



**Peace
Corps**
KYRGYZ
REPUBLIC



Annual Report 2022

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MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Scan to watch
the video of arrival
of most recent
group of Peace
Corps Volunteers



2022 was a special year for Peace Corps Kyrgyz Republic and its partners. Peace Corps Volunteers returned to Kyrgyzstan for the first time since the worldwide evacuation of Volunteers in March 2020. Kyrgyzstan was the first country in the Europe, Asia, and the Mediterranean region to welcome back Volunteers. We celebrated the 30th anniversary of the agreement between the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic that established the Peace Corps program in Kyrgyzstan. By the fall of 2022, the 28th group of Trainee Volunteers to serve in Kyrgyzstan (K-28) had completed 11 weeks of Pre-Service Training and Kyrgyz language instruction and had been sworn in as Volunteers. The 11 K-28 Volunteers are co-teaching English alongside local teacher in villages in Chui, Issyk-Kul, Naryn, and Talas oblasts. Together with their local counterparts, Volunteers are inspiring students to advance their English skills and expand their horizons. In addition to their classroom work, Volunteers and their counterparts are leading English clubs and other after-school activities to help students and other community members practice and improve their English. Volunteers are also working with their communities to develop joint projects they will implement together with the support of Peace Corps' Small Grants program funding.

K-28 Volunteers are pioneers in a new era of inter-cultural cooperation but they are not starting from scratch. They are building on the experiences and contributions of over 1300 Volunteers who came before them. Peace Corps has been serving communities in the Kyrgyz Republic continuously since 1993, including during the pandemic, when Peace Corps staff helped students and their teachers in multiple communities plan and organize a variety of community service projects. And several Returned (former) Volunteers have been co-teaching online English classes for students in Kyrgyzstan for the past two years through the Virtual Service Pilot Program (VSPP).

For 30 years, Volunteers and their communities have collaborated, inside and outside of the classroom to increase student and teacher capacity in English and have built relationships that continue long beyond the two years of a Volunteer's service. These relationships have promoted – and continue to promote – friendship and mutual understanding between the people of Kyrgyzstan and the United States. This progress would not have been possible without the hard work, cooperation, and sacrifices of Volunteers, counterpart teachers, school directors, and Host Families, as well as the support of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, especially the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Looking ahead, Peace Corps Kyrgyz Republic's priorities are to strengthen cooperation with our partners; to meet the Government of Kyrgyzstan's request to bring more Volunteers to more schools in Kyrgyzstan, including in the south; to help make Peace Corps service in Kyrgyzstan an even safer and more successful experience for Volunteers; and to share with the American and Kyrgyzstani publics what Volunteers and their partners are achieving together.

We are honored and delighted to share the results of the past year with you. This report highlights the collaboration between Peace Corps Volunteers, local teachers, students, school directors, and host families, and their collective contribution to English language education in Kyrgyzstan. We look forward to building on this collaboration to reach more communities and students throughout the country; to exchange knowledge, skills, and ideas; and to create new relationships and cooperation between the people of our two countries.

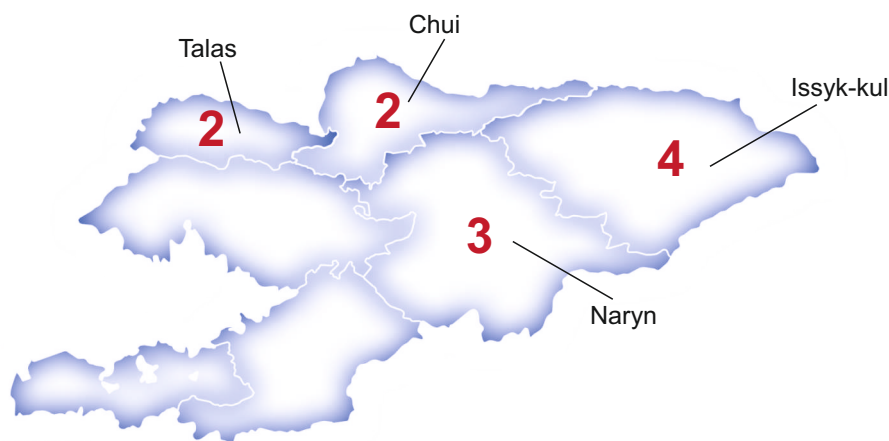
GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF THE PEACE CORPS

