality for all people should be at our core. So, thank you to all who stepped out of the sidelines and comfort zone. I applaud you for being brave around these uncomfortable issues and for taking action.

To the Board of Directors, 2020 allowed us to learn from one another and we were able to manifest amazing things in spite of COVID-19. Thank you for your hard work, the time and effort you put into our projects and for your patience with me. As of the publishing of this annual report, we will have new faces joining the Board. This is a sign towards growth, innovation, and a commitment to the mission and vision of NOVA RPCVs. This would not be possible without the quality time you put in to making NOVA RPCV great during a tumultuous 2020. Thank you.

To those transitioning Board members, many of which are Founders of NOVA RPCV, no words can express the gratitude that we hold for you. NOVA RPCV is 8 years in operations because you always showed up and volunteered when we needed you the most. Thank you for this amazing foundation which the new Board can build upon. We hope to make you proud.

Lastly, I wish to say a special thanks to Jean Wintemute for her continued mentorship as I embark on the 2nd year of this presidency. Your guidance has been invaluable.

Sincerely,



Charlaine V. Loriston

President

Guinea 2016-2017

SUMMARY

Strategic Highlights

NOVA RPCV responded swiftly to the growing and ever-changing needs of the RPCV community. After over 7000 volunteers were evacuated from their countries of service, NOVA RPCVs offered support in the form of career mentorship, friendship, and advocacy for the financial and health needs of newly minted and evacuated RPCVs.

Financial Highlights

NOVA RPCV made itself known as an ally by raising funds to promote racial justice and equality in Northern Virginia. In addition, members donated hundreds of dollars of supplies needed to assist refugee families adjust to living in the United States.

Though no PCV is on the ground, NOVA helped to fund for the continuation of a WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) program in Madagascar. This program was started by a PCV before being evacuated due to COVID-19. The work was too important to simply let it die and NOVA RPCVs helped see it move forward.

Operating Highlights

NOVA RPCV successfully transitioned into a virtual environment to keep members safe from exposure to the SARS-2 virus that causes COVID-19. We continue to implement changes to accommodate the needs of our members during these unprecedented times including:

- more weekend activities for 9-5 workers working from home,
- closed captioned presentations for the hearing impaired,
- mental health support in the form of mindfulness training and,
- an upgrade to our website to improve communications.

We added a new committee to our board focusing on Youth Education and Global Engagement (3rd Goal). Director Sara Holtz got us started with providing virtual 3rd Goal activities with Fairfax County Public Schools.

“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. 2020 proved to be a challenging year, but the work towards a better America and a better world will march on.

Looking Ahead for 2021

While COVID-19 continues to keep us physically apart, NOVA RPCV remains engaged in service to you and the Northern Virginia community. Annual activities such as the Multicultural Festival and Refugee Packing Party are delayed until conditions change. We will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 to identify opportunities to meet in person safely. To ensure receipt of electronic communications, please add novarpcv@gmail.com to your address book.

Below are upcoming activities. We will continue to modify this list and encourage you to please visit www.novarpcv.org/events to learn more and to register!

All events are virtual unless marked with ()*

Calendar of Upcoming Events

January - April	NoVA RPCV Anti-Racism Program: Build our Capacity to Affect Racial Equality (Closed registration)
February 21	Girl Scout's World Thinking Day (Talk with an RPCV to earn a badge)
March 1	Peace Corps Anniversary Week
March 1	National Days of Advocacy Kickoff
March 12	Music & Dance Around the World Social Event
March 27	Quarterly Trail Cleanup*
June 20	World Refugee Day (Possible Refugee Packing Party will be planned)
September TBD	Multicultural Festival
September 24-25	Peace Corps Connect

Board of Directors Meetings

April 18, 2021
July 18, 2021
October 17, 2021
January 16, 2022

General Body Meetings

May 16, 2021
August 15, 2021
November 21, 2021
February 20, 2022 (Annual Meeting)

All Board of Directors Meetings are open to members of NOVA RPCV

Board of Directors

Charlaine Loriston
President

Stephen Cristofar
Vice President

Elaine Staab
Secretary & Interim Social
Events Director

Lynn Lilienthal
Treasurer

Don Boileau
Advocacy Director

Erica Brouillette
Community Service Director

Sara Holtz
Youth Engagement and
Education Director (3rd Goal)

Sarah Samuel
Membership and
Communications Director

Jean Wintemute
Immediate Past President &
Anti-Racism Program Co-
chair

Randolph Adams
Oral History Project

Mary Jo Smrekar
Member-at-Large & Anti-
Racism Program Co-chair

Alana Delvecchio
Former Social Events
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.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY & STATEMENTS

COVID-19 prevented NOVA RPCV from supporting more Virginia PCV's Peace Corps projects. The mass evacuation stopped all activity.

