



Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (NOVA RPCV)



January 2026 Newsletter (revised)

<https://novarpcv.org/>

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Thank You for a Great Year – Let's Keep Growing!

Thank you to everyone who supported NOVA RPCV over the past year! We're excited to share that our community is growing—and it's all thanks to you.

As we look ahead, we invite you to join or renew your membership or make a one-time donation to help us continue building a strong, connected Peace Corps community in Northern Virginia.

Join NOVA RPCV via Connect+:

- Your first year is free with basic NPCA membership
- NOVA RPCV membership is just \$15/year after the first year

To make a one-time donation:

1. Visit [Memberships & Donations | Peace Corps Connect+](#)
2. Click "Select Membership" under the "Donations" section
3. Click "Proceed to Pay" then "Proceed to Billing Information" and enter your preferred amount

(Note: \$10 will be added by default—just factor this into your total.)

4. The listed timeframe is a system default; your donation will be processed as a one-time gift.

Please help us spread the word—invite fellow RPCVs to join, give, and stay connected.

We look forward to a vibrant year ahead as we continue to champion the Peace Corps mission together!

With gratitude,

The NOVA RPCV Board



Sunday Supper Uzbek Style!

RPCVs and friends are invited for a special Sunday Supper Uzbek Style on Sunday, January 25 at 5:00 PM at Rus Uz Restaurant in Ballston. Hear some Peace Corps food stories from Uzbek and Central Asian RPCVs. It's bound to be a fun time and the restaurant comes highly recommended! While Peace Corps CEO Paul Shea was invited to join us for this dinner, he is unavailable that day. We will host him Friday, February 6th at Upside Food Hall in Rosslyn. See our calendar for details---and join us for both events if you can!

Rus Uz offers an electric yet welcoming dining space inspired by a traditional Uzbek home, complete with artwork and collectibles from Uzbekistan and beyond. The atmosphere is warm, vibrant, and designed for connection.

Guests may enjoy appetizers or a hearty dinner featuring cherished family recipes that celebrate the rich flavors of Uzbek and Russian cuisine. Family-owned and passionately run, Rus Uz brings a true taste of the Old World to the Washington, DC area, with locations serving a thoughtful blend of both culinary traditions.

The menu also includes traditional and infused vodkas, select beers from Russia, and non-alcoholic options such as compot, kvas, and tea—perfect for relaxing and savoring the evening.

Please join us for what is sure to be a memorable night of delicious food, conversation, and community.

Rus Uz is located at 1000 North Randolph St. Arlington VA 22201 near Ballston Metro. Please confirm your attendance, so we can save you a place at the table.

We look forward to seeing you there!

[REGISTER](#)



Dinner and Drinks with Peace Corps CEO Paul Shea

RPCVs and friends are invited for Dinner & Drinks with Peace Corps CEO Paul Shea on Friday, February 6th at 6:00 PM at Upside Food Hall on Moore in Rosslyn. This is a chance to get personally acquainted with Peace Corps' top leadership and hear an update on Peace Corps activities today. Also enjoy a global selection of dinner and drinks at our area's newest hot spot. Upside is a vibrant culinary ecosystem, consisting of an eclectic food hall and dynamic gathering space beside Rosslyn Metro. This event is not to be missed!

NEW DATE & LOCATION: Dinner & Drinks with Peace Corps CEO Paul Shea at [Upside Food Hall on Moore](#) in Rosslyn.

1700 N Moore St
Level M2
Arlington (Rosslyn), VA 22209

Look for our group with the Peace Corps banner.

[REGISTER](#)



Ring in the Lunar New Year with us at Eden Center's new Pop Up District Food Hall on Feb. 20th 5-7 PM!

This festive gathering features special guest Carla Brown (Comoro Islands 92-94), NPCA's newly elected CEO. Come meet Carla, reconnect with RPCV friends, and celebrate in a vibrant space packed with delicious Asian food and drink options.

2026 ushers in the Year of the Fire Horse, beginning February 17, 2026, and running through February 5, 2027. This powerful year is all about high energy, bold action, independence, and transformation—perfect vibes for a fresh start and strong connections. The Fire Horse symbolizes freedom, strength, passion and momentum with themes of innovation, leadership and breaking old patterns. Auspicious colors include red for fortune and vitality, gold for wealth and success, and emerald green for growth and renewal, Learn more about the venue here:

👉 <https://www.pop-updistrict.com/>

Come celebrate, connect, and welcome the Fire Horse in style.

[REGISTER](#)



Come one, come all! - NOVA RPCV Elections

NOVA RPCV's 2026 Elections for Board & Committee Chairs

The 2nd Toughest Job You'll Ever Love--Join the NOVA RPCV Board of Directors!

