



Peace Corps

# Peace Corps Kosovo



## Annual Report 2019



**Peace  
Corps**

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# A Message from the Country Director



## **Welcome to Peace Corps Kosovo!**

Opened in 2014, we are proud to be the 140th country for American citizen volunteer service in Peace Corps history. At the Sept. 2013 signing of our country agreement with then President of the Republic of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, we were the first entry into a new country since Peace Corps opened a program in Cambodia in 2007. Through our web and print publications, we strive to introduce you to our enthusiastic Peace Corps Volunteers, the majority who arrive in Kosovo with no Albanian, Serbian or Bosnian language skills, but through living with host families and working side by side with local counterparts and language tutors, master the language and grow to know and understand the culture.

I am humbled by and applaud the local partners who work with us to make volunteer service successful. And to those reading this who are new to Peace Corps, I encourage you to consider the positive impact that a Peace Corps Volunteer could make in your village or small town community.

Kosovo has a rich and complex history that not only impacts how our Volunteers live and work, it teaches every Volunteer lessons in Balkan history, perseverance in the face of challenges, humility, the power of family, and community. The two projects focused on primary and secondary school English education, and youth and women employability skills and civic engagement, our presence here demonstrates Peace Corps' important role in working towards America's development and people-to-people, citizen diplomacy goals.

The first group of Volunteers arrived in Kosovo in June 2014. As with each subsequent cohort, they received about 11 weeks of cross-cultural immersion, and comprehensive language and technical training in country before traveling to their permanent 2-year Volunteer sites outside of the capital city, Pristina. A little over two-thirds of our Volunteers serve as TEFL English Resource Teachers in primary and secondary schools, and the remaining Volunteers serve as Community Organizational Development workers. These two programs offer opportunities for Volunteers to share experiences, transfer skills and knowledge, and foster greater understanding between Volunteers and their host communities. The success of Peace Corps is built on the people-to-people exchange of ideas at the grassroots level.

One of the key cultural aspects Peace Corps Volunteers notice is that Kosovo is a relationship-oriented society. When time is taken over Turkish coffee or Macchiato, to talk about work and establish professional relationships, Volunteers find they are more successful and satisfied in daily life and work here. In 2019 there were projects such as English and baseball clubs, yoga classes, computer, science and engineering summer camps, women's employability workshops and much more. We thank all of the school, municipal, NGO and other community partners who assist with these projects to support local development and making our Volunteers feel welcome and at home in Kosovo.

If, after reading about the work Peace Corps does in Kosovo, you would like to apply to become a Volunteer -- or to host a Volunteer in your community, you will find helpful information on our website <https://www.peacecorps.gov/kosovo/>.

And we hope that you enjoy the photos of our Volunteers their colleagues and students, working and playing together. Peace Corps Kosovo is here to strengthen the bonds of friendship between our two countries.

**Darlene Grant, Ph.D.**

**Peace Corps Kosovo Country Director (Nov. 2015 to Dec. 2019)**

**Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Cambodia 2009-2011**

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# About Peace Corps Globally

