

# Diversity in the Peace Corps

## Same-Sex Couple Service



## Jessica and Khayla

Jessica, an Education Volunteer, and Khayla, a Health Volunteer, served together in Ecuador.

### Why do Peace Corps?

**Jessica:** I really wanted an immersive experience. I studied education and I really wanted to do something in the field of education and this seemed like the perfect fit. You get the language aspect, the culture, and it's very intensive. Two years is a perfect amount of time to really get to know your community and make a difference.

**Khayla:** I looked into studying abroad during college and nothing really fit the bill of what I was looking for. The studying abroad was too short. When I saw there was an opportunity to first finish your degree and then go two years abroad where you would really become a part of a community, it was an easy decision.

### Advice for Same-Sex Couples Thinking About Applying:

**Jessica:** Keep an open mind and to really be communicating well with each other. Because for any Volunteer—no matter who you are, whether you're single or part of a couple—open-mindedness is really huge. And to be aware that there will be hard days. There will be days that are incredible. There will be days that are just neutral. Remain open and take things as they come, and then talk about it. Being able to communicate about the challenges we faced or to share the joys and the happiness that comes with positive situations and support has been really great.

**Khayla:** Even not being an LGBT person, being a Volunteer is a difficult life. Aside from having some sort of special diversity on your side, it's hard. I've had my highest days in Peace Corps and my lowest days in Peace Corps during my service. And then factor in that you're going to have an additional obstacle on your side. So don't always think that the stress you're feeling is because you're a same-sex couple: It's also because you're doing Peace Corps.



*"The best part about serving together has been changing together: our views, our world views changing, understanding poverty at a very grassroots level together. This would have been incredibly difficult if I had to get back to Jessica and had she not done Peace Corps and I had to, over a very long time, explain to her everything I had learned. I think our future will be better for it, growing together."*

—Khayla

*"To be able to serve with my partner, with the person I love more than anything, has been just incredible. To be able to share that with her and to have her here is just more than anything I could have ever imagined."*

—Jessica



Jessica (left) and Khayla.



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