NOVA RPCV will have the following positions open on its Board of Directors. Nominees are not required to live in NOVA, but we ask that you participate regularly in our programs and events, including our quarterly virtual board meetings. Nominees should be RPCVs or former PC Staff. We also strongly encourage and welcome a diversity of applicants.

According to our Bylaws, elections for President and Secretary are held in even-numbered years. We invite you to consider being part of our NOVA RPCV Board. Send your brief bio and statement of nomination (why you would like to serve) to mail@novarpcv.org by **COB Saturday, January 31, 2026**. Members will be able to vote by mail or in-person at our Annual Meeting & Winter Gathering Peace Corps Day Sunday, March 1st. This year's Nomination Committee is led by Membership Chair Arnab Sinha & Vice President Beth Hain.

NOVA RPCV's 2026 Elections for Board Officers & a Committee Chair Position

Please consider serving on our Board! While officers may be willing to serve more than one two-year term, we welcome other nominations at each cycle.

We are soliciting nominations for the following positions:

President: This officer presides at meetings, develops the meeting agenda, and is responsible for the general organization and management of the group.

Secretary: This officer is the custodian of the paperwork related to the group. S/he should have access to the copies of the legal documents (e.g., bylaws), goals, and other documents that describe the functions of the group. S/he should also keep records of meetings and decisions made by the group and post them on the google-drive.

We are also soliciting nominations for the committee assignments: Third Goal Chair. Chair positions can be appointed by the president at any time.

Third Goal Officer:

This officer plans, advertises, and executes Peace Corps Third Goal activities directly related to promoting Peace Corps and sharing our experiences with schools, clubs (Scouts), and community partner groups. This activity may be combined with the role of Community Service officer.

We hope you will join us!

Confirm membership, join or renew through

NoVA RPCV [Memberships & Donations | Peace Corps Connect+](#)



NOVA RPCVs Flameworking Workshop Saturday, January 31st 4 pm - 7 pm

UPDATE: SOLD OUT!

We have filled all the spots in our upcoming Flameworking Workshop Saturday, January 31st 4pm-7pm at Workhouse Art Center. Contact rpcvlisa@gmail.com to get on the wait list.

Step into the mesmerizing world of flameworking with a special NOVA RPCV workshop: *Heart of Glass* at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton—the only place in the region offering flameworking. This is not glassblowing or stained glass. Flameworking (also called lampworking or torchworking) uses a focused torch fueled by oxygen and propane to melt and shape

glass rods and tubes into striking, one-of-a-kind pieces.

In this hands-on workshop, you'll create a tornado heart pendant or paperweight using borosilicate glass. You'll start with the essentials: glass science, flame and heat control, and studio safety. Then you'll learn how glass behaves in the flame—and how to use that movement to shape a piece you'll actually want to keep. Time permitting, you'll experiment with two or three techniques to find what clicks with your creative style.

No experience needed—just respect for the open flame. Required attire: long sleeves, long pants, closed-toe shoes, and 100% (or near 100%) natural fibers only. If toes are visible, so is the hot glass 🔥

This is a small, intimate workshop designed just for our group, offered at a special price of \$75 (materials included; normally \$100+). Afterward, we'll head to the Bunnyman Tavern for dinner and drinks.

To register, contact NOVA RPCV President Lisa Martin at rpcvlisa@gmail.com while space lasts.

Come see just how *badass* flameworking really is.

[REGISTER](#)