- \$2418.19 End Balance for 2020
- Received \$500 refund from donation to Peace Corps project of evacuated volunteer
- Raised and donated \$300 to social justice organizations
- Opened an e-commerce account (PayPal) to sell event tickets and receive donations online

2020 CASH FLOW

DESCRIPTION	REVENUE	EXPENSES
DONATIONS FOR RACIAL JUSTICE	\$300	
A TOWERING TASK SCREENING		(\$155.00)
PC CALENDARS		(\$375.00)
2020 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS	\$765	
SILKSTART FEES		(\$200)
N MACEDONIA PROJECT		(\$500)
MADAGASCAR PROJECT		(\$500)
REFUND FOR N MACEDONIA	\$500	
DONATION TO OAR FAIRFAX		(\$150)
DONATION TO NAACP FAIRFAX		(\$150)

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!

MEMBERSHIP & COMMUNICATIONS

2020 led to a net decline in active members in NOVA RPCV. While we gained many new members, several more did not renew during the year. It is 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 2021)
 - 89 Active members (down from 98 on February 2020)
 - 33 Expired in 2020

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

- Silkstart
 - 24 messages were sent to members during the last quarter of 2020
 - 6 messages were sent in January 2021
 - Elections were held completely online
 - Website was completely updated to highlight the current work of NOVA RPCV and removed errors
 - All Board meetings added to events calendar so that members have more access
 - Calendar color coded for members to distinguish NOVA from other RPCV group events
 - Webpages created for
 - 2021 Elections
 - Global Education (3rd Goal)
 - Oral History Project
 - Mentoring
 - PCV Support
- Novarpcv@gmail.com and other communication avenues
 - Google services used to create membership focused surveys to assist with operational changes and document member community activities
 - NOVA began using Zoom Video Communications to host virtual meetings

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

ADVOCACY REPORT

National Advocacy Day

On March 4, 2020, over 200 RPCVs and allies of RPCVs gathered on the Hill making it the largest group assembled for the annual NPCA's National Advocacy Day on the Hill.

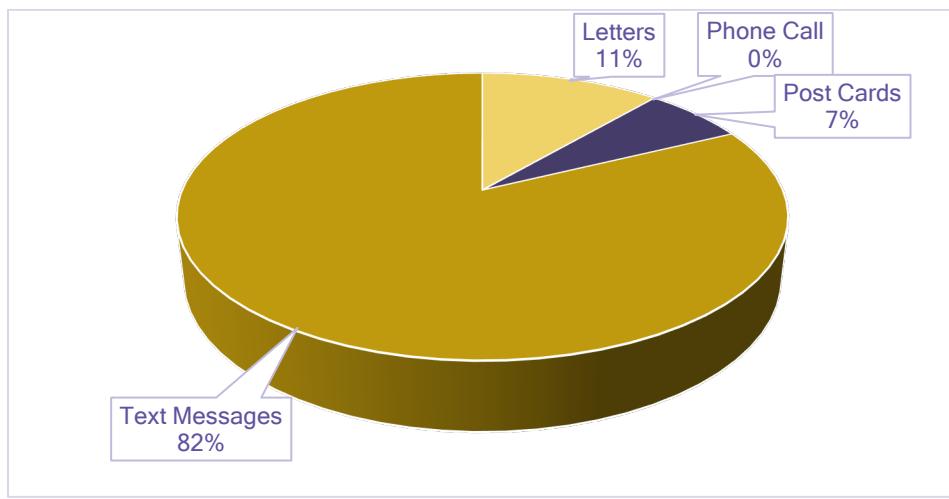
Participants included recently evacuated PCVs from the recently closed China Peace Corps program.

The eight participants of NOVA RPCV in attendance were divided into two groups to meet with Virginia lawmakers. The groups were later consolidated for visits to Senators Kaine and Warner.

Get out the Vote

Many members of our group participated in national letter writing to urge previously registered voters in several states. Over 700 letters and postcards were written by our members as part of the non-partisan Get Out the Vote campaign.

Number of messages sent by message type	
Method of Message Delivery	Sum of Number of Messages Sent
Letters	510
Phone Call*	0
Post Cards	290
Text Messages	3700
Grand Total	4500



Advocacy Efforts for Peace Corps Funding

During the year 2020, several members of NOVA RPCV participated in pro-Peace Corps Legislation letter writing campaigns with National Peace Corps Association. Members

supported Peace Corps expansion, maintenance, and the defeat of a bill seeking to defund the Peace Corps.

Due to COVID-19 safety, NOVA RPCV circulated postcards for mailing to congressional and state legislator leaders in lieu of in-person writing sessions.