The Peace Corps is an independent, non-political, and non-religious U.S. Government agency that provides Volunteers to countries requesting assistance around the world. The agency traces its roots and mission to 1960, when Senator John. F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. In 1961, when Kennedy was the U.S. President, he officially established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship, and that mission has not changed. Peace Corps remains committed to its three goals, namely:

1. Helping people of interested countries in meeting their needs for trained individuals.
2. Helping to promote a better understanding of American people on the part of the peoples served.
3. Helping to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of American people.

Peace Corps Volunteers around the world are committed to grassroots development by working and living hand-in-hand with local people of countries in which they serve. They work as teachers, business advisors, youth development specialists, health educators, and agriculture and environmental workers. They are committed to learning from their host families and partners and integrating themselves into the culture of the countries where they serve. Volunteers serve at the invitation of the host country government and work in partnership with a host agency. Funding for Peace Corps programs around the world is allocated by the United States Congress and comes from the taxes paid by individual American citizens.

PEACE CORPS IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



The Peace Corps was established in the Kyrgyz Republic in 1992 with an agreement signed between the governments of United States and Kyrgyz Republic. Since that time, more than 1,300 Peace Corps Volunteers and Virtual Service Pilot Participants (VSPPs) have helped over 130,000 Kyrgyzstani people learn English, develop leadership skills, and engage in community projects. These Volunteers, working closely with their local counterparts, have also carried out successful teacher training, gender education, computer literacy, and youth development activities.

All current Peace Corps Volunteers in the Kyrgyz Republic co-teach English as a foreign language together with local teachers. In addition to building the capacity of teachers and students in the classroom, most Volunteers participate in summer camps and teach young people about life skills, including critical thinking and planning for their futures.



REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING INTO PEACE CORPS SERVICE

In order to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic, aspiring Peace Corps Volunteers pass through a rigorous screening process. Applicants who are invited to serve have demonstrated that they have fulfilled the following requirements:

- U.S. Citizenship
- Bachelor's Degree from an accredited university
- Health Screening: documented physical and mental ability to serve; fully vaccinated for COVID
- Background Check: Clearance covering civil, financial, and professional conduct
- Successful interviews with Peace Corps headquarters staff
- Successful completion of an intensive pre-service training program in Kyrgyz Republic

PREPARATIONS FOR SERVICE IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC AND ONGOING TRAININGS

Scan QR-code to watch video from Pre-Service training



All Peace Corps Volunteers participate in three months of pre-service training to prepare for their two-year service. In June 2022 Peace Corps Kyrgyz Republic welcomed 12 new trainees who were eager to work as Volunteers in English education. The training began even before the trainees arrived, with sessions over the internet on Kyrgyz language and culture. The goal of Pre-Service Training is to prepare trainees to work, live, maintain their health, and stay safe in the Kyrgyz Republic. During these three months they study the Kyrgyz language, practice teaching methodologies with local counterparts, and receive training in cross-cultural tools and awareness. Only trainees who successfully complete the training program are sworn in as Volunteers.



Throughout two years of joint work, Peace Corps Volunteers transfer skills to local English teachers, such as Teaching Methodologies, Grading and Assessment, and Lesson Planning. With the aim of supporting the schools in creating a friendly environment for students, Peace Corps provides “Student-Friendly Schools” training for School Directors, teachers, and Volunteers, who in turn conduct trainings to share their new ideas and knowledge with their community members. Local teachers, community members, and Volunteers also gain “Project Design and Management” skills and can apply for small grants aimed at the development of their communities.



TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, Peace Corps' Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) project aims to increase the professional, academic, and personal opportunities of the teachers, students, and community members through improved English language skills teaching, and learning methods.

Through co-teaching English in secondary schools Peace Corps, Volunteers build the capacity of English teachers. TEFL Volunteers provide assistance to their schools and communities by establishing or expanding English teaching resources, producing student-centered lesson plans, and incorporating new approaches in classroom management. The Volunteers are also involved in extracurricular activities such as conducting English clubs, computer training, and other youth development activities. The Volunteers together with local counterparts also assist communities to achieve their development goals through small projects that emphasize capacity building and sustainability. On March 15th, 2020, the Peace Corps made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend all Volunteer operations around the world and begin evacuating Volunteers from all countries due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Peace Corps Kyrgyz Republic acted quickly to ensure that all 76 Peace Corps



Volunteers serving in the country were able to get home safely. In June 2022, the first group of TEFL Trainee Volunteers arrived in country following the evacuation. Currently there are 11 Volunteers serving in the Chui, Naryn, Issyk-Kul and Talas regions. Since its inception in 1993, more than 800 TEFL Volunteers have served as teachers in 200 secondary schools and 15 universities.

How can schools apply?

All Volunteers currently work in public schools in the country, focusing on communities in need. The Ministry of Education and Science provides Peace Corps a list of schools where the Ministry would like Peace Corps to consider assigning a Volunteer. In order to request to be included on the Ministry's list, schools should contact their district (Rayono) superintendent. After receiving the list from the Ministry of Education and Science, the Peace Corps begins the selection and preparation of schools and communities for Volunteer placement.

Peace Corps Preliminary Criteria for Selecting Partner Schools

- School is recommended by the District (Rayono) School Superintendent
- School has completed an application to host a Peace Corps Volunteer
- School has a minimum of one committed English teacher
- English teacher(s) is available to co-teach with a Volunteer for a minimum of 18 hours per week
- School and the community in which it is located are highly motivated to host a Volunteer

As part of the selection process, Peace Corps Kyrgyz Republic's Safety and Security Manager, Medical Officers, Programming, and other staff will visit and hold meetings with local authorities, school officials, and members of the local community.



TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

Goal 1: Increase the capacity of teachers to use general and/or English teaching skills

24

English teachers trained to use new learning resources or classroom materials.

Goal 2: Increase achievement of students in English

1080

Students from secondary schools attended English classes co-taught by Volunteers, as native English speakers working with their kyrgyzstani counterparts

Peace Corps Kyrgyz Republic looks forward to sharing the results of Volunteers' and Counterparts' efforts at the end of the school year on our website <https://www.peacecorps.gov/kyrgyz-republic> and the 2023 Annual Report.

THE NEW PEACE CORPS VIRTUAL SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM

The Peace Corps Virtual Service Pilot Program is an opportunity for Americans to support Peace Corps projects and partners from a distance. In Kyrgyzstan, Virtual Service Pilot Participants (VSPPs) have been co-teaching with Kyrgyzstani English teachers since February 2021. The first VSPPs were Volunteers who had been evacuated from Kyrgyzstan due to the pandemic. These VSPPs engaged via Zoom from the United States with the students and teachers with whom they had been working prior to leaving the country.

Since that time, 15 different Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have participated as VSPPs in classrooms throughout the Kyrgyz Republic, including in Batken, Osh, Jalalabad, Naryn, Issyk-Kul, and Chui. Currently six VSPP-counterpart pairs are engaging Kyrgyzstani students in English language activities at least once per week.

RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER DAVE CONTINUES SERVING THROUGH OUR VIRTUAL SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM



Dave is a Virtual Service Participant at a school in a village in Jalal-Abad oblast. Dave applied to serve in the Virtual Service Pilot Program as a way to connect with and serve a part of the world in which he had little experience. He thought this would be a great way to serve while studying for his Master's - and it turned out to be the case!

