

OLD FRIENDS NEW PARTNERS

How can Rotary and the Peace Corps
work together
to make the world a better place?

Rotary clubs and Peace Corps volunteers have worked together for decades on projects to promote literacy, clean water and sanitation, and health. Our two organizations have a presence in more than 60 of the same countries, and many Peace Corps volunteers join Rotary clubs to continue their service once they return home. In May, we made our connection formal, signing a letter of collaboration to explore how to share resources and expertise to boost the impact of our development efforts. Based on this agreement, one-year pilot programs will be set up in the Philippines, Thailand, and Togo, which will provide a model for how our organizations can team up to create lasting results. "This provides a formal basis on which to take our work to the next level," says Rotary International General Secretary John Hewko.



Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet with RI General Secretary John Hewko and 2013-14 RI President Ron Burton (far right) at the signing ceremony for the collaboration in May.

ROTARY IMAGES/ALYCE HENSON

5 QUESTIONS FOR PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR CARRIE HESSLER-RADELET

Carrie Hessler-Radelet knows the Peace Corps – and Rotary. Four generations of her family have served in the Peace Corps (she volunteered in Western Samoa from 1981 to 1983), and her grandfather, father, and aunt have been Rotarians. And when she travels, she often visits a local Rotary club. While she was in Evanston in May, digital edition editor Diana Schoberg spoke with the director of the Peace Corps to find out more about its successes and goals, and how we can work together.

1. You come from a family of Rotarians and Peace Corps volunteers. Why do you think the two organizations tend to attract like-minded people?

HESSLER-RADELET: We share so many of the same values. Both of us are fundamentally committed to service and to building peace. The thing I love about Rotary, which is a little different from Peace Corps, is that you are truly an international organization – that your members come from over 200 countries. That is inspiring.

It's a privilege for our volunteers to work together with the people who live in the same communities they do. Many of our volunteers continue to have longstanding commitments to their communities after they leave, and then they work through Rotary to support priorities in those communities.

2. The Peace Corps has been around for more than 50 years. How successful has it been in promoting peace?

HESSLER-RADELET: There will never be a time when there won't be a need to promote peace. What I do know is there are 12 presidents in Africa who credit a Peace Corps volunteer with starting them on the path to the presidency. There are thousands and thousands of schools where volunteers have served over the past 50 years. Our volunteers have worked in 140 countries around the world over the last 53 years, and they have made a difference in ways that are difficult to measure. Almost every time I travel internationally, I meet the ambassadors of our own country, and they tell me our Peace Corps volunteers



are our best ambassadors. They are building peace at the ground level. That's the same thing Rotary does.

3. How do you define peace?

HESSLER-RADELET: Through service and development. We have three goals that guide our work. The first is a development goal: to help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women. Our second goal is to help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served. The third goal is to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. We're trying to use more rigorous monitoring and evaluation, especially around our first goal. All of our projects now have indicators, very close to the ones used by Rotary. We have thousands of stories, but we're only now measuring our impact.

4. The Peace Corps does its work out in the field. But do you also strive to bring peace back to the United States?

HESSLER-RADELET: Absolutely. The greatest benefit of the Peace Corps to the United States is the training of Americans

who are globally competent, who have a strong understanding of another culture, speak another language, and are committed to building relations with the rest of the world. Peace Corps volunteers serve for two or three years. But you carry that with you for the rest of your life.

5. The world has changed a lot since John F. Kennedy launched the Peace Corps. We were dealing with the Cold War then, and today's conflicts are different. How has the Peace Corps changed?

HESSLER-RADELET: Technology probably drives the most change. We're using technology to gauge our impact. We have tools that allow volunteers in some countries to use smartphones to monitor their work every day. But in the end it is the relationships, the conversations, the personal mentoring and role modeling that makes the difference, and that part remains the same. Peace Corps volunteers are still integrated within their community. They speak the same language, they live as a member of that community, they eat the same food, and they work on the priorities of the community. The general Peace Corps model has not changed.



Lauren Erickson-Mamane, the Peace Corps country director in Togo; Hessler-Radelet; Hewko; and Burton speak to a reporter after the ceremony.

ROTARY IMAGES/ALICE HENSON

SOCCER BALLS

OPEN THE FIELD FOR MALARIA EDUCATION IN TOGO

David Gooze learned the power of soccer in Africa shortly after he arrived in the village of Kemeni, Togo, as a Peace Corps volunteer in 2012. Even before he could speak the local language, the game allowed him to interact with his new community.