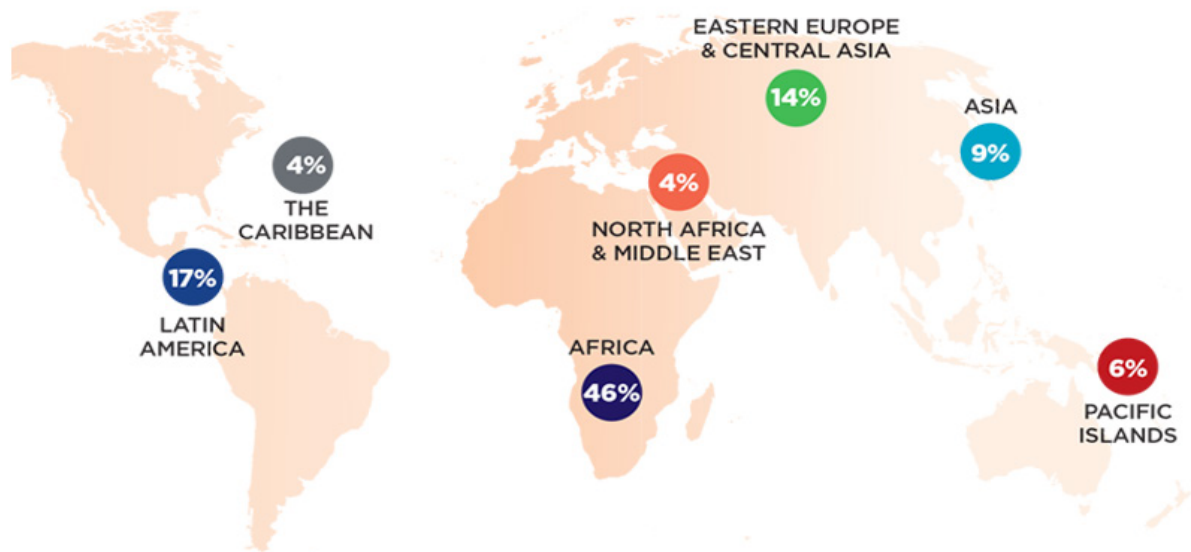
The Peace Corps is an independent U.S. Government agency that provides Volunteers to countries requesting assistance around the world. President John F. Kennedy officially established the Peace Corps in 1961 in an effort to promote world peace and friendship. The Peace Corps has been a leader in international development and citizen diplomacy for more than 50 years across more than 141 countries. Although times have changed since the Peace Corps' founding in 1961, the agency's mission—to promote world peace and friendship—has not.

Peace Corps changes lives—both the the lives of people in communities around the world and the volunteer's life. Peace Corps Volunteers have demonstrated their commitment to grassroots development by working with and living amongst local people of countries served in order to achieve the agency's Mission to promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

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

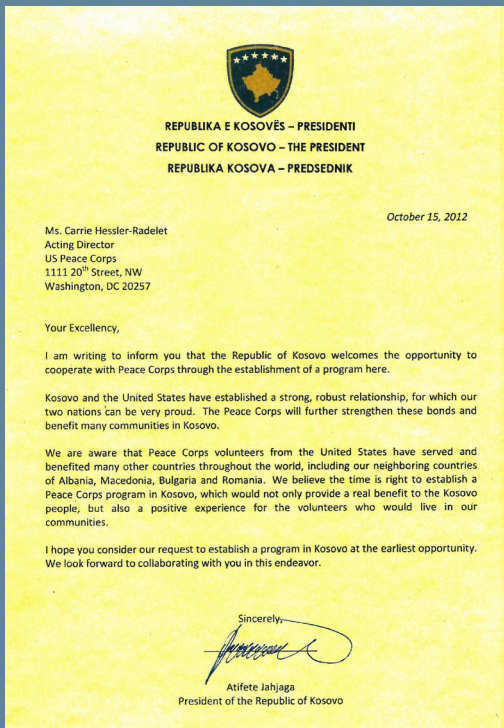
Since its founding, nearly 220,000 Americans have served in 140 countries as Peace Corps Volunteers. Currently the United States Peace Corps is working in 64 countries around the world with close to 7,000 Volunteers.

## Where Volunteers Serve Globally





# Peace Corps Kosovo



On October 15, 2012, Kosovo’s President, Atifete Jahjaga, invited the Peace Corps to send Peace Corps Volunteers to Kosovo. Her proposal was strongly supported by Tracy Jacobson, the US Ambassador to Kosovo, and by Maureen Shauket, Director of the USAID Mission in Kosovo. They stressed to Peace Corps that assigning Volunteers to Kosovo would be important in terms of Kosovo’s development; would complement existing US efforts in Kosovo; would promote mutual US-Kosovar cultural understanding; and would aid in advancing broad US engagement with all populations in Kosovo.

Shortly thereafter, Acting Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet sent a team to assess the possibility of assigning Peace Corps Volunteers to Kosovo. Based on the findings from this assessment, two projects were established, beginning in 2014 with a TEFL project. The Community Development project was initiated in 2016. In 2019, the Community Development project was reestablished as the Community Organizational Development sector.

The term of service for Volunteers is 27 months. All Peace Corps Kosovo Volunteers live with local host families for, at minimum, the first nine months of their service. All Volunteers are trained to at least an intermediate level in a local language (Albanian or Serbian). Around 70 Volunteers serve at one time. Currently, about 80% of these Volunteers work in English Education, and the other 20% serve in the Community Organizational Development sector.