CHARITABLE GIFT GIVING REPORT

During 2020, the Charitable Gift Giving Committee recommended and received Board approval for the following donations:

- English classroom improvement in North Macedonia
- Clean Water project in Madagascar \$500

English Classroom Improvement

The NOVA RPCV Board approved this North Macedonia PCV project for \$500 funding in the beginning of 2020. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus pandemic began, and the project was put on hold as all serving PCVs were evacuated to the US. Peace Corps Headquarters refunded NOVA RPCVs donation several months later.

Clean Water Project

Toward the end of 2020, NOVA RPCV donated \$500 for a clean water project in Madagascar, a project begun by a serving volunteer and subsequently taken over by a local enterprise in the country when the PCV was evacuated. This project was co-sponsored by the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), through which our donation was processed.

WHAT NOW SINCE THERE ARE NO VOLUNTEERS SERVING?

If and when the Peace Corps resumes field operations and as the pandemic hopefully subsides, we will be evaluating and recommending additional projects sponsored by serving PCVs from Virginia and the rest of the DMV.

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.

3RD GOAL REPORT

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

The conditions of 2020 affected the ability of NOVA RPCV to engage in 3rd Goal activities in-person. NOVA RPCV was able to find new ways to engage despite the COVID-19 restrictions.

Fairfax County Public Schools - Youth Outreach and Education

NOVA RPCV signed up as speakers to be matched with teachers and staff at Fairfax County Public Schools looking to share their experience as volunteers with the Peace Corps and to share their expertise on sustainable development, language, global issues and more with students.

Visit <https://www.novarpcv.org/cpages/global-knowledge> to sign up today

Girl Scouts World Thinking Day

NOVA RPCV members helped Girl Scouts earn a badge by sharing their Peace Corps experiences and responding to the girls' many questions about their countries of service, the culture, and the work done as a volunteer promoting peace and friendship. World Thinking Day, February 22, celebrates what it means to be a peacebuilder and is celebrated by Girl Scouts worldwide.

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 Third Goal Director, Sara Holtz.

COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORT

NOVA RPCV volunteers served a total of 480 hours in 2020!

Soapstone Drive Trail Cleanup

We maintained our commitment to keep the environment green by conducting three of our four Trail Cleanups. The first quarter cleanup was cancelled due to the initial COVID-19 guidance. COVID-19 safety precautions were implemented for subsequent cleanups.

Refugee Welcome Kits Packing Party

Our larger service project of the year was the Rotary-Peace Corps Partnership project: Refugee Welcome Kits Packing Party. This was the 4th time NOVA RPCV collected needed items for refugees. This year, 60 NOVA RPCVs volunteered 90 hours to pack a total of 55 Refugee Welcome Kits including 25 Cleaning Kits, 25 Toiletry Kits, and five Linen Kits. Lutheran Social Services (LSS/NCA), our Packing Party partner transported all kits to their offices for distribution.

Save the date for our VIRTUAL edition of the Refugee Welcome Kits Packing Party in June 2021 - stay tuned for details

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

Reston Multicultural Festival

Typically, during the year, we also serve our community via a booth at the annual Reston Multicultural Festival. We provide resources for prospective Peace Corps Volunteers and feature our famous map activity for everyone to participate. Due to COVID-19 guidance, we were also unable to host our booth in 2020 but hope to do so in September 2021.

Get out the Vote

During this historical and climatic election season, NOVA RPCVs donated many hours encouraging fellow American's to exercise their right to vote.

NOVA RPCVs sent over 4000 messages and dedicated 80 hours to spread the nonpartisan Get out the Vote message throughout the United States.

Thank you for your service!

SOCIAL EVENTS REPORT

In January 2020, before the pandemic took hold in the US, NOVA RPCV enjoyed each other's company via many social gatherings. The pandemic, however required us to shift gears and exercise our creativity in a virtual setting.

Winter Solstice Party January 11, 2020

Over 40 RPCVs gathered and exchanged Peace Corps stories and played interactive Bingo to celebrate the New Year and recently passed Winter Solstice.

NOVA at Night April 15, 2020

The first of many virtual social events where members grabbed a cocktail from a seat the comfort of their homes for a virtual Happy Hour. Stories were exchanged, music, ideas, and just sharing about the COVID experience were topics of the night. A much-needed reprieve from the new world of mask wearing and social distancing.

NOVA Jeopardy April 22, 2020

RPCVs tested their wits in this family friendly NOVA RPCV interactive version of Jeopardy equipped with all the sound effects!

A Towering Task: The Story of the Peace Corps Film Screening June 26-27, 2020

NOVA RPCV and community members had the opportunity to learn more about the founding of our beloved Peace Corps through this ticketed event. All donations collected during the screening went towards promoting racial justice work in Northern Virginia.

A Towering Task Date with the Director June 28, 2020

A question-and-answer opportunity with Director and Producer, Alana DeJoseph. NOVA RPCV members who watched the screening enjoyed digging deeper into the makings of this film.