"It helped me make a better connection with the local people," he says. "Soccer has a mobilizing effect here, in these small villages."

Volunteers in Togo have long used soccer as an informal way to unite young people and promote education on a variety of topics, including gender equity and HIV/AIDS prevention. So when David's father, Robert Gooze, a member of the Rotary Club of Madison South, Wis., brokered a donation of more than 5,000 indestructible soccer balls from the One World Futbol Project, it didn't take long for the Peace Corps to find a use for them.

In April, David Gooze and other volunteers kicked off the More Than Just a Game tour, traveling to each of Togo's five major regions to sponsor a two-day soccer festival. They used the game to engage local student leaders, mixing sport with interactive training sessions focused on malaria prevention and treatment. Every student chosen to participate received a soccer ball, and each school that supported the effort also received an

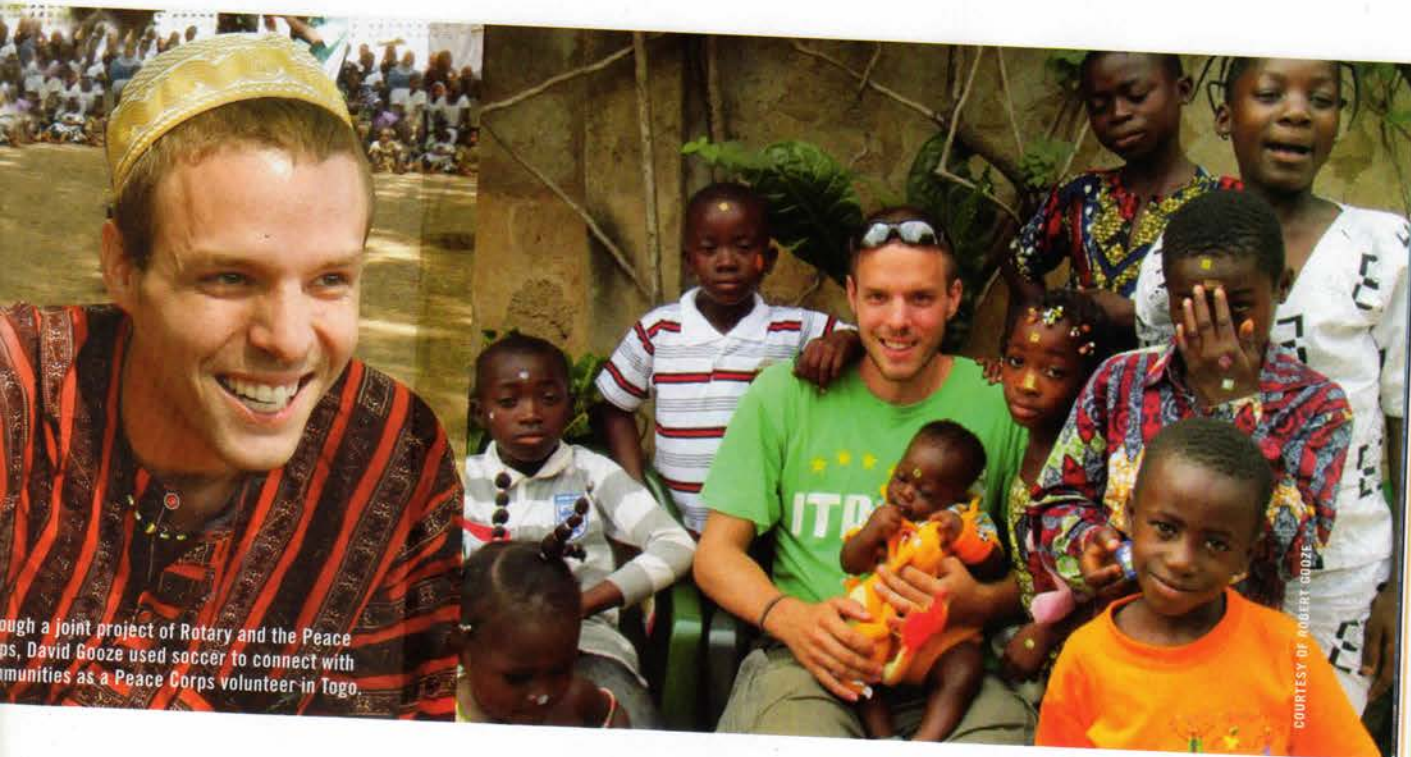
allotment. In addition, about 70 Peace Corps volunteers scattered across the country received about 20 balls each to facilitate smaller talks at the village level.