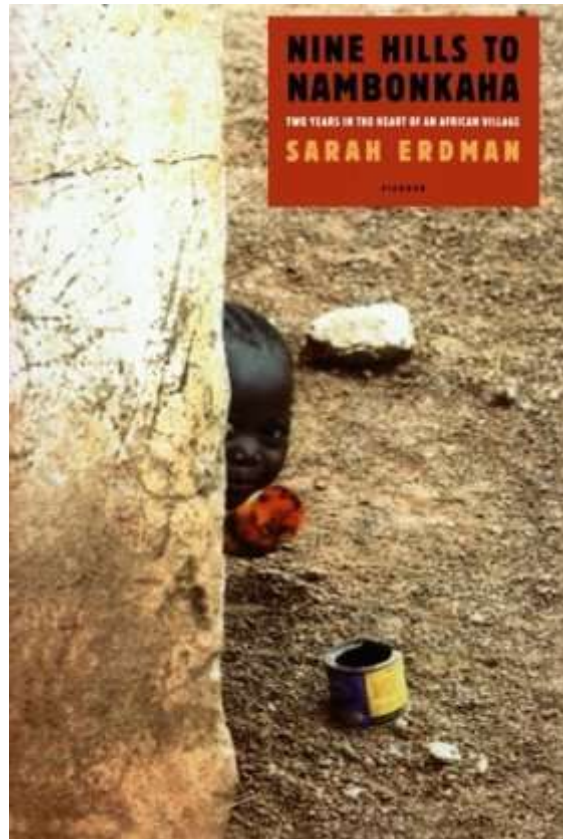
Instructor

Dr. Cynthia Izuno Macri is a glass artist creating and now teaching out of the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, Virginia. She is a graduate of Lehigh University and Temple University School of Medicine and served in the US Navy Medical Corps for 35 years. Prior to joining a 6-week Beginner Flameworking class for veterans and military members 3 years ago, she had no experience or interest in art other than traditional crafts like counted cross-stitch, needlepoint, and basic sewing. As a US Navy cancer surgeon, sewing seemed like a natural extension of preserving her professional skills. In retrospect, with the increased use of LASERs, electrocautery and the Argon Beam Coagulator in the operating room, FLAMEWORKING now seems like a more modern natural extension of her professional skills! Dr. Macri now teaches multiple Beginner Flameworking 3-hr workshops for the general public (adults 16+ years of age) per quarter and a multi-week workshop for veterans and military families (16+) twice a year.



Sign up with Connect+!

NOVA RPCV has hundreds of members but only a handful have registered on Connect+. We need your help to encourage all our members to register! Connect+ is the brand-new virtual village for the entire Peace Corps community. Reconnect with fellow RPCVs;



RPCV for the Arts book talk with Sarah Erdman

build your personal & professional network; contribute to conversations, join a group, find the latest news and network with the global Peace Corps community. We are stronger together!

It's a great way to connect/network and **it's free for the first year!** When joining Connect+ **you can also become a member of the Northern Virginia Returned Peace Corps Volunteer group for free (for the first year)!** If you need help to register, please don't hesitate to reach out to mail@novarpcv.org.

Join today!

<https://community.peacecorpsconnect.org/>

New Beginnings Seeks Funds to Support Refugees

As noted in the December 2025 newsletter, New Beginnings was started in August 2024 by NOVA RPCV Ed Miltenberger. We are made up of NOVA RPCVs and friends who have worked together over the past year to support refugee and SIV (Special Immigrant Visa) families arriving in the United States. Our group sponsored an Afghan family of five who arrived in NOVA in April. Our funds were completely depleted after we helped those family members get on their feet. We have now committed to sponsoring a new SIV family this year and are urgently fundraising to ensure we can assist the family during their first 90 days with housing, clothing, food, educational needs, and transportation, among other necessities. We ask that you consider [donating to our Go Fund Me campaign](#) as well as to sharing our appeal in your social networks. Please contact Ed Miltenberger (Miltenberger53@gmail.com), Kate Pongonis (Kate.Pongonis@gmail.com), or Anne Baker (AEBaker43@gmail.com), all members of NOVA RPCV, if you are interested in joining our sponsorship group.

On Friday, January 23rd at 8:30 pm RPCV for the Arts welcomes author Sarah Erdman (RPCV/Cote D'Ivoire) who wrote *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. The village of Nambonkaha in the Ivory Coast is a place where electricity hasn't yet arrived, where sorcerers still conjure magic, where the tok-tok sound of women pounding corn fills the morning air like a drumbeat. As Sarah enters village life as a Peace Corps volunteer, she finds that Nambonkaha is also a place where AIDS threatens and poverty is constant, where women suffer the indignities of patriarchal customs, and where children work like adults while still managing to dream. Lyrical and topical, Erdman's beautiful debut captures the astonishing spirit of an unforgettable community. Zoom link to follow.



Celebrate Peace Corps!

On Dec. 17th, the Museum of Peace Corps Experience hosted a Holiday Story Slam. Held at the Martin Luther King Jr. library, the event featured returned Peace Corps Volunteers sharing heartfelt, humorous, and unforgettable stories that captured the spirit



Holiday Fun!

In December, NOVA RPCV celebrated the holiday season! We attended the Fairfax Festival of Lights where we enjoyed holiday dancers, carols and hot cider and the Herndon Wintermarkt with their bell ringers and German dancers.



Third Goal

of service, creativity, and cross-cultural connection. Peace Corps CEO Paul Shay gave brief remarks and NOVA RPCV NPCA Liaison Corey Taylor participated as one of the speakers sharing his story of celebrating Thanksgiving in Benin.



Welcoming Nepal PCV Kayleigh Durr

On Jan. 3rd, NOVA RPCV welcomed Nepal PCV Kayleigh Durr. Kayleigh whose parents reside in Virginia was home for the holidays. Kayleigh and Nepal RPCV Dick Popp shared highlights of their Peace Corps activities in Nepal and fellow RPCVs exchanged stories of countries where they served. A wonderful gathering to welcome in the New Year!

