



February 2026 Newsletter

Northern Virginia Returned Peace
Corps Volunteers (NOVA RPCV)

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Join the NOVA RPCV Board of Directors!

We are soliciting nominations for the following positions:

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

Secretary: This elected 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.

Third Goal Officer: This appointed 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.

Who:

Nominees are not required to live in Northern Virginia, 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.

How:

Send your brief bio and statement of nomination (why you would like to serve) to mail@novarpcv.org. **Members will be able to vote by email or in-person at our Annual Meeting & Winter Gathering Peace Corps Day Sunday, March 1st.**

Note: If you would like to support the group in other ways, please submit a general expression of interest (EOI) and share your ideas! Learn more about the board and our work.

Contact the Nomination Committee led by Membership Chair Arnab Sinha & Vice President Beth Hain if you have any questions.

If you'd like to support NOVA RPCV in other ways, we welcome general expressions of interest (EOIs) to get involved! Share your ideas or learn more about the board and our ongoing work here: <https://novarpcv.org/team>.



Recognizing the 65th Anniversary of Peace Corps on March 3rd

In 2026, the Peace Corps celebrates its 65th anniversary, marking over six decades of international service since President John F. Kennedy established the agency on March 1, 1961. The milestone year coincides with America's 250th anniversary, featuring major events like the Peace Corps Connect conference in Washington, D.C. on July 18–19, 2026, and potential awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to volunteers.

On March 3 at 9:30 AM, 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

Board Auditorium, Fairfax County
Government Center, 12000 Government
Center Parkway.



Fire & Ice

On January 31st, our group of NOVA RPCVs had a great time doing flamework with teacher Cynthia Macri at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, VA—the only place in the region offering flameworking. 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. We made tornado heart pendants as well as wine toppers using borosilicate glass.



Dinner and Drinks with Peace Corps Senior Advisor to the Director Paul Shea

RPCVs and friends are invited for Dinner & Drinks with Peace Corps Senior Advisor to the Director 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 Senior Advisor to the Director 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.

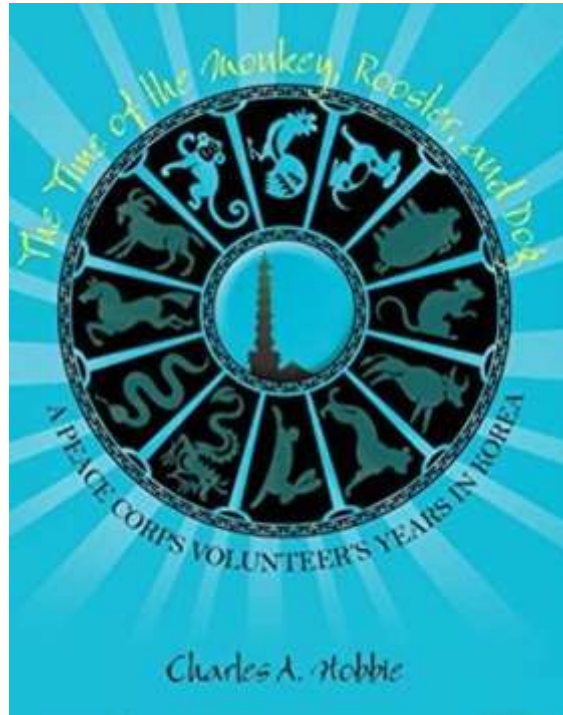
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Ring in the Lunar New Year at Eden Center's new Pop Up District Food Hall with special guest NPCA's new CEO Carla Brown on Feb. 20th!

This festive gathering features special guest Carla Brown (Comoro Islands 92-94), NPCA's newly elected CEO ([bio](#)). 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



Winter Potluck Gathering on March 1st

Celebrate Peace Corps Day with NOVA RPCVs! Join us for our Winter Potluck Gathering Sunday, March 1st at 5pm! This event will be held in the home of Nicaragua RPCVs Tim & Pam McCarthy in Fairfax Station.

Chuck Hobbie will share highlights of "Korea *The Time of the Monkey, Rooster, and Dog: A Peace Corps Volunteer's Years in Korea,*" a memoir of service, discovery, and change set against a pivotal moment in history.

