

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



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PCV Parker during one of his Health Family Life Education sessions at school.

From the Country Director

Since 1962, Belizeans and Americans have lived out John F. Kennedy's vision of "world peace and friendship." This annual report is a testament to what Volunteers, Belizean counterparts, host families and staff members have done to bring this mission to fruition. Peace Corps Belize remains true and dedicated to the objective of placing trained individuals in Belizean communities to live, work, learn and share their skills.

For the last year, US citizens have served Belizeans in their communities in the area of rural family health. This year, the second group of highly trained and specialized Peace Corps Response Volunteer were placed in District Education Centers and worked closely with local teachers to improve literacy among primary school students. These groups of Volunteers, who have served for either a nine month term or for two years, have partnered with a variety of host country nationals, friends, families and communities members to implement the three overarching goals of Peace Corps focused on skills transfer and cultural exchange. Each Volunteer focused on achieving the Agency's core mission of world peace and friendship through their work, relationships and experiences.

In 2019, Peace Corps Belize consulted with its national partners, local counterparts and Volunteers to discuss the mission, current achievements, and potential opportunities. These exchanges reaffirmed the commitment, mutual respect, and successes that characterize the partnership Peace Corps shares with Belize. This 57 year long relationship is evidence of Peace Corps' commitment to the people of Belize and to working toward its development on the country's own terms. This alliance is also proof of Belizeans' friendship with and commitment to Volunteers. Belizeans communities welcomed these US citizens, worked efficiently with them, kept them safe, and taught them the Belizean way of life with openness and patience. Thanks to this year of learning, growth, and progress, Peace Corps Belize is poised for continued success.

I continue to be humbled and moved by the generosity, hospitality, hard work, and determination I have witnessed in Belizean communities and among host families, ministry counterparts, local leaders, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers. I am eternally grateful for your efforts.

I am confident that together, we will continue to advance Belize's development goals and Peace Corps' mission of world peace and friendship.

Tracey Hébert-Seck, Country Director, Peace Corps Belize



Country Director, Tracey with PCV Tarae's Pre-Service Training Host Family during Host family Recognition Ceremony.

History of Peace Corps in Belize

In 1961, Senator John F. Kennedy challenged a group of idealistic students at the University of Michigan to consider serving their country by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew the Peace Corps, an organization whose purpose is to promote world peace and friendship.

While much has changed since the first group of Volunteers served, the three goals of Peace Corps have remained the same. These goals are as relevant today as they were at the inception:

1. Help people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. Help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served.
3. Help promote a better understanding of other people on the part of Americans.

Over the past 58 years, more than 240,000 Volunteers have served in more than 140 countries, providing training in the areas of health, education, business, information technology, environment, agriculture, and youth development.

In 1962, the first group of Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in what was then British Honduras. Since then, 2,090 Volunteers have served in Belize, working primarily in Education, Youth Development, Health, Small Business Development, and Environment.

Volunteers have been assigned to NGOs, government organizations, schools and businesses, and reside within Belizean communities to improve the quality of life of Belizeans by supporting the Belizean government's development goals.

In 2019, Volunteers lived and worked in 49 rural villages and 6 towns with predominant Q'eqchi, Kriol or Mestizo culture. Since 2013, 70 rural communities in all six districts have benefitted from the RFHP.

Peace Corps Goals:

1. Help people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
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PCV Rachel serving as a judge for a fruit creativity competition for fruit day at school.

Volunteers Living and Working in Belize

Volunteers in Belize are placed in rural communities or district towns. Rural communities would have populations ranging from about 250 to 4,000 people. These communities often lack paved roads, have limited transportation services and may be without electricity or running water. Because Belize is a small country, Volunteers rarely live and work farther than three hours (by public bus) from a larger town where services may be more accessible.

In collaboration with Belize's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, Peace Corps Belize undertakes a rigorous process every year to identify and select rural communities to host new Volunteers. This process involves a series of meetings between Peace Corps staff and ministry officials, village leaders, prospective counterparts, other community members and currently-serving Volunteers to gauge buy-in, discuss needs, select and cultivate host families, and develop plans for working with the incoming Volunteers. Peace Corps selection process for interested communities that will receive Volunteers is based on factors such as safety and security, language, community needs, host family availability and counterpart interest.

In 2013, Belize launched the 27-month Homestay Program which requires Volunteers to live with host families throughout their service. Under the Homestay Program, Trainees are placed with a host family for ten weeks of Pre-Service Training (PST) in Community-Based Training sites. Once they are sworn in as Volunteers, they will live with another host family for the duration of their service in their permanent sites.