"Finishing my VSPP service and then visiting my students and counterpart in Kyrgyzstan brought back memories from my Volunteer experience in Indonesia and gave me a taste of Peace Corps Kyrgyzstan when I visited my counterpart and students in their village. By far, it was the highlight of my 7-week trip to Kyrgyzstan this past summer despite only staying with my Peace Corps VSP community for a few days. Teaching online at first was a bit of a challenge (mainly due to time differences and technical difficulties) but my counterpart and I worked through the challenges and will be better prepared for the next session!"

Also, I will always remember the kindness and true hospitality from meeting the in-country Peace Corps Staff - even the Country Director - and getting to know them on a personal basis. They warmly welcomed me into their community, and I feel privileged to work with incredible people on a weekly basis - despite being thousands of miles away!

To anyone who wants to participate: DO IT!! Like Peace Corps service, VSPP is a challenge. And it takes getting used to. It is an excellent opportunity to serve students who have dreams and aspirations to do great things in a different capacity. You can make an impact on your students and your school despite being thousands of miles away!"

HELPING STUDENTS MAKE THEIR DREAMS COME TRUE

K-27 Volunteer John is co-teaching English at a secondary school in Naryn oblast. He and some of his students shared their thoughts on how teaching and learning English has made an impact on their lives.



Scan to learn John
collaborate with teachers to
keep students engaged



Nurjan, 11th grade: "It has always been my dream to learn English. I started to study English when I was in 4th grade. It was very difficult. I memorized words but did not know the alphabet or grammar. Mr. John has helped me with grammar and improved my speaking and listening ability. When I grow up I want to be a translator and visit America. When I have children, I want them to study in America. This is my dream."

Aidana, 11th grade: "My dream is to study abroad in the U.S. or Europe, at Harvard or Cambridge, to travel to all countries in the world, help my parents, and to become a programmer. All this requires English! Mr. John taught me a lot and that it is OK to make

mistakes. Now I speak and understand better. I would like to study in America because the level of education is very high. I have learned about schools in America on the internet. After meeting Mr. John, I am curious to meet other Americans and I want to become a Volunteer too."

Jibek, 10th grade: "I learned about Peace Corps last year when I participated in a project at my school sponsored by the Peace Corps. We created a team and completed a project to help our community with support from the Peace Corps. We want to continue working together on more projects. I like Peace Corps because it helps students to develop skills and achieve their goals. Peace Corps helps students learn and get scholarships. Mr. John is a great English teacher! He also explained a lot of things about America that I did not know. When I was younger, I learned about America only in movies. Mr. John learns from us too, about Kyrgyz culture and language! My dream now is to study in America."

John, K-27 Volunteer: "I first came to Kyrgyzstan in 2019, but after just nine months I was evacuated as part of the Peace Corps' global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evacuation was hard for a number of reasons, but the most difficult part was leaving behind my host family, counterparts, and students without knowing if I would have the chance to return. They did so much to welcome and support me, so leaving without completing the projects we started was challenging. When Peace Corps gave me the opportunity to come back to Kyrgyzstan in 2022, returning was an easy decision. It is an amazing privilege to have another chance to learn from my community at school, in the village, and over tea. The best part of returning has been the chance to reconnect with my students and see their progress. I help a little, but the students do the hard work, both inside and outside of class. Their progress, dedication, and curiosity are daily reminders that persistence pay off, and that dreams can come true."

FROM HOST SISTER TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE COUNTERPART

From host sister to teacher counterpart and researcher of Peace Corps' impact in the Kyrgyz Republic – Nurgul's inspiring Peace Corps story began when she was a fifth-grade student and Host Sister to a PCV living with her family in a rural village in Issyk-Kul Oblast, in northeastern Kyrgyzstan.



"I have known the Peace Corps since 2005 when two Volunteers lived in my grandparents' home. At the time I was in the 5th grade and since then, I have been interested in learning

the English language. I remember how one Volunteer, Nicolas, motivated me and my family to learn English; we practiced speaking English every evening with Nicolas. He is unforgettable because he was the first American I had ever met. I remember that Nicolas' family came for one month to our village and we cooked different American foods. I especially remember making traditional American pizza - it was delicious. My family spent four years living together with two Volunteers and would welcome more Volunteers, because it is interesting to learn another culture even living in a small village like ours.