## Regions where Volunteers Serve in Kosovo



Gjilan



Mitrovica



Peja



Prishtina



Prizren

# From 2014 - 2019, 205 Volunteers have served in Kosovo

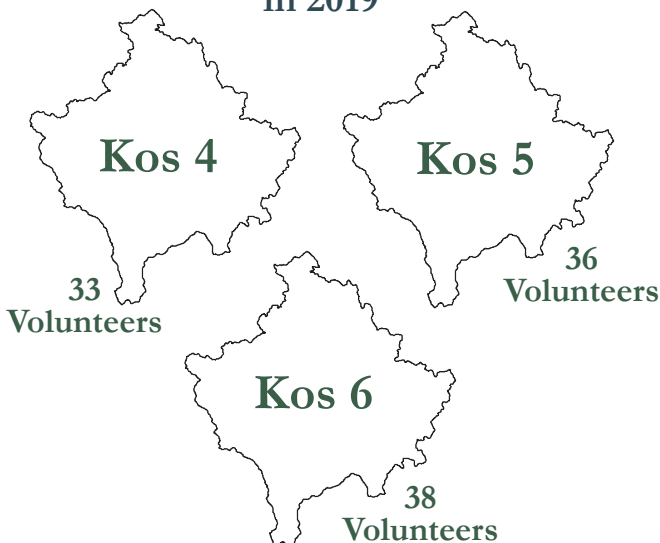
- 180** TEFL Education Volunteers
- 11** Community Development Volunteers
- 14** Community Organizational Development Volunteers

## Municipalities Where Volunteers Have Served

- Ferizaj/Uroševac
- Gjilan/Gnjilane
- Kaçanik/Kaçanik
- Kamenicë/Kamenica
- Klokot/Klllokot
- NovoBrdo/Novobërdë
- Parteš/Partesh
- Ranilug/Ranillug
- Štrpce/Shtërpcë
- Viti/Vitina
- Drenas/Glogovac
- Mitrovica
- Podujevë/Podujevo
- Skënderaj/Srbica
- Vushtrri/Vučitrn
- Deçan/Deçane
- Gjakovë/Đakovica
- Istog/Istok
- Junik
- Klinë/Klina
- Pejë/Peć
- Graçanica/Gračanicë
- Lipjan/Lipljan
- Prishtinë/Priština
- Shtime/Štimlje
- Dragash/Dragaš
- Malishevë/Mališevo
- Prizren
- Rahovec/Orahovac
- Suharekë/Suva Reka



### Peace Corps Kosovo Volunteers (Kos) in 2019



- 67** Current Volunteers in Kosovo (September 2019)
- 53** TEFL Education Volunteers
- 14** Community Organizational Development Volunteers
- 4** Third-Year extension Volunteers



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# Peace Corps Kosovo Current Projects

Peace Corps Kosovo currently works in two sectors: Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Community Organizational Development (COD). Volunteers frequently collaborate between sectors to facilitate various community-led activities and projects.

## Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology is making concerted efforts to improve the skills of teachers, particularly in smaller towns and rural villages where the need is greatest. The Peace Corps' involvement in this challenging endeavor is twofold: to improve the effectiveness of English language instruction, and to assist the students in improving their English language communication skills, critical thinking skills and independent lifelong learning skills. Volunteers serve as English Language Resource Teachers to help meet the need for continued improvement of English language programs in primary and secondary schools.



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“TEFL program is much more than practicing the most current trends in teaching and learning English. It’s a transformative journey for both PCVs and their counterparts. Each one of them embarks on this journey with a set of expectations, different life and educational experiences, and different cultural backgrounds. Through planning and teaching, through trials and errors they learn to set aside any difference they might have in order to focus their attention on the students. Through English classes they manage to inspire younger generations, they set examples how to develop empathy and foster tolerance. They teach them leadership skills, they prepare them with labor market skills, they encourage innovation, and they model the true meaning of partnership. They are change agents in the education system in Kosovo, whose legacy affects the lives of those who need it the most. Hence, the TEFL program is a life changing experience for PCVs, their counterparts and their students and goes beyond teaching grammar lessons”.