Volunteers learn one of three local Belizean languages depending on where they will be placed: Kriol, Q'eqchi or Spanish. They receive formal language training which continues throughout Pre-Service Training. During this time the host family assists the Trainee with language learning, community integration and adaptation to the intricacies and nuances of Belizean culture. Throughout their service, Volunteers augment their learning through daily interactions with their host families and community members. Living with host families also enhances their safety and security, as they provide invaluable advice and guidance related to safety and cultural norms.

While each Belizean household is different, all Volunteer accommodations with host families are modest. Volunteers share common living areas with host families but each Volunteer has a private room, a bed, a chair and a table to work on. By coming to live in a rural village, Volunteers leave behind their former lifestyles and understand that living with a host family in Belize requires an open mind, cultural sensitivity, patience, and flexibility. The rewards, they also realize, are immeasurable.



Working with the Ministry of Health

In 2012, Peace Corps Belize initiated the Rural Family Health Project (RFHP) in close collaboration with Belize's Ministry of Health (MOH), focusing on health education and promotion in rural communities. Since the RFHP was launched, 131 Volunteers have served in 70 rural communities in all districts of Belize.

The Rural Family Health Project (RFHP) is implemented in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health to address the country's priority areas of maternal, neonatal and child health and chronic, non-communicable diseases. The purpose of the RFHP is to support Belizean rural families in adopting positive behaviors to improve and maintain their health. The project emphasizes behavior changes and individual empowerment through carefully designed activities that target the following objectives:

- Engage communities in participatory health education and promotion activities
- Enhance the technical capacity of community health providers and partners
- Empower mothers and caregivers to make positive maternal and child health choices
- Foster positive individual lifestyle changes to prevent non-communicable diseases

September 2018 marked five years since the inception of the RFHP. During this time period, the project has served over 15,000 Belizeans in rural communities countrywide. Village members benefitted from health education and health promotion activities related to the goals of the RFHP: maternal and child health and non-communicable diseases.

In 2018, the Ministry of Health launched a Community Health Platform in 50 rural communities. This platform is a mechanism in which various community members/leaders, in addition to the Community Health Workers (CHWs) work together to address health concerns in their village. Our Peace Corps Volunteers who serve in the pilot communities have had the opportunities to be a part of this initiative.

Peace Corps Belize is currently undergoing a program review of the RFHP. This process has included a thorough evaluation of the program. All stakeholders at the grassroots and national levels, Volunteers and community partners have participated in this process which concluded in 2019. A revised health project will be launched in May of 2020.

The Rural Family Health Project has served over 15,000 Belizeans in rural communities countrywide.



PCV Rachel during one of her Physical Education sessions at the school.

h - The Rural Family Health Project



It all began on a quiet day in my second week of service. I had met the maternal health nurse at a Parents Teachers Association meeting within my first few days of arriving at site, so I decided it might be a good idea to show up at the clinic to see if the nurse had some spare minutes to meet with me. So on a hot Thursday afternoon, I began my two and a half mile walk to the satellite clinic, wondering if I was in way over my head by thinking I could be a valuable work-partner to a professional nurse. When I reached the clinic I was greeted by the secretary looking me up and down, wondering what on earth this white man was doing at a village clinic in the middle of nowhere. Feeling nervous, I started to wonder the same thing. Luckily for me, I shouldn't have worried.

Right from the start, the nurse made me feel welcomed and assured me that my knowledge and skills could be useful at the clinic. She told me to first join in on mobile clinic days, where each week a truck takes the nurse and caretaker to little villages off the beaten path to reach mothers and their babies that might find it particularly challenging to make visits to the clinic. And so I was picked up the following Tuesday for my first mobile clinic. We searched for infants and young children based on their need for updated vaccines. When we found them, we would weigh and measure each child to show the mother their child's progress in their early childhood development. Each visit would include nutrition education based on where the child stood in their development to provide the mother with the knowledge needed to make healthy choices on behalf of their infants and young children. On my first mobile clinic I observed the nurse and caretaker greeting each mother by name, asking them about their personal lives, inquiring about their physical and emotional health, and overall treating each patient as old friends they were eager to visit. This taught me one of the most important prerequisites to success at the clinic: in such rural areas where privacy can be difficult to come by, a healthcare professional must proactively build trust and rapport with their patients. My primary strategy to achieve this was to use the local language as exclusively as possible, asking patients for advice and guidance on my journey to language mastery. As I provided mothers with education on nutrition and early childhood development, they taught me the language and provided cultural insights. This created a two way street of learning from each other, establishing us as equals.