The time I spent learning English with Volunteers encouraged me to become an English teacher. I love the Peace Corps because it helps teachers to improve teaching methodologies and speaking. In 2021 I was in a seminar with other teachers from around the country and I saw that not all English teachers could speak English. Since then I have been thinking of ways to help English teachers improve their English. Of course, I am a new teacher, but in the future, I plan to conduct different kinds of seminars and training for teachers. To build a bright future for our students, we teachers should be well-educated. I completed different kinds of training and courses that were organized by Peace Corps such as TESOL, Virtual Service Pilot, and New Generation (Jangy Moon). Such courses help teachers in rural areas because we have limited access to new ideas and information. Peace Corps always tries to help us, including through online courses.

Such courses have motivated me to refresh my knowledge as a teacher, and this past summer I applied for the MAT program at AUCA where I got a full scholarship from the American Embassy. Now I am working on my academic research paper about *How Peace Corps Volunteers Impact Kyrgyz Teachers*.

Benjamin Franklin said, 'Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.' Peace Corps Volunteers involved me in learning English when I was younger, and another Peace Corps Volunteer is involving me in the next phase of my learning today. In 2018 I applied to work with a Volunteer as a teaching counterpart, and in 2022 my Volunteer arrived. I was so happy because it is so interesting to work with Volunteers, to learn new teaching methods from each other, and to practice together. After all, Kyrgyz teachers do not have many opportunities to speak with native English speakers or to make friends from other countries."

HOW I INTEGRATED INTO MY COMMUNITY

"My name is Adam and I am a PCV serving in a village on the northern shore of the stunning lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan. For those of you who have never been, Issyk-Kul Oblast is known as the 'Pearl of Kyrgyzstan' due to the breathtaking scenery that surrounds a lake that shines so brightly in the sun, it might as well be a jewel. The village finds itself at the edge of the fields that encompass Issyk-Kul, which change from a brilliant golden sea in the summers to a quiet blanket of snow in the winters. These fields stretch for miles unto the lakefront in one direction, and one need only turn to face the majestic wall of mountains in the other which encapsulate this paradise on all sides. I cannot help but elaborate on the beauty which has been bestowed on this corner of the world as it permeates into everyday life, my life. Work here is often not easy, and many of the challenges facing my community on a day-to-day basis simply do not exist in the capital Bishkek. However, you must believe me when I tell you this is paradise.



The key to my success at site is simple: my host family. I am forever grateful for the engagement and warmth that I have been shown from the beginning by my host mother Darikha and my host father Kubanychbek. In the very first week, I was able to start working on our farm. Though it sounds strange, this was considered a luxury among my peers since, despite all of us being eager to work, we were pushing up against traditional Kyrgyz hospitality which treated us as royalty upon arrival. Paradoxically, by simply asking for my help collecting tall grass by the lake, my host family had shown that they were welcoming me into their world as a full fledged member. As I stood there among the reeds, pitchfork in hand, discussing philosophy with my host father, I knew I had been given something very special. That pitchfork has also been a shovel, a broom, a hammer, a rope, and a bucket. I have had the privilege of a wide array of conversations: the Kyrgyz education system while harvesting potatoes, vacation plans while planting garlic, collecting beets, and longing for 80s Moscow Discotheques, teaching English while selling milk at the mosque. Through inviting me to work with them, my host family has given me the opportunity to authentically experience and get to know what life is like on our farm and, more importantly, in our family. I have also assisted with other things. In the kitchen, for example, I have helped to prepare Oromo, Manti, Pizza, Kurdak, and Lagman. My greatest honor however was being asked to help with a Koy-Soy, the slaughtering of a sheep that takes place almost any time there are preparations for a celebration. I have chased many a cow and wrangled many a sheep, but there is no experience more shocking or rewarding than being welcomed into the family as wholeheartedly as I have been.