Scattegories! Game Night July 26, 2020

NOVA RPCV exercised their creative thinking playing this online version of the popular kid friendly game of Scattergories.

Great Falls National Park Hike October 24, 2020

The first in-person, physically distanced, and COVID-19 friendly hike co-sponsored with RPCV/W Hikes

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

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

- Career Mentoring
- Mindfulness Education and Practice
- Listening Sessions

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

Mindfulness Education and Practice

Premature evacuation from service is never easy. Staying at home due to a global pandemic while mandated to remain socially distant from family and friends does not improve things either. In response to these changes that can have negative implications on mental health NOVA RPCV partnered with **Karyn Sandelman**, founder of A Mindful Choice and certified MBSR teacher, to offer tuition free training to members and discounted services for future courses in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

Information about courses can be found by visiting www.amindfulchoice.com.

Please email Karyn@amindfulchoice.com to learn more about scholarship opportunities.

Listening Sessions

Evacuated Peace Corps Volunteers needed a place to vent frustrations, meet RPCVs and know they had support from those who understood what they were going through. NOVA RPCV opened our hearts and arms in virtual embrace to EPCVs torn from their service during the global pandemic and offered them a safe space to share in a virtual environment. Many were living in hotels with no idea what the future would hold for them and NOVA RPCV answered their call for a listening ear on March 26 and April 1, 2020.



ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

All Oral History plans for receiving grant funding and partnering with other VA RPCV groups were cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As a result of physical distancing safety restrictions, interviews for the JFK Library were effectively stopped. The national RPCV Oral History Archive Project team researched and found virtual alternatives for capturing the stories of volunteers through a partnership with the University of Kentucky using Their Story.

- All interviews now held in Their Story, a Zoom Video-like platform that will allow participants to be interviewed from the safety of their home.
- All interviews are still publicly available as the audio-only interviews that were published with the JFK Presidential Library.
- Over 1000 interviews archived to date and many more to go!

Interested in being interviewed? 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.

NPCA ACTIVITIES

NOVA RPCV Board members are actively engaged in the planning for the 60th Anniversary Peace Corps Connect conference. As of March 16th, 2021, the Peace Corps Connect Planning Committee has the following draft schedule and outline.

Peace Corps Connect 2021 conference theme: “Lifetime of Service and Impact- Looking Back and Forward”

This will be a virtual event scheduled for September 18 - September 25th, 2021.

- Events will be approximately two hours long
- Participants can choose what session they wish to attend
- Registration fees will cover the cost of hiring a professional virtual platform

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The coordinating committee is looking for volunteers for the following committees:

- Production and logistics
- Programming Committee
- Sponsorships, partnerships, and exhibitors Finance Committee
- Marketing and Communications
- 60th Special Events

If you wish to volunteer, please fill the following form [60th Anniversary Subcommittee Volunteer Interest Form](#)

Draft Schedule

<p>Saturday, September 18, 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affiliate Groups National Association Meeting for Affiliate Coordinators• Presentations on RPCV Service Projects and discussion in Breakout rooms• Fun Activity such as virtual cooking class or dance from around the world
<p>Wednesday, September 22, 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy Day recap from NPCA President• Fun Activity such as virtual cooking class or music from around the world
<p>Thursday, September 23, 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PechaKucha Session• Oral History Project• Possible Friends of Countries Affiliate groups meetings
<p>Friday, September 24, 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversations with Peace Corps Director and NPCA President• Presentations of Awards - Harris Wolford, Deborah Harding, etc.• Country of Service Impact Videos
<p>Saturday, September 25, 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening Plenary - Glenn Blumhorst• Sessions and breakout rooms for<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion○ Climate Change/Refugees○ Evacuated RPCVS Oral History Archive Project and panel discussions○ Moderated Panel discussion with Host Country Nationals• Closing session

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 consists of a series of six dialog sessions during which provide opportunities for participants 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 was developed over the course of 3 months and the first course offering was in January 2021.

WHEN

The program began January 2021 with 20 participants in a private Zoom meeting. Each participant committed to participate in the six sessions, each lasting 1.5 hours, to be held over a 3-month period, on Sunday evenings.

WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Preparation for the online sessions require 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 continue to share reflections, discuss, and offer additional resources to further the anti-racism conversation in a private Google Groups sharing platform. For the success of this program, all members commit to maintaining a safe space for open and judgement free dialogue.

HOW'S IT GOING?

This is a new initiative for NOVA RPCV. As of mid-February, the participants have provided positive feedback of the program. Additional offerings may be considered in the future. For questions about the program, please email novarpcv@gmail.com.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email

NOVARPCV@gmail.com

Website

www.novarpcv.org

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/NoVaRPCVs>