From that first Tuesday of being picked up by the mobile truck, the clinic became the cornerstone of my service. I expanded my involvement to 4 days on a typical week. Mondays for child health, Tuesdays for mobile clinic, Wednesdays for pregnancy checkups, and Thursdays for new pregnancy bookings. Together, Nurse and I designed nutrition education sessions catered for each different day with the goal of empowering mothers and caregivers to make healthier choices for themselves and their children. I also began to assist in a wide variety of small tasks, from checking blood pressure to helping the caretaker organize paperwork and educational materials. Every small task I assisted with, every personal conversation had, and every child I managed to calm on their way to see the nurse helped me to build rapport with the clinic and its patients. Now with sixteen months at the clinic under my belt, a vast majority of the mothers and pregnant women that come through are familiar with who I am and trust what I have to say. The nurse and caretaker frequently ask for my thoughts and advice on a variety of health topics. And while it feels great to have succeeded in becoming a true member of the clinic family, I didn't do it on my own. My proactivity to integrate into the clinic was accelerated by the kind and welcoming nature of Belizean culture. Both the nurse and caretaker went out of their ways to ensure I had a voice and distinct role among the staff, and the patients I worked with were quick to make me feel like a welcome addition to their routine. Working with these exceptional counterparts and wonderful community members has been a highlight of my service and is sure to be an experience that I value for the rest of my life. What a privilege it truly is to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer."

- PCV DJ



PCV DJ and his clinic counterparts (Nurse Garbut and Caretaker Karen).

Volunteer experience with th

“ In September of 2018, the primary school held its annual beginning of the year meeting. In front of an audience of parents and school staff, the president of the Parent-Teacher Association announced her intention to bring two things to the school: bike racks for the students and a feeding program. As the village's Peace Corps Volunteer, I was present at the meeting and intrigued by the projects. After the meeting, I introduced myself as the new Peace Corps Volunteer (as I had only been in the village for a couple of weeks) and told her I would love to work on bringing the community together to execute her plans. In particular, I liked the kitchen idea as it was a project the Volunteer before me had marked as a need for the community due to its relatively high rates of child malnutrition and stunting. The President and I would set up a meeting and discuss fundraising strategies to accomplish the goals. By doing barbeques and dollar drives, the PTA had raised funds for the bike racks. They were proving themselves to be capable of completing their promises. With one goal down, the PTA shifted focus to the feeding program.

For this project, we knew we would need to work with multiple facets of the community and outside resources. In the community, we would need the support of the school, the village council, and influential groups like churches. Building these bonds proved to be hard work, not because there didn't exist a desire to improve the school and the health of the students, but because inertia is a hard thing to overcome. We had to organize meetings to plan how the feeding program would be structured, plan logistics for food and labor payments, and make construction plans and estimations. From outside the community, we sought advice from the Ministries of Education and Health. The Ministry of Education has an excellent feeding program menu, which we decided to adopt. To reinforce the importance of following such guidelines, a Ministry of Health nutritionist came to the school to speak with teachers and the PTA about the importance of proper nutrition. Through this partnership, we laid plans to do more educational talks later on in 2020, specifically targeted at educating the head chef of the program and parents of the students. From February to December, we worked interspersing meetings between the daily working lives of community members to finally reach a point where we had raised $\frac{1}{3}$ of the funds for the project and documented a comprehensive feeding program plan.

What was left was now was a search for additional funding support. The Peace Corps Partnership Grant Program seemed a perfect fit. This had always been a community-driven project, so we found harmony with the Peace Corps requirements without much struggle. In December, my school's principal and I presented our community's vision for the project. Today we are in the final stages of securing the grant and hope to begin the construction of the kitchen in April. Following this timeline, by next school year, the feeding program will be running and serving snacks and lunch to the students at the primary school.” - PCV Matthew



PCV Matthew (bottom left) during one of the nutrition talks by the Ministry of Health.

e Rural Family Health Project



PCV Sierra and one of her classes.

and the American perspective. Often the question of "how is it in the U.S.A?" is posed. The students especially enjoy hearing about my culture and are always eager to ask more questions." - PCV Sierra