Because I am fortunate enough to have both my host parents also be teachers at our local school, I have had the honor of being introduced to almost every co-worker, neighbor, and host family member through my host parents. Their patience with my language is exceptional, just as it is with household chores, and has thus enabled me to substantially progress in my linguistic abilities which are a necessity in village life (where Kyrgyz and Russian are often mixed, spoken together in the same breath). After the arrival of my host brother and his family, I have received a further level of integration being able to experience what life is like in a large multi-generational family living together under the same roof. My little host niece is adorable, and I have thoroughly enjoyed witnessing a fully functioning household in problem solving mode respond to power outages, broken furnaces, lack of water, run away animals, etc. My host brother has been particularly kind in the way that he has introduced me to his friends in the village, allowing me to have a semblance of a social network among other men my age.

The attitude of my community is one of genuine kindness and support. Never once have I doubted that this is a place that made me feel welcome, appreciated, and respected. I am humbled by the regular warmth and compassion that is shown to me by all, and I take great pride in calling this little slice of heaven my second home."

TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SHARING: MY AMAZING PEACE CORPS EXPERIENCE



Scan to watch the video
of Volunteers celebrating
Nooruz holiday

"My name is Stephanie, and I am 27 years old. I spent most of my childhood in West Virginia and lived in California prior to leaving for Kyrgyzstan. I am a current Peace Corps Volunteer serving in Kyrgyzstan as a TEFL educator. I live in the Issyk-Kul region with my host dad, mom, and younger sister who is also in my English class at our local secondary school. It feels surreal that this is my seventh month in Kyrgyzstan.



In these short months, I've bonded with and adjusted to living with a new family and become comfortable communicating in a new culture and language. While rewarding, it has also been a hard and emotional process. I have questioned my language progress, my effectiveness as a teaching professional, and my ability to connect with people and navigate the ambiguities of a new culture. Throughout my personal misgivings, though, I've experienced the generosity and support of my host family, counterparts, fellow teachers, students, Peace Corps staff, fellow Volunteers, and complete strangers.

What has amazed me most is Kyrgyz hospitality. When my host aunt and her family visited, everyone including their taxi driver sat down for tea.

Another time, another volunteer and I struck up a conversation with a storekeeper and were immediately invited to her house for a full meal and an invitation to the next

wedding. During the summer, when I was playing volleyball at the lake with my host sister and her classmate, other kids joined in, no introduction or explanation needed, to the point that there were at least 15 kids playing volleyball. It is also interesting how well received and well-known Peace Corps is in Kyrgyzstan. People in my village still ask me if I know Michael, the Volunteer that served in my village in 1996. Many local Peace Corps staff previously worked as counterparts or were taught English by Volunteers while students. People will often guess that I'm a Volunteer just because I'm an American who knows Kyrgyz. Peace Corps and Volunteers have made their mark here.

As I continue to serve in Kyrgyzstan, I am excited to work more with my counterparts trying out different teaching methods to meet the needs of students. It is great to see students become more involved in activities and comfortable speaking English throughout the year. This confidence leads to new passions and the drive to strive for new goals. I love being a teacher here, whether it is teaching students in the classroom or competing against them on the volleyball court after school."

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS ARE PART OF OUR FAMILY

For more than 30 years, I, Darikha and my husband, Kubanychbek, have been working as teachers at a secondary school in Issyk-Kul oblast. Here are Darikha's reflections on hosting a Volunteer:



"In 2022, we were lucky to welcome Adam, a Peace Corps Volunteer from Michigan to our family. He co-teaches English language to students with local counterparts and increases the potential of English teachers. My family is very pleased with the arrival of Adam, he easily joined and became a member of our family. We developed friendly warm relations. He often helps us with spring, autumn and field work. Adam helped plant garlic, pick apples in autumn, helped his host father collect hay during haymaking in summer, and in winter he helps to rake snow.

