



Peace Corps Success Story

Health



Mark Seaman

Director of Development and Communications, Philadelphia FIGHT
Health Volunteer in Niger, 2006–2008

Education: Bachelor's degree in political science from American University

Current Job Summary: Manage revenue and marketing for Pennsylvania's largest AIDS service organization, which provides direct patient care and conducts clinical drug trials.

Notable Project: Coordinated several HIV/AIDS awareness events, including a concert for 600 Nigeriens and a six-day bike ride with 30 Volunteers through 22 villages.

Slice of Service: "In my first year of service, I was a Community and Youth Education Volunteer and worked with the secondary school district and local leaders around the importance of young girls' empowerment. I met with parents to convince them to let their daughters go to school, hosted girls' empowerment projects, and conducted teacher trainings. In my second year, I was a Community Health Agent in the capital city, Niamey. There I worked to ensure Volunteers had the resources they needed to conduct HIV prevention and education campaigns and was responsible for sharing the message of HIV awareness in the capital and with larger-scale projects across the country."

Career/Skills Gained: "You have to really get to know people before you can help them. Project implementation takes community buy-in, tough skin, patience, and, in Niger, countless cups of Arab tea. Rushing headfirst into a project without understanding the culture and environment you will be working in will lead to missed opportunities, greater challenges, and frustration. All of that can be avoided and immense success achieved with a strengthened grasp of the real need."

Why do Peace Corps/Career Advice: "To explore the world and its cultures. To see someplace new. To learn a little bit about yourself. To be helpful. I could not imagine a greater opportunity to meet new people and come to understand their values while reexamining my own."



Seaman raises HIV awareness among Nigerien youth during the Peace Corps/Niger's annual AIDS Bike Ride. The six-day ride took 30 Volunteers through 22 villages to talk about HIV prevention and stigma reduction.

"There was a TV commercial for the Peace Corps that used the slogan 'The toughest job you'll ever love.' In college, I knew I wanted to do something 'different' when I graduated. I knew I wanted to travel, to interact with people and to work for something important. I thought back to that commercial and that slogan, wondering if it was just an effective campaign or if it was true. After my service, I realized that it is absolutely true."



Mark Seaman directs development and communication for Philadelphia FIGHT, Pennsylvania's largest AIDS service organization.

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