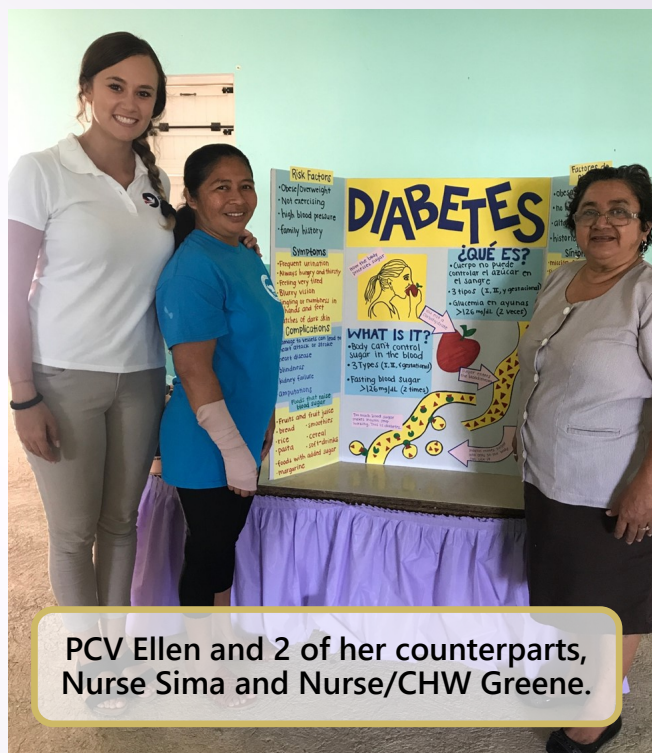
“As I enter the 6 month mark at site I have had some time to reflect on how things are going, and overall nothing but GREAT! In the beginning of service some of the energy I felt was strange, but that was expected because I was unknown to everyone. So I began working on my relationships in the communities, mostly by spending as much time as possible getting to know them. When I am invited to attend an event I try to find the time to and while present I attempt to be as engaged as possible, whether that's lending a helping hand or through small talks with locals. I find my visibility to be an important factor towards building community relationships and wearing identifying items like a name tag or a Peace Corps polo.

I have had the pleasure of working in both of my community primary schools in which I co-teach HFLE lessons. The teachers are providing a lesson plan for the desired learning outcome and a discussion is had about which content should be taught by whom. Typically teachers appreciate Peace Corps addition of creativity with posters, activities, videos,

“Working with Nurse Sima, Nurse/Community Health Worker (CHW) Greene and CHW Carolyn in my village has been a wonderful experience. These women have a passion and dedication to the health and wellness of their community members that goes unmatched. CHWs in Belize work for hardly any pay, but volunteer their time because of the love and care they have for their village. From the day I arrived in my village, these CHWs welcomed me onto their team and helped me integrate into the community. I have learned so much about Belizean health needs and concerns working alongside these women, as well as have had the opportunity to share my knowledge and experience with them.

The village that I live in has a mobile clinic that comes one day each month. I assist the nurses with measuring and weighing the babies and children, as well as charting their growth. Additionally, the CHW and I plan and facilitate educational presentations for parents on various topics ranging from non-communicable diseases to young child nutrition. We check blood pressures and blood glucose levels, educate on living healthier lifestyles, and refer people to see a doctor when necessary. The CHWs and I also visit the primary schools in the village for different needs. I assist in checking the students for lice, as well as educate all classes on good hygiene practices.

My favorite activity has been conducting home visits with my CHW. Together we visit homes throughout the village, assess basic levels of health, and have the opportunity to get to know the villagers more personally. I am able to help educate community members on how they can reduce their risks for chronic illness and live healthier lifestyles, as well as get to know their families and feel more a part of the village. While the language barriers can be a major challenge at times, my CHWs are always there to support and help me better learn the local languages." - PCV Ellen



PCV Ellen and 2 of her counterparts, Nurse Sima and Nurse/CHW Greene.

Accomplishments from the

Goal 1: *Improving Maternal and Child Health*

1,456

Individuals educated on the prevention of common childhood illnesses

328

Individuals educated on nutritional needs of children under 5 years of age

344

Individuals who are able to identify at least 4 or more warning signs indicating the need to seek immediate care with a healthcare provider during pregnancy.

544

Individuals educated on essential maternal care services

279

Number of individuals reached with training on MOH family planning methodologies.