When his host father is resting, he often takes Adam on a fishing trip, where they rest together. He also became very close with my son Maksat. Maksat introduced him to friends

and classmates. Adam goes on vacation with them. For example, they visited Ak-Suu hot springs, Karakol ski base. In summer, we often have a rest with our family on the coast of Issyk-Kul.

Adam made a huge positive impact on us! He is very active, inquisitive, cheerful. He didn't give us any trouble. He found an approach to every member of the family. Adam has a wide range of interests and is always striving for new knowledge. He loves to learn new Issyk-Kul dialects, replenish his vocabulary, study the meaning of Kyrgyz proverbs, constantly expanding his knowledge about the traditions and culture of the Kyrgyz people. Being a participant in our family traditional events, he understood its content well and was a full participant. And we, in turn, learned about the culture of America, the life of another nation from the inside. We constantly draw a parallel between two countries with Adam: we compare nature, population, way of life.

I also constantly like to learn new things, I like communicating with people, expanding my horizons about United States, and learning new things about it. As a deputy of local administration, I introduced Adam to many people of our community, including youth. He found a common ground quickly and became familiar with language and culture.

I also had the opportunity to host another Volunteer, Jay, from Virginia. Due to the pandemic we had to say goodbye to each other as Jay left to his homeland. We are still in touch with each other.

I am so lucky to partner with the highly qualified staff of Peace Corps. During the pandemic I attended online English language classes and training on how to work with Volunteers. It gave me an opportunity to understand the difference between our two cultures.

My family is very happy about the Peace Corps Volunteers' arrival in 2022. The Volunteers inspire Kyrgyzstanis to gain knowledge, achieve dreams, and expand opportunities. I express my gratitude to Peace Corps staff for cooperation, warm relations, and their noble work."

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER DAVID WORKS SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH HIS LOCAL COUNTERPART



Scan to watch the video of David's co-teaching process

Over the past school year I have worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic where I have been co-teaching English classes with Alia, a local teacher counterpart. Our efforts have been met with enthusiasm from secondary school students in Chui oblast who are eager to learn English and engage with us. Our days have been filled with happy, smiling faces. Through our co-teaching and the English clubs I conduct, we have been making a positive impact on the students and have helped foster a love for English. It has been a rewarding experience to work with the students and with Alia. I'm proud of the progress we have made and the enthusiasm we have nurtured over the course of the school year.



PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER MARGARET AND HER STUDENTS MAKE LEARNING ENGLISH FUN



"Not much time went by after coming to my permanent site before I was greeted by an enthusiastic group of girls at my school. They told me they love English and were very excited to have a Volunteer in their village. They made me feel welcomed in my new environment. Before long, we established our Talking Club where we meet twice a week for an hour after school. It started with just English conversation practice, but my students were motivated to do more. After noticing a lack of motivation from some students, we wanted to find ways to show their peers that English is fun. My students told me our school loves parties and so we planned and held our English Autumn Party in November. Students brought baked goods and decorations to make the atmosphere warm. We had two students who prepared English scripts to act as the event MCs, several student performances of English songs and English games like Autumn Pictionary. We danced and sang and ate and learned. After a video of our party made its way to our school's Instagram page, there was a noticeable improvement in student participation in class and general interest in English lessons. We had reached our community!

Closer to the New Year Holiday, in our conversations, we compared American and Kyrgyz celebrations of the Christmas/ New Year holidays. This time, we celebrated on a smaller scale, within our club, and held a Secret Santa gift exchange. Students decided on a price limit, and we exchanged simple and meaningful gifts to ring in the New Year. And we continue to plan more! Recently, we were given a small room to turn into an English office. With my students, we are brainstorming ways to create a space that is welcoming for all students and motivating in English language learning. My students have lots of great ideas and I'm proud that we can work together to reach out to our community and to reach our goals!"