[Read More >](#)

We will take the opportunity to host our Winter Potluck Gathering – bring your favorite dish or cuisine from your host

growth and renewal, Learn more about the venue here:

 <https://www.pop-updistrict.com/>

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

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country. We encourage to wear or represent your country of service and Peace Corps

Location: Home of Nicaragua RPCVs Tim & Pam McCarthy in Fairfax – address will be emailed before the event

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Peace Corps News

Richard E. Swartz Appointed Acting Director of the Peace Corps

President Donald J. Trump has appointed Richard E. Swartz acting Director of the Peace Corps.

“I am honored and humbled by the President’s faith in me, and his faith in the work of the Peace Corps and the volunteers who serve in more than 60 host countries around the world,” said Swartz. “The Peace Corps plays a vital role in advancing U.S. global engagement and I am committed to positioning the agency for a successful future, one that will help make America safer, stronger and more prosperous.”

Swartz will serve as acting Director until President Trump nominates a Peace Corps Director and the nomination is confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Paul Shea, who has served as the chief executive officer since August 2025, will continue with the agency as a senior advisor.

Having served as the agency’s chief of staff since September 2025, Swartz has more than 35 years of experience in senior leadership in the Federal government and the non-profit, information technology, and manufacturing sectors. During the first Trump Administration, Richard served as Peace Corps chief financial officer for three years during a pivotal time in the agency’s history. He also led the Trump-Vance Agency Review Team for the Peace Corps during the transition period after the 2024 U.S. presidential election.

Prior to the Peace Corps, Swartz served as chief financial and administrative officer at Lead for America, whose signature program is one of the nation’s leading AmeriCorps service organizations.

Originally from Philadelphia, Swartz attended Philadelphia University and received both a bachelor's degree in accounting and a master's in business administration with a concentration in management.

"Everything that has ever mattered began with something impossibly small. A single seed. A first mindful breath. A quiet decision to take one step, then another."

-Monks from [Walk for Peace - Why We Walk](#)



Sunday Supper Uzbek Style!

Celebrate Navruz/Nowruz the start of Spring with traditional Uzbek dishes! We have invited RPCVs who have served in Uzbekistan to share their own stories of this Central Asian culture. Enjoy a special Sunday Supper Uzbek Style on Sunday, March 22 at 5:00 PM at Rus Uz Restaurant in Ballston. It's bound to be a fun time and the restaurant comes highly recommended!

Rus Uz offers an eclectic, 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.

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.

[Read More >](#)

We look forward to seeing you there!

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Share Your Story!

You can help recruit the next generation of Volunteers by sharing your unique Peace Corps experience and how it continues to impact your life and career. Connect with

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. 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!

your local community through service groups, libraries, school activities and social media networks. Your story has the power to inspire the next generation of Peace Corps Volunteers. [Sign up on the RPCV Portal](#) to be part of Peace Corps' [Global Connections Program](#) and become part of the network of RPCVs available to share your story with communities in the U.S.



Celebrate our 65th anniversary in the VA State Capitol on Feb. 27th!

Delegates JJ Singh (Bolivia) and Amy Laufer (Jamaica) invite Virginia RPCVs to the State Capitol in Richmond on 2/27/26 to commemorate the 65th anniversary of Peace Corps, thank RPCVs for their Peace Corps service, and applaud RPCVs for their domestic dividend. This will be an amazing opportunity to meet our two RPCV state delegates, be recognized for our service, and build community with two other NPCA affiliate groups in Virginia (RPCVs of Richmond & RPCVs of Hampton Roads).

1000 Bank St, Richmond, VA 23218. For more information and to register, please see below link.

[Read More >](#)

[REGISTER](#)



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.

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](#)



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!

Join Peace Corps 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; 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!

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

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. Why wait?



Walk for Peace

"We walk not to protest, but to awaken the peace that already lives within each of us. The Walk for Peace is a simple yet meaningful reminder that unity and kindness begin within each of us and can radiate outward to families, communities, and society as a whole." - Bhikkhu Pannakara, spiritual leader of the Walk for Peace.

Thank You for a Great Year!

Don't forget to renew your membership or make a one-time donation ([here](#))!

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