606

Individuals educated on exclusively breastfeeding

274

Pregnant women trained on the importance of fruits or vegetables and proteins

368

Number of target population educated on evidence-based complementary feeding practices for infants aged 6-11 months old.



Rural Family Health Project

Goal 2: *Reducing the Risk of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases*

3,530

Individuals educated on
Non-Communicable Diseases

1,280

Individuals demonstrated increased
knowledge of Non-Communicable Diseases

2,791

Individuals educated on ways to incorporate
physical activity into their daily lives

1,538

Individuals able to identify ways to incorporate
physical activity into their daily lives

1,157

Individuals able to identify five out of seven
food groups of the Belizean food basket

637

Individuals previously inactive reporting
increased physical activity

1,652

Individuals demonstrated how to properly
wash hands

361

adults/caretakers who demonstrated how to
prepare a nutritious meal with locally available
or affordable foods

121

Individuals who reported eating at least 3 servings
of fruits and vegetables and one protein/animal
source of food daily

205

Number of individuals who participated in at
least one household/community garden
training session.

Numbers represent data from October 1st, 2018 - September 30th, 2019



A football match being played at a village in southern Belize.

Working with the Ministry of Education

Established approximately 20 years ago, Peace Corps Response (PCR) is a lesser known Peace Corps program that sends experienced professionals to undertake short-term (3 to 12 months), high-impact assignments in communities around the world.

In 2017, Peace Corps Belize worked with Belize's Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture (MOE) to incorporate four PCR Literacy Intervention Specialists into the MOE's important work on increasing literacy in Belize. While discussions between Peace Corps and the MOE regarding collaboration on literacy initiatives date back to 2014, planning for a formal partnership through PCR began in August 2016. On May 2017, four Peace Corps Volunteers began a six month assignment with the MOE. The Volunteers arrived with more than one hundred fifty years of combined experience in teaching literacy, reading recovery, training trainers, and school administration. This vast experience was leveraged toward the MOE Literacy Intervention Project's goal of ensuring all students will either a) be reading fluently and accurately at or above their grade level or b) be the subject of appropriate, targeted interventions. The Volunteers worked tirelessly with their MOE counterparts to revise a teacher manual and accompanying literacy intervention toolkit, train teachers on its use in and out of the classroom, evaluate its effectiveness, and submit a comprehensive report and recommendations to senior MOE management.

In June 2017 Peace Corps Belize and MOE signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop projects and activities in the early childhood literacy sector. In 2018, Peace Corps welcomed a second group of 6 Volunteers to work with teachers from 49 schools on raising the literacy levels of their students.

This year, Peace Corps Belize welcomed a third group of 9 Volunteers to work in 5 districts of Belize: Corozal, Orange Walk, Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo. With the sustained and solid collaboration from the Ministry of Education, they have been able to have a positive impact, contributing to the improvement of Early Childhood Literacy indicators across the 5 districts.



PCRVs during their Swearing In Ceremony.

on - The Literacy Intervention Program

Response Volunteers have worked directly with students and teachers at the Standard 1 level, as well as with school administrators and Education Officers in building capacities for a more solid implementation of the Literacy Intervention Strategy put forth by the Belizean government.

The materials designed by our Belizean work partners at the Quality Assurance and Development Services (QADS) Office of the MOE are used and refined by Response Volunteers, and the recommendations the Volunteers make based on field experiences are taken very seriously by MOE's senior leadership, to continue to strengthen the different elements that come into play in this initiative.

The results from August through December 2019 are as follows:

Schools where Volunteers worked	69
Students receiving intervention support	340
Teachers receiving coaching	104
Visits to project schools	287
Trainings events imparted by volunteers	21

Peace Corps Belize intends to maintain its support to the districts by placing Response Volunteers in District Education Centers (DECs) in 2020.



PCRV Phyllis during one of the Literacy day activities.

Volunteer experience with the Literacy Intervention Program

“My time in Belize has been wonderful working with great and dedicated teachers. This has been such a positive experience and I really appreciate how teachers have been so open to encouragement throughout my Response service. Teachers have such a special relationship with their students and I always look forward to seeing the impact teachers have on a daily basis. Each visit showcases the work the teachers put in for their students and it reflects in student work.

Students in the district I was assigned are inquisitive and anxious to learn. It is always wonderful to see when a student finally clicks with a concept they are learning in class. For a teacher, that is the best affirmation for their hard work. I love to see a student's face when they apply what they have been learning. They are so proud that they finally understand what the teacher was talking about.