On Dec. 3, 2025, Sara Holz gave a health-sector focused presentation to the Patriots for Public Health and Graduate Students for Global Health clubs at George Mason University's College of Public Health. A teacher of global health, Sara provided an overview of Peace Corps' three models of service (Peace Corps, Peace Corps Response, Virtual Service Pilot), shared photos of her service in Togo, guided students on how to view current health-sector openings, and provided tips on applying.

Peace Corps announces 2025 top volunteer-producing states

On December 15, 2025, the Peace Corps released its 2025 rankings of the top volunteer-producing states across the United States. "In 2025, Peace Corps volunteers from all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam shared their unique hometown perspectives with communities in the sixty countries where they serve," said Peace Corps Chief Executive Officer Paul Shea. "The Peace Corps offers U.S. citizens from all backgrounds an opportunity to make a powerful impact overseas while developing the skills they need for a global world. We are deeply grateful for the contributions of our volunteers and the families, friends, and communities that encourage and support them." While California continues to rank No. 1 for overall volunteer production, Virginia moved up two slots into the No. 2 spot nationally for total volunteers. New York and Texas tied for No. 3 honors.

Cultivating person-to-person connections at the grassroots level plays a critical role in extending American values overseas. Countries and communities around the world continue to partner with the Peace Corps as the agency aspires to attract and support 8,000 volunteers in service by September 30, 2030.



Holiday dinner

On Dec. 7th, NOVA RPCV enjoyed a beautiful holiday unity dinner organized by Kamana Mathur at Maharani Palace. Kamana shared highlights of Diwali - the festival of lights – and offered to place a bindi (for women) or tilak (for men) on individual foreheads symbolizing good fortune. A wonderful gathering enjoyed by all!

Recognize Peace Corps Volunteers—past and present—with a Congressional Gold Medal!

Take Action to Support the Peace Corps in Congress. The Peace Corps is approaching its 65th anniversary — a perfect time to honor its legacy and Volunteers with a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor from Congress.

Just prior to the government shutdown, a bill was introduced to Congress. The bipartisan Peace Corps Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2025 (H.R. 5521) would award the Congressional Gold Medal to all Peace Corps Volunteers, past and present, recognizing over six decades of global impact and partnership. This initiative not only honors history, it also reinvigorates America's commitment to national service.



Volunteer Opps!

Do you love to share stories? Wear your traditional outfits from when you served overseas? If so, please sign up with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS).

FCPS is seeking speakers from our NOVA RPCV community interested in sharing their experience and in-depth understanding of the communities where they served. This will “promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans” -- Peace Corps’ Third Goal.

Opportunities include showcasing your Peace Corps experience and the country/region you served during a cultural heritage night or perhaps giving a short presentation on various topics (i.e. how you used foreign language overseas; ancient Mali; knowledge of a particular region; information on a subject you’re comfortable addressing -- environmental protection, civic education, etc). Please share your info and proposed topics in this form [Returned Peace Corps Volunteers - Third Goal Opportunities](#) (only shared with FCPS staff). FCPS will contact you.

The Peace Corps needs more Volunteers, and this recognition helps elevate awareness, pride, and recruitment for our next generation of grassroots ambassadors and peacemakers.

Peace Corps family, if you can, please send a message to your Representative urging them to cosponsor H.R. 5521: [Recognize Peace Corps Volunteers with a Congressional Gold Medal](#) | [National Peace Corps Association](#)

Before sending a message, you can read the full bill text here: [Text - H.R.5521 - 119th Congress \(2025-2026\): Peace Corps Volunteers Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2025](#) | [Congress.gov](#) | [Library of Congress](#)

Thank you for honoring Peace Corps so we may continue to inspire and engage new Volunteers!

Recognizing Peace Corps

On March 3, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will read a proclamation recognizing March 1 as Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Day/Peace Corps Day.

Please mark your calendars!

March 3 at 9:30 AM at the Board Auditorium, Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway.



Thank you for sharing your Peace Corps experience with Fairfax County Public School students!

Virtual service and other opportunities!

For those who are nearing retirement or have time, please do consider Peace Corps virtual service or Peace Corps response.

[Peace Corps - Serve Online Through Peace Corps Virtual Service Pilot](#)

[Peace Corps - Short Term, Skilled Volunteering with Peace Corps Response](#)

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2026 International Calendars – courtesy of RPCVs of Wisconsin now available at NOVA RPCV!

Purchase your 2026 Calendars here!

\$18.00 each, pay here for credit card transactions or pay cash in person!

Credit card transaction can be made [here](#). Cash is always acceptable!

Delivered in person, we hope to see you at one of our events!

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[Unsubscribe](#)

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