**-Blerta Mustafa, TEFL Technical Trainer**

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Volunteers working in primary and secondary schools typically work with their local colleagues to:

- Demonstrate diverse and student-centered teaching methodologies and communicative activities;
- Develop grade and age appropriate supplemental materials for English Language classes;
- Engage in team teaching to plan and present lessons;
- Make effective use of information technology and internet provided at schools;
- Develop English language centered extra-curricular activities such as English clubs, drama clubs, summer camps, and other student-centered activities.

Peace Corps strives to place Volunteers in mixed-ethnicity schools where the Volunteers possess a unique value in bringing students from various ethnic groups together who normally would not have contact. Through these projects, Peace Corps Volunteer activities will more closely align with the Peace Corps' mission, values and goals.

## Community Organizational Development (COD)

Peace Corp Kosovo sent its first group of Community Organizational Development (COD) Volunteers to work in August 2016. The COD project underwent a redesign effort after the first group, and the second group of COD Volunteers arrived in Kosovo in June 2019. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare is making concerted efforts to improve the infrastructure for improving social welfare, increase employment, and reduce unemployment and establish measures to meet the assistance needs for citizens in need. Volunteers work collaboratively with local counterparts to strengthen organizational capacity at the municipal level, bolster community led projects, and increase youth and women's employment skills in an effort to support the strategic priorities of the Government of Kosovo while serving higher need communities. COD Volunteers focus on economic development and increased citizen engagement. Through this project we envision that youth and women will both increase participation in civil society while attaining competitive employability skills.



Volunteers working in Municipal Government offices and NGO's may work with their local colleagues to:

- Strengthen the capacity of community organizations that serve women & youth to achieve their mission;
- Increase employability of women & youth;
- Increase citizen participation of women & youth in community development activities.

“The COD project should be seen as a unique opportunity by the local institutions and grassroots organizations. I think that volunteers placed in municipalities will not only increase the capacity of partner organizations in certain areas, but also contribute to promoting cultural diversity at the community level. For community-based organizations, having a COD volunteer is definitely a unique experience and an added value to the organization, given the expertise volunteers bring with them”.

- Linda Abazi-Morina, COD Technical Trainer 2019





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## Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

**70%** of TEFL Volunteers work with youth to develop their skills

**23%** of TEFL Volunteers focus on childhood or early literacy

**37%** of TEFL Volunteers work on gender equity in the classroom

**39%** of TEFL Volunteers focus on teacher training

**14%** of TEFL Volunteers work on library development



### Testimonials from Local TEFL Counterparts

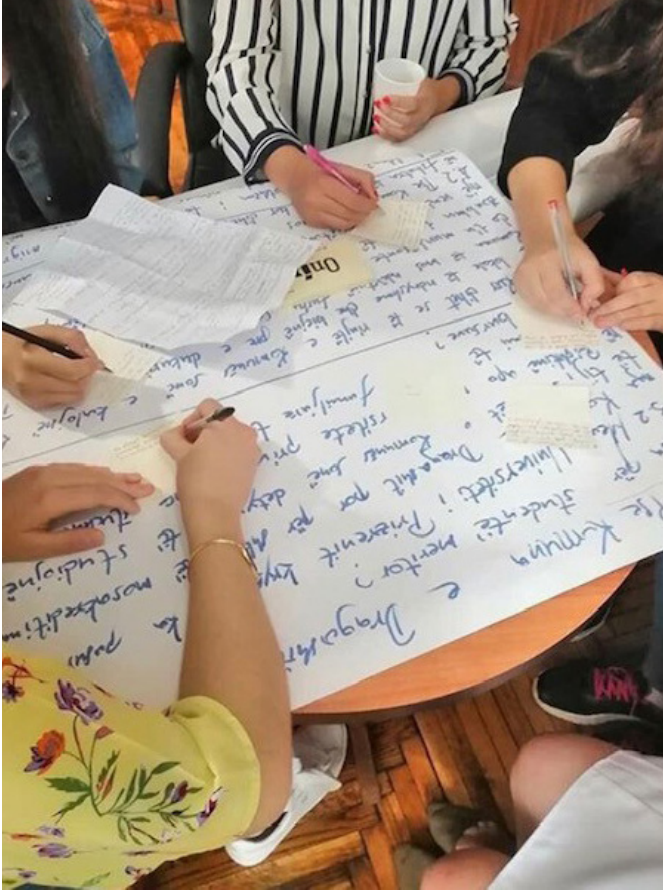
“It’s my second year of working with a Peace Corps (PC) volunteer. I can say that it is a really pleasure to work with a PC Volunteer. We get on really well with each other. We always co-plan and we co-teach without any problems. Lessons are more interesting with a native speaker. New ideas are always welcome to make lessons more interesting. PC volunteers can help school with grants they can apply for. My school has benefited from those grants, so now we have a learning center thanks to PC volunteers. I am very thankful to my PC Volunteer who I am working with because he is helping me a lot and making classes more enjoyable.”

