

RPCVs NENY Annual Report 2016 - Activities and Accomplishments

The RPCVs of NENY had a very active year. We continued to reach out to RPCVs in our community and have worked to engage our members with a variety of different types of activities. Here are the highlights...

Communications

Sarah Janeski, President of RPCVs NENY, reached out to new members who joined our group through NPCA, sending each a personalized welcome letter. She has also increased our presence on facebook and continues to update our website.

Fundraisers

RPCV NENY Garage Sale - June 17th and 18th, 2016

Our group held its seventh fundraising garage sale. The sales occur approximately every other year. This year we raised \$1,189.42. A large percentage of our active members donated to the sale and about 15 members participated during the two days of the sale. The event was a fundraiser but also an opportunity to tell people about Peace Corps, meet RPCVs who did not know about our group, talk about the projects that we support, and interact with people from many of our countries of service. Our proceeds from the sales go to support several projects including the Akuffo Tom School in Ghana, and an orphan village in Lesotho (both projects of local RPCVs), and the US Committee for Immigrants and Refugees.

Freedom From Fistula Fundraiser - April 12th, 2016

This effort to raise funds for women suffering from fistula in Malawi was spearheaded by our two members, Becky Raymond and Rich White-Smith. The event was held on 4/12/16 from 6-9pm at Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church in Guilderland NY, hosted by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Northeastern NY (RPCV NENY) in partnership with the Center for Global Health at the University at Albany's School of Public Health. The program included a speaker, film, patient testimonial, plus light food, and silent auction. The evening's activities were well received and many of those who attended expressed how much they learned from the program and enjoyed the company. Through ticket sales and donations \$6,362 was raised to prevent and treat obstetric fistula - way beyond our wildest expectations! The funds have been donated to the Freedom From Fistula Foundation (FFFF) to support the Fistula Centre in Lilongwe, Malawi.

RPCV-NENY's original goal for this fundraiser was to sell fifty tickets and raise \$1300. We underestimated the incredible generosity and heart of the greater northeastern New York region, and our families and friends across the country. We sold over seventy tickets and more than quadrupled our fundraising target donation. In addition, small businesses in the

region and many individuals were contributors to our silent auction, which helped raise significant funds.

We wish to extend a special thanks to the congregation of Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church in Guilderland for the use of their facilities and their support.

The FFFF will use the funds for surgeries to restore a woman to health, life, and a future. Each surgery costs \$500. They will also be used to support the Patient Ambassador Program at the Malawi Fistula Centre. The Patient Ambassador Program trains former fistula patients to be outreach ambassadors in remote areas of Malawi. The ambassadors identify women suffering from fistula and bring them into the center for surgery. The ambassadors also help prevent fistula by encouraging pregnant women to get to medical facilities in time to deliver with medical assistance. A portion of the funds will enable the Center to purchase bikes for the ambassadors, to further their outreach.

Group Gatherings and Meetings

Monthly Meetings

Our monthly meetings are always held on the first Tuesday of the month. We had twelve potluck meetings in 2016. Speakers included: Becky Raymond, RPCV Malawi - Fistula Awareness, Alice Brody - Turkey, James Walker - Asteroidea Health Alliance in Uganda, Thomas Doyle - Guatemala, Diane Reiner and Ronnie Sseruyange of Jajja's Kids in Uganda, Allyn Writesel, RPCV Swaziland - PC Connect Conference, and Peace Corps Recruiter Douglas Miller.

Happy Hours - at Slidin' Dirty, May 26th, 2016 and at City Beer Hall on October 13, 2016

Our social events coordinator, Heather Senecal, organized another couple of wonderful happy hour events, this time in Troy, NY at the restaurant Slidin' Dirty and in Albany, NY at City Beer Hall. Several were in attendance at both events, including many who can't make it to regular meetings, and a good time was had by all.

Annual Summer Picnic - July 16, 2016

Our annual summer picnic was held on July 16th at Bob Crowley's house in Poestenkill. 25-30 people were in attendance, including RPCVs, husbands and wives, and plenty of friends and family. A good time was had by all as we ate, drank, swam, and talked the day away.

Presentations and Educational Events

Many members gave presentations or tabled at events in the community. Some of the highlights from this year are listed below.

Panel at Union College - October 18, 2016

Members Heather Senecal (RPCV Togo), Erin Kelly (RPCV El Salvador), and John and Lyn Kucij (RPCVs Liberia) participated in a Peace Corps panel discussion at Union College on October 18th with students interested in learning more about Peace Corps. Participants answered questions, discussed their PC experience, and We had about 10-15 interested students come sit with us to learn more about Peace Corps. The panel discussion was approximately 45 minutes, followed by approximately the same amount of time walking around and talking with interested students. The event was well attended.