HOW STUDENT LED PROJECTS HELP COMMUNITIES ACHIEVE CHANGE

Peace Corps Kyrgyz Republic supported youth development even during the COVID-19 pandemic through Jangy Moon (New Generation) projects. While unable to participate in the clubs and camps normally organized by Peace Corps Volunteers, students developed life skills by collaborating on school projects funded through Peace Corps' Small Project Assistance (SPA) Program. The main objective of the projects was to help secondary school students in rural areas gain knowledge and skills, including social emotional learning (SEL) skills, project design and management, and social entrepreneurship.



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One Jangy Moon project involved a team of secondary school students in a rural area of Issyk-Kul Oblast. The students formed a "Genius Team" to address the environmental pollution in the community and surrounding areas, which has had a negative effect on the health and lives of community members. The team developed their project with the support of a social entrepreneurship-focused Project Design and Management (PDM) workshop, funded by a SPA Program grant. They organized a massive clean-up campaign throughout their village, sorted the collected trash, sold plastic and used the proceeds to support vulnerable community members. Team members were proud of their results, saying "our knowledge in the field of economics and business has expanded significantly. We have learned how to do projects with limited resources and time, and yet make a significant impact in our communities." Their team was one of many: across 30 communities, 300 young leaders improved their project management skills through the workshops and subsequent two-week long PDM trainings. With over half of Kyrgyzstan's population under the age of 25, youth represent a powerful force to drive sustainable development amidst widespread unemployment and poverty. These teams demonstrated



the impact that innovative, dedicated youth leaders can have on their communities. Following the SPA-funded trainings, the youth leaders went on to implement their own projects without additional SPA funds.

From organizing community clean-up campaigns to recreational and educational activities for marginalized children and other peers, the teams targeted what their own communities needed most. Many team members saw their potential as changemakers, and at least one gained the "confidence that we can achieve anything!"

Genius Team leader Jyldyz: "Before I participated in the project, I used to think that a lot of money is needed to provide clothes and other items to needy people, without money it is impossible to do anything. But thanks to Peace Corps I changed my mind. I now understand that to do good things, one should be rich not materially, but rich in soul and heart."

Team member Nurbol: "I have learned many things since participating in this project. For example: Working with a team, writing various projects. Basically, I have never volunteered before. And this project was eye-opening for me. I can say that this project broadened my horizon. I realized that even if a person has no money, it is possible to help needy people in other ways, for example: planting vegetables and fruits in the garden, cleaning the house and yard, giving new clothes. If there are more projects like this, I think that the minds of the next generation will improve, and the youth will be motivated."

GRATITUDE TO HOST FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Peace Corps Volunteers live with local host families throughout their two years of service. This is one of the key ways that Peace Corps accomplishes its core goals of promoting intercultural exchange and mutual understanding. In the beginning of a Volunteer's service, the host family members are essential to the safe integration of the Volunteer into the community. Through this close relationship, Volunteers gain valuable cultural and language skills, and host families receive a new member of the family eager to share traditions and knowledge from home.



Scan to watch the video of Volunteer Jenny talking about community



In addition to the exchange of cultures, host families and Volunteers develop meaningful relationships that often last far beyond a Volunteer's two-year service in the Kyrgyz Republic.

We are thankful to host families and communities throughout the country who open their homes and hearts and take such good care of their American sons and daughters.



LETTER FROM MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic expresses its deep respect to the leadership and employees of the Peace Corps in the Kyrgyz Republic and its gratitude for their contribution to the development of the education system of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Peace Corps has been successfully operating in Kyrgyzstan since 1993. We note that during this period, more than 1,300 Volunteers from the United States of America managed to work as English language teachers together with local counterparts in state public schools.

Taking this opportunity, the Peace Corps' Teaching English as a Foreign Language project makes a great contribution to the mastery of the English language by the teachers and students of the educational organizations of the Kyrgyz Republic. We wish you success in your future endeavors!

Sincerely,
Nadira Jusupbekova
Deputy Minister



КЫРГЫЗ РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫН
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