– **Hadie Mehulli Bajraktari, Vushtrri/Vučitrn**

“His skills greatly contributed to all (three) English teachers in getting their own skills further develop, both in language and in teaching. There was no week which didn’t have a practical help on behalf of Mitch (Peace Corps Volunteer) to any of the counterparts with regards to their teaching and English language skills. Mitch established a very good working and friendly relationship with all teaching and administrative staff at school. It has gradually developed into a very high degree of respect towards Mitch as well. The residents of Partesh have well accepted Mitch. The host family had only the words of praise for him. He has been going to village celebrations, and to the relatives of his host family.”

– **Ljubiša Simić, Parteš/Partesh**

# Community Organizational Development (COD)



Community Organizational Development (COD) Volunteers have been working with their host organizations and Municipal partners for four months as of December 2019. COD Volunteers are still in the early stages of their Peace Corps service and focused on relationship building, language learning and integrating into their communities.

**14** Community Organizational Development Volunteers

**13** Municipal partners

**17** NGO counterparts



## Testimonial from a Local COD Counterpart

“Working with Peace Corps Volunteers has made me work harder and smarter. If you cooperate with them, you will have a prosperous life perspective!”

– Lirim Hajredini, Dragash/Dragaš



# Secondary Projects

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded  
Small Project Assistance (SPA) Grants

SPA is a program of low-cost grassroots development projects which are effectively implemented in communities where Volunteers live and work alongside community members. It enables Volunteers to co-facilitate development and implementation of small grant projects that build capacity in communities where Volunteers serve.

Twenty-one (21) grant projects were implemented and completed by Education Volunteers in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. Half of these projects resulted in increased educational capacity and resources in Kosovo public schools, and the other half addressed various community needs in villages and towns where Volunteers live.

**In 2019,**

**3,560** participants directly engaged  
in SPA activities

**11,428** community members were the  
beneficiaries of SPA projects

**37 %** of project contributions came  
from the community



## Beekeeping and Women's Economic Empowerment

Peace Corps Volunteers James and Rachel helped to form the initiative Bletët e Vërtetë, a women's group focused on economically empowering women through beekeeping in western Kosovo. Through SPA projects, James and Rachel supported Jehona, who manages approximately 700 beehives in western Kosovo. Jehona has trained a group of women on how to properly bee keep, make hive frames, administer medication and diagnose the health of bee hives, and manage a business. Only 17 percent of women in Kosovo participate in the formal labor market, according to World Bank.





## Language Lab and Extracurricular Space

Peace Corps Volunteer Melissa and her counterpart Laura have created an encouraging learning lab about English language at their village school. The lab is also an extracurricular activity space for student clubs and courses, a teacher-training center, and an adult education classroom. English language class utilizes the language lab during school hours. To further develop language skills, the school has developed after-school language courses for both youth and adult learners. One year after the inauguration of this SPA project, here's what the Volunteer and counterpart say about its outcome:

**Laura, Counterpart:** “The lab fulfilled needs for me as a foreign language teacher. Providing technology in the lab helps a lot with the new curriculum. Children love learning in the lab because they can listen to CDs, watch videos, and practice the English language. It's much easier for them to learn and for me as a teacher to help them learn English. This is a new experience for us and we adore it. Listening to native English and reading English novels make students more flexible and fluent in the language. From my observation the students cannot wait for English language classes, and they don't want to be in any other classroom. The lab is the biggest success in the village these last years. Thank you to the Peace Corp Volunteer Melissa”.