I will miss the teachers and especially the students, but I am grateful for this amazing opportunity to learn from Belizeans! Belize is such a beautiful multi-cultural society. I am always learning something new every day. This experience in Belize has reminded me why I became an educator and life-long learner in the first place. ¡Muchísimas gracias!” - PCRV Kelly

PCRV Kelly at one of the classrooms she visits for literacy interventions.



“This has been such a wonderful experience. I love how much I have been able to learn by working with the Peace Corps staff, Ministry of Education, Belizean teachers and principals, and especially my fellow Volunteers. Equally as rewarding as expanding my professional skill set has been sharing what I know with standard 1 teacher Ms. Carmen and her students at a little school at the edge of town. I first met Carmen in June when I introduced myself and told her that I would be working with her on the literacy intervention. She was excited that I would be coaching her.

Working alongside Carmen has been such a pleasure. For one thing, she always has me over to her house for lunch. Her husband, a taxi driver, picks us up. He cooks the meal beforehand, so we can eat right away. Across the handful of meals I had with them, he made rice and beans, cucumber slices seasoned with pepper and lime, spaghetti with meat sauce, and french fries made using Guatemalan potatoes. One time I was not able to come over for lunch because I was busy talking to another teacher, so Carmen brought me back a homemade plate of macaroni and cheese, salad, and chicken. What graciousness!

Second, I like working with her because she is personable. She makes me laugh through her off-beat, blue humor. Third, and most of all, she is great to work with because she is interested in learning how to do the intervention. I am excited to see the results of the post-test that I will soon give to her students. I am confident they have made considerable progress.

I asked her to speak about the intervention, so I could include something for this article. She said, *“The intervention program is a very strong tool that I was able to implement in my class. It was a very difficult, challenging task, but Teacher Ben, whenever he came to school, he wouldn't dictate what to do - he would explain. He would first show me how to implement whatever game or strategy I use, and that was what helped us, the children and myself, facilitate the journey through the program.”*

It has been an honor to work for Carmen, and I will miss her.”
- PCRV Benjamin



PCRV Ben and one of the teachers he has worked with (Teacher Carmen).

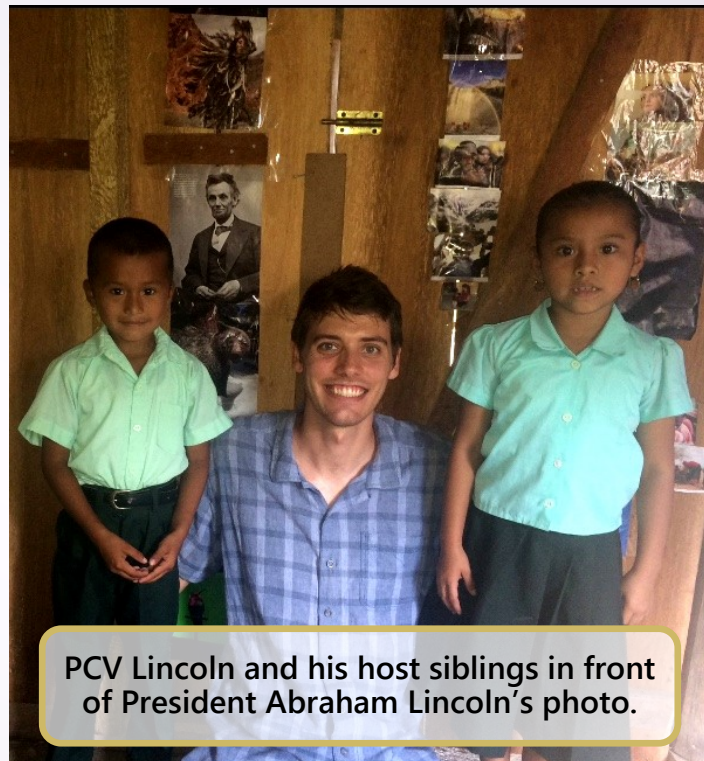
Other Volunteer Engagements

“In my village, I have two host siblings that are 5 and 7 years old—a bundle of energy and laughter. They quickly became my best friends after I moved in with them. They love all of the new and strange ideas I bring into their lives, and are always asking me questions about life in the United States.

One of our favorite activities is to stare at the National Geographic pictures I have hanging in my room. There are several striking photos of nature, architecture and important historical figures, but one photo in particular has made a lasting impression on them: President Abraham Lincoln. The photo is one of the last ever taken of him, his hands folded in a polite pose.