None of this would have been possible without cooperation between the Peace Corps and Rotarians. Shipping was funded by One World Futbol; a \$6,600 district grant sponsored by the Madison South club and District 6250, combined with a Peace Corps grant, covered other costs. Togolese Rotarians helped usher the shipment through customs and deliver the balls throughout the country. The U.S. State Department, which has close ties to the Peace Corps, also lent a hand with logistics.

Lauren Erickson-Mamane, the Peace Corps country director in Togo, says Peace Corps volunteers act as a natural link between the villages where they live and work and the urban Rotary club members who are passionate about serving local communities. Though the two organizations are already working together, the new agreement will allow them to do so more strategically, she adds.

"Our projects are community-led and community-driven," she says. "So are Rotary projects, and that's what makes it such a perfect marriage."

— M. Kathleen Pratt



Through a joint project of Rotary and the Peace Corps, David Gooze used soccer to connect with communities as a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo.

COURTESY OF ROBERT GOOZE

TODAY DENVER TOMORROW THE WORLD

How Colorado Rotarians kicked off the movement to partner with the Peace Corps

Like so many of the projects their volunteers initiate, the collaboration between Rotary and the Peace Corps has grassroots beginnings. Before there was an official agreement, there was a small circle of Denver-area Rotarians who recognized the power that could come from working together.

"One of the best things about Rotary is that once a week you walk into a room of people whose hearts are in the same place. They're good people. And, of course, returned Peace Corps volunteers' hearts are in that same place," says Sue Fox, a member of the Rotary Club of Denver who served in the Peace Corps in Liberia from 1968 to 1970.

Fox is founder and chair of the District 5450 Rotary-Peace Corps Alliance Committee. Composed of Rotarians and returned Peace Corps volunteers, the group first met in late 2009 to explore how the two organizations could collaborate, and later advocated for the formal agreement adopted in May. The committee used

its own district as a model to demonstrate how Peace Corps volunteers and Rotarians can complement each other, from assisting with service efforts to recruiting for scholars and members. In one project, Peace Corps volunteers who had served in Nicaragua provided Rotarians with cultural background before a visit to the country. In another, Rotary clubs are working with the Peace Corps to show women in Vanuatu how to operate clean cookstoves, and to monitor their use.

"Our mantra has been 'Connect with Rotary when you go, connect with Rotary when you get there, and connect with Rotary when you get home,'" Fox says.

While Peace Corps volunteers are serving abroad, for example, Rotary clubs might help identify community needs or provide project funding. When the volunteers return to the United States, Rotarians can help ease the transition and alleviate culture shock.

Charlie Hunt, a member of the Rotary Club of Denver Lodo, Colo., served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Vanuatu in 2006-08 with his wife, Nancy Cole. Since returning, he has started a cookstove project in the island nation with support from his Rotary club.

COURTESY OF CHARLES HUNT



4 WAYS TO WORK WITH PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

While the formal agreement targets only three countries, Rotarians all over the world can work with Peace Corps volunteers.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. Talk to Peace Corps volunteers working in the region where you're exploring a project to help you understand cultural issues and needs.
2. Connect with outbound Peace Corps volunteers before they leave, and use district grants to help them fulfill development needs they encounter. Or work with returned Peace Corps volunteers; they often stay involved with the communities they served.
3. Ask returned Peace Corps volunteers to speak at your club meeting. Connect them with a local Rotary or Rotaract club to help them reintegrate into their home community.
4. Consider returned Peace Corps volunteers as candidates for Rotary Peace Fellowships and scholarships.

"When you come home from your service, you are looking for ways to remain engaged with people who have the same drive in life," explains Arianne Burger, a past president of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado who worked with Denver-area Rotarians to lay the groundwork for the pilot programs. Connecting with Rotarians also opens doors to scholarships and educational opportunities, such as Rotary Peace Fellowships and exchanges, says Burger, who served in Kazakhstan from 1999 to 2001.

Peace Corps volunteers have a lot to offer Rotary clubs too, says Steve Werner, a member of the Rotary Club of Denver Southeast who was a Peace Corps volunteer in South Korea from 1976 to 1978. Because volunteers understand cultural norms and speak local languages, they can facilitate project management and communication, he says.

— M. Kathleen Pratt