**Melissa, Volunteer:** “My observations of the students and the community since the opening of the lab has been that of excitement and renewed passion for learning. The students and staff are happy to use and maintain the integrity of the learning space. My counterpart is utilizing the computer and projector to enhance her lessons, and the students love it, they are constantly asking for new visuals and alternate resources to discover English. Students have embraced the English storybooks and novels as well. A variety of students are requesting to borrow the reading materials for their personal entertainment.”



## Community Connect Project

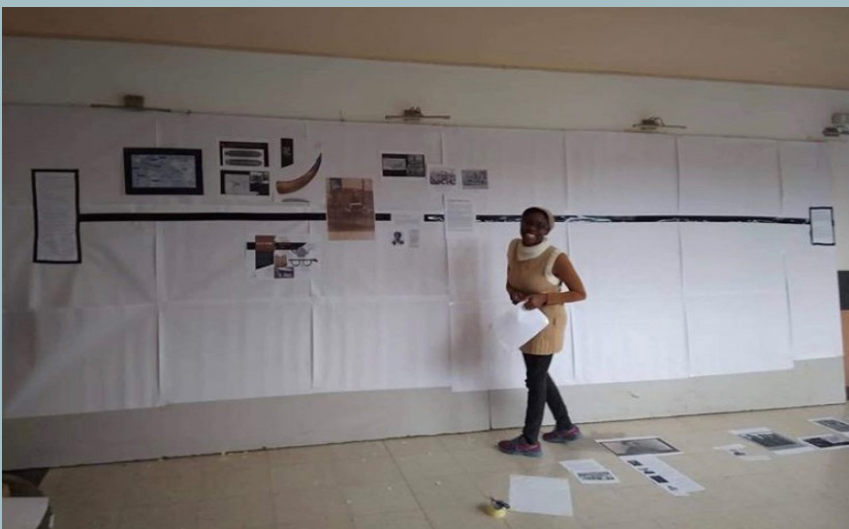
Fast forward five months and the Community Connect summer camp is in full swing. Seven Peace Corps volunteers and over 50 students are picking up trash, painting rocks, and dancing. Freakishly, the first 3 whirlwind days of the camp went mostly without a hitch, but as we prepare for the fourth day we are informed that a small mutiny was brewing in the village. Word was getting around that a group of elders were unhappy with the students' proposed design for the school, because they were concerned that it would diminish the historical symbolism of the space. Their proposed alternative would require a new timeline, a new location, and a much more ambitious project. Eager to keep the community on-board, we agreed. What at the time appeared to be a disastrous setback flourished into the most successful and sustained project in any of the villages.

## Volunteer Projects

While every Peace Corps Volunteer is assigned to a primary project, secondary projects are often a significant part of service for Volunteers in every sector. A few examples of secondary projects include leading summer camps, hosting films and discussions in schools, sharing about American culture and diversity and helping facilitate nationwide poetry, spelling and creative writing competitions.



A summer sportsmanship and wellness camp for middle school aged students facilitated by Volunteers Jeremy and Will in Vushtrri- August 2019



Black History Month exhibition at the American Corner in Prizren set up by Volunteers Schellsie and Michaela- February 2019



A group of students from Podujevë taking a selfie after their regional Spelling Bee competition- May 2019



# Life as a Volunteer in Kosovo

Life as a Volunteer in Kosovo doesn't end in the classroom or at the end of the work day. Living with a host family means Volunteers have the opportunity to learn about the culture and traditions of their community during their service in Kosovo. Volunteers often learn how to make traditional foods, participate in local holiday activities and even learn how to play traditional instruments. Volunteers also enjoy making some of their favorite foods for their friends and host families and sharing about American culture and traditions.

Volunteer Adyel and his friend celebrating Orthodox Christmas in Gračanica- January 2019



Kos4 Volunteers (2017-2019) showing off their medals after a 5K race in Prishtina- April 2019



Volunteer Lydia learning to make pita with her host mom from Pre-Service Training (PST) in the village of Topanicë- June 2019



Volunteer Emily practicing the çifteli with her friend and teacher in Dobërdelan- March 2019



Volunteer Lindsay making plum jam with the women in her host family in the Župa Valley- September 2019



Volunteer Abigail teaching her host brother how to make hamentashen for the Jewish holiday of Purim in Štrpce- March 2019



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