Perhaps the reason my host siblings were initially drawn to this picture is because I happen to have the same last name as President Lincoln. They always ask me the same question: “Is he your daddy?” By now they both know he is in fact not my daddy. Nevertheless, our conversations about this man have become a fun ritual of learning. After the preliminary “daddy” question, I share with the children another piece of the 16th President’s story. The 5 year old has even begun to imitate the President’s pose in the photo, and I must say it is quite good.

Abraham Lincoln is a legendary historical figure known throughout the world, a great and true American hero. It makes me happy to know that my host siblings have grown to appreciate him. My hope is that eventually their knowledge of the 16th president will contribute to their overall impression of Americans in a positive way.” - PCV Lincoln



PCV Lincoln and his host siblings in front of President Abraham Lincoln's photo.

“The largest request that I received from the community when coming to site was to get the young girls involved. Within a few weeks, the teachers and I formed a GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) Girls Club at the school. This club is held every Wednesday after school and was formed to empower young girls by providing opportunities to practice positive leadership, life skills, community service, and sisterhood in a supportive and safe environment. Other activities the girls expressed interests in were building a garden, learning to play volleyball, and building new friendships!”
- PCV Angelica



PCV Angelica, her counterparts and their GLOW club.

Working with Belize

Besides adopting a different lifestyle, Volunteers also learn to work with Belizean counterparts throughout their service. In their villages or towns, in order to implement behavior change interventions, Volunteers work with Community Health Workers (CHWs), Rural Health Nurses, School Principals, Teachers, District Education Officers, village councils, Alcaldes, youth groups, women's groups and church leaders, among others. Volunteers develop strong alliances with these counterparts and carry out their activities and projects collaboratively.

RFHP Volunteers and their counterparts plan, coordinate and implement health promotion, education and training activities. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with village leaders, identifies and trains Community Health Workers who are volunteers themselves and who work closely with Rural Health Nurses, District Health Educators, Peace Corps Volunteers and other community members. Together they plan and carry out various activities promoting healthy living with emphasis on maternal and child health (MCH) and non-communicable diseases (NCD), as per the goals of the RFHP. Some of these activities include: community health fairs, promoting school or backyard gardens, home visits, NCD health houses and educational sessions, physical fitness programs, lessons on maintaining healthy pregnancies and promoting exclusive breastfeeding, sessions addressing childhood illnesses and malnutrition, hygiene education and sanitation projects. RFHP Volunteers also work extensively in the local primary schools along with principals, vice principals and teachers. Together they work to educate children on health-related topics such as nutrition, exercise and hygiene by co-teaching the Health and Family Life Education and Physical Education Curriculum with classroom teachers. Besides their primary projects with CHWs and schools, Volunteers also work with their many counterparts on secondary projects that benefit the community. Some work with the elected village officials, youth leaders or women's group leaders on activities such as re-vamping libraries, developing literacy programs, involving youth in extracurricular activities, organizing summer camps for children or other community events.

Response Volunteers, on the other hand, work closely with District Education Officers and teachers to implement literacy intervention strategies to help children enhance their literacy. Each District Town has Education Officers who are the main counterparts for Response Volunteers. Together they visit schools in their nearby villages and there, along with primary school teachers, they provide literacy interventions to children facing challenges. They also collaborate with the Ministry of Education to provide teachers with training on literacy intervention.

Counterparts play a central role in the lives of Volunteers during their service. While Volunteers share their expertise with counterparts and help to build their capacity in technical aspects of their work, counterparts similarly share their knowledge, skills and experience with Volunteers, providing invaluable assistance in navigating the many cultural differences between their home and the host country. Counterparts and Volunteers leave long-lasting impacts on each others lives and on the lives of the people they serve.

Volunteers engage with Belizeans in a rich cultural exchange which furthers Peace Corps' mission of promoting world peace and friendship.



PCVs Rachel and Caroline with their counterparts for a gardening session held by the Ministry of Agriculture.

zean Counterparts



Education Officer, Mrs. Garay and PCR V Judy during one of the school visits.

