

Richard Lupinsky, Peace Corps Volunteer, Tanzania (2003–2005)

Biography

My name is Richard Lupinsky Jr. and I am 29 years old. I was born and grew up in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. I have two younger sisters, Kim and Kelly, and an older brother, named Jeff. After



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graduating from high school, I joined the Army and was sent to the 82nd Airborne Division in North Carolina. In the Army, I had the opportunity to jump from airplanes, which was always very scary and exciting. I was promoted to sergeant and I finished my enlistment in four years. After leaving the Army, I studied at Mansfield University, in the northern part of Pennsylvania, where there are more dairy cows than people. Both the cows and the people in Mansfield are very friendly. In college, I earned degrees in biology and English. In my free time, I enjoy going for long walks, reading, writing, learning Kiswahili, and spending time with all my friends. I am also keenly interested in the natural world; I like to look under rocks and in ponds to catch bugs and reptiles like lizards and turtles. I look at them and then show my friends, who surprisingly, don't always seem to like meeting a snake or a bug. But I always release the animals where I found them. For many years, I wanted to serve somewhere in the world with the Peace Corps. Now, I find myself in Tanzania.

Site Assignment

My village is in central Tanzania near the capital, Dodoma, and the regional

city of Morogoro. The landscape is flat, but there are high mountains to the west and north that are impressive. I live at the secondary school about four kilometers from the village. If I want to go to the village itself, in order to buy food or to visit people, I usually ride my bicycle. All of those who teach at my school must live on the school grounds. The majority of my time is spent at the school, which is my primary focus in terms of my Peace Corps service, and the rest of my time is focused on my secondary projects. One of my goals is to become more integrated and active in the village, but for the time being, my focus is at the school. All of my projects involve the students at the school in some way.

My village is a wonderful place for a Peace Corps Volunteer to serve because the people are so very friendly and helpful. Learning the language, though, is essential because most of the villagers know very little English. Most of the people are subsistence agriculturalists who don't have a long tradition of even primary education. The people grow corn, rice, potatoes, sugar cane, tomatoes, and onions as their staple diet. They supplement their diet with chicken, beef, goat meat, and fish. The village is at the mercy of the rainy and dry season. If it rains very little during the year, there is no irrigation to alleviate the dryness. When it is dry, everything starts to turn brown. But when the rains come, everything from trees to insects seem to explode in color and profusion overnight. Farmers plant their crops to coincide with the rainy season, which usually lasts from January to April.

Wells throughout the village supply drinking water.

The village is actually a truck stop because of its proximity to one of the major highways in Tanzania. This is part of the reason I was chosen for this site. As a part time health volunteer, I can make an effort in educating the local people at a place where HIV/AIDS is introduced, because of the constant stream of truck drivers passing through. One of the nice aspects of living in this village is its centralized location in Tanzania and access to buses and cars traveling along the highway. This makes for an easier time in getting either to the north or south of the country. I can also get to Morogoro very easily in order to draw from that city's many resources, including an abundance of nongovernmental organizations. If I can't find something or someone I need in the village, Morogoro is only a short, two-hour Daladala ride away. I encourage you to visit Tanzania. Karibu!



Richard's house



The house of one of Richard's friends



Richard, proud to be in Tanzania



Richard's classroom