“Walk into the District Education Office on any Wednesday morning. You’ll feel the quiet presence of a few officers, and you’ll hear the tapping of keyboards and the quiet swoosh of a page turning now and then. As you wander further down the hall, you hear the soft voices of persons in a meeting, the low endless drone rattles on, lulling you in a nostalgic state of mild stupor... and then you hear a strange sound. What are these sounds coming from the second room down the hallway, dancing and tilting on the quiet air? As you come closer a veritable “din of collaboration” escapes through the door. You peek in and see two women, each with their computers and notebooks; they are laughing, problem-solving, bouncing ideas off each other, jotting down ideas, listening to music, brainstorming and writing. It strikes you as unfamiliar –strange. You see a young woman at the edge of her chair, asking the other questions, observing and taking notes, and yes, laughing with the other woman who is speaking knowledgeably and kindly to her. A little later, you watch the women leave the office weighted down with lots of bags, their

eyes tired, but they are wearing huge smiles on their faces. The older woman stops to pet a stray. They wait under the shade of their umbrellas for a long time – still talking, still laughing. Finally, the ‘busito’ arrives and they are off!

The younger woman is me: An Education Officer who has had the honor of working as a Peace Corps Response Volunteer Counterpart for the past three years. Over this time, I’ve found the experience to be meaningful and inspirational. I’ve been grateful to Peace Corps for gifting Belize with Literacy Specialists who selflessly and uncomplainingly give their time, skills, talents and hearts to respond to the literacy urgency in the country. I’ve truly enjoyed working closely and connecting with the Volunteers. Through collaboration, my own knowledge and skills have been amplified. While the Volunteers are literacy experts, they have always made me feel included in and of value to the work. They affirm that I am an integral part of the initiatives that have started and will continue long after they leave. Not only have the PCRVs positively impacted the educators and students, but they have also given the teachers of Belmopan and me the wonderful gifts of hope and friendship.” - Mrs. Garay, Education Officer

“Indeed our Peace Corps Volunteer has played a significant role in our school. On behalf of the entire school, I hereby extend a million thanks to her for her support in education and generous contributions to our institution. She has always done the extra mile at our school. She is a great person and a wonderful human being. Thanks to our Heavenly Father for granting us the opportunity to have her as our Super Peace Corps Volunteer. Once again, thank you for the excellent work you have done at our educational institution.”
- Mr. Tzul, School Principal



School Principal, Mr. Tzul, and PCV Julie at the playground they both partnered to complete.

Frequently asked questions

Who are the Peace Corps Volunteers and why do they choose to do this work?

Each year thousands of US citizens ages 18 and over who are interested in public service abroad apply to become Peace Corps Volunteers. One of the goals of the Peace Corps is to help the people of other countries gain a better understanding of people from the United States and our multicultural society. Peace Corps actively recruits people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to share with the communities they will serve around the globe. Americans who apply to the Peace Corps undergo a competitive and extensive year-long application process. Peace Corps attracts idealistic individuals who are willing to share their technical experience with others and are eager to learn about other cultures.

What do Volunteers do in Belize?

Volunteers are trainers, teachers and mentors. They are agents of change who partner with locals in rural villages to identify community needs, establish educational priorities and apply their skills, knowledge and experience on a daily basis to improve the health of Belizeans.

Can Volunteers help secure funding for projects?

Peace Corps differs from aid groups in that it has a unique development philosophy focused on building human capacity for long-term sustainability. Volunteers can help train others in the area of fundraising and grant writing, but the emphasis must be on equipping others with these skills to ensure that when the Volunteer leaves, community members are able to carry out these activities independently.

How can I apply for a Volunteer to serve in my community?

Peace Corps Belize will consider Volunteer applications which are completed and submitted after Site ID meeting #1 at primary schools by the school principal. Submitting an application by the school principal says the following:

- The Principal is agreeing to supervise the Volunteer and provide support at school.
- The Principal is prioritizing HFLE, PE and school-based clubs on the school's timetable.
- The Principal will support an environment of co-planning and co-teaching/facilitating work activities with their teaching staff.
- The school, along with the PTA, sports coaches, youth groups leaders are open and available to work with a Peace Corps Volunteer under the Youth Health and Well-being Project.
- The schools that Peace Corps staff visit for meetings #1 and #2 are identified by our Ministry of Education partners.



PCV Dexter and his Pre-Service Training host mom.



On September 2019,
18 Volunteers commenced their
service to Belize.



On September 2019,
13 Volunteers completed one
year of service to Belize.



On September 2019,
13 Volunteers completed their two years
of service to Belize.

A total of 67
Volunteers,
including Response
Volunteers, served
in Belize in 2019.



Peace Corps Goals:

- 1. Help people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.**
- 2. Help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served.**
- 3. Help promote a better understanding of other people on the part of Americans.**



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