



# fellowS

NEWS ABOUT PEACE CORPS FELLOWS/USA

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FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## Peace Corps Welcomes a New Director

This summer, President Obama nominated, and the U.S. Senate confirmed, Aaron S. Williams as the 18<sup>th</sup> Director of the Peace Corps.

"I am deeply honored to be the Director of the Peace Corps and I want to thank President Obama for the trust that he has placed in me. I look forward to making his call to public service a reality for more Americans," said Director Williams. "I am committed to recruiting, training, and supporting the next generation of skilled and enthusiastic Volunteers eager to serve side by side with members of Peace Corps host communities around the world."

Williams is the fourth Director to have served as a Peace Corps Volunteer. He served as a Volunteer in the [Dominican Republic](#) from 1967 to 1970. Upon completing his service, he served as the coordinator of minority

recruitment and project evaluation officer for the Peace Corps in his hometown of Chicago from 1970 to 1971.

Williams has pursued a career in the development and implementation of worldwide assistance programs. Williams was a vice president for international business development with RTI International. He was also a senior manager at the [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#), where he attained the rank of career minister in the U.S. Senior Foreign Service. He also served as executive vice president of the International Youth Foundation.

As USAID mission director in South Africa, Williams led a \$1 billion foreign assistance program during President Nelson Mandela's administration. In addition, he has extensive experience in the design and management

of assistance programs in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. He was awarded the USAID Distinguished Career Service Award, and was twice awarded the Presidential Award for Distinguished Service.

He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and he was a member of the USAID Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid. He served on the Obama-Biden transition team, the advisory board of the Ron Brown Scholar Program, the board of directors of CARE, and the boards of the Institute for Sustainable Communities, the Pan American Development Foundation, and the National Peace Corps Association.

Williams is fluent in Spanish. He is a graduate of Chicago State University, and has an MBA from the University of Wisconsin. Williams met his wife Rosa dur-



Peace Corps Director  
Aaron S. Williams

ing his service as a Volunteer in the Dominican Republic. The couple have two sons, Michael and Steven.

## Coming Full Circle

By Nicole Warren

(RPCV/Mali, 1994-1997; Fellow/Johns Hopkins, 1998)

I was sworn in as a Peace Corps Volunteer in May 1994, after three months of crash courses in local language and maternal and child health, and was deposited rather unceremoniously in a village about eight miles off a paved road in southeast [Mali](#), West Africa. By default, I began working with Sali, a *matrone*, or auxiliary midwife. She was the only female health care worker available in her community.

When I met her, Sali could not believe I had never seen a child born. Hadn't everyone? She laughed, shaking her head

in amazement as she put my inexperience with birth in the same category as not being able to pound millet or carry water on my head. Despite our vast differences, Sali took it upon herself to introduce me to working with childbearing women.

In Mali, matrones are formally trained health care workers, providing the majority of reproductive health services in a country where one in 15 women die from a childbearing-related cause. Though they are uniquely situated to help reduce maternal mortality in their communities, matrones

fall at the bottom of the medical hierarchy. Because of their rural location and relatively low status, most matrones are inadequately trained, poorly supervised, lack basic equipment, and receive little continuing education.

Despite these challenges, matrones are committed, determined health care workers who provide the best care they can with little respite or support. It was Sali who introduced me to the realities such a woman would face as wife, mother, farmer, and matrone. Sali's family and clients needed her attention at all hours.

Clients came to her on the backs of bikes, mopeds, and donkey carts. She never turned them away. She couldn't have if she wanted to. They literally trailed her as she made the well-worn trip from her home to the village maternity throughout the day.

On market days, when I helped her with prenatal consultations, Sali's multitasking was at its peak. I remember watching her assess one client's abdomen, explain how to take an antibiotic to another confused client, and breastfeed the youngest of her



## Peace Corps Fellows/USA

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# Friend Us, Fan Us, and Follow Us

Peace Corps has jumped head first into the 21<sup>st</sup> century using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

In our online world, these sites provide one of the best ways to connect with a broad new audience. Compared to a standard website, social networking is more interactive and personal, making it easier to get involved.

Social networking sites are especially useful to our partner universities, who can use them as a powerful tool for raising awareness of the programs they offer, as well as for recruitment.

With their very own YouTube channel, Fellows at the [University of Arizona](#) are able to share their unique experiences with the online community. [Duquesne](#) and [Western Illinois](#) use Facebook pages and groups to provide information on their degree programs, and to keep their Fellows connected.

Other than keeping Fellows up to date on what's happening on campus, social networking sites provide the Fellows with a community made up of other RPCVs. Assimilating back into American culture can be hard following service, but having a group of people with a similar background can make that process a lot easier.

As a Fellow, you can also use sites like YouTube to chronicle your internship and promote your community service project. Remember, there's nothing wrong with a little self-promotion!

So, next time you're surfing the Web, make sure you connect with the Peace Corps community by friending, fanning, or following us.



## Happy Anniversary to Our University Partners

Congratulations to all of our partner universities celebrating an anniversary with the Fellows/USA program in 2009! Thanks so much for your continuing contribution and commitment.

### 5-year (founded 2004)

[Duke University](#) (public policy)  
[Fordham University](#)  
[Seton Hill University](#)  
[University of Cincinnati](#)  
[University of Maryland–Baltimore](#)  
[University of South Carolina](#) (business)  
[University of Vermont](#)  
[University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point](#)  
[Xavier University](#)

### 10-year (founded 1999)

[University of New Orleans](#)  
[Southern New Hampshire University](#)  
[Florida Institute of Technology](#)

### 15-year (founded 1994)

[Western Illinois University](#)  
[Illinois State University](#)



Current and past Fellows, administrative staff, and community internship supervisors celebrate Western Illinois University's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

# Full Circle

Con't from page 1

eight children—all at once. When the last client was taken care of, Sali would sigh and complain that her busy morning prevented her from getting the best produce at the market.

I returned to the U.S. in 1996 and pursued training in nursing, midwifery, and public health, traveling to Mali as often as I could. In 2002, I became a nurse-midwife and began to appreciate the magnitude of the matrones' responsibilities through my own professional lens.

As I struggled to balance my own personal and professional responsibilities, I thought about the matrones, who were doing the same thing, only under much harsher conditions and with far fewer resources. In the midst of my busy clinic day, I could call up an electronic version of evidence-based guidelines to help guide my practice. A well-rested, competent colleague would reliably relieve me at the end of a 24-hour shift. If a client I had been laboring with suddenly developed a complication, I could call on a nearby expert to provide needed care. Matrones have no such resources.

I was fascinated by the matrones' experiences and admired the way they managed with so few resources—and so the matrones became the focus of my doctoral research. I traveled to Mali in 2003-2004 to conduct my field work, interviewing matrones in the district of Koutiala, where I had served as a Volunteer.

The matrones were natural collaborators, eager to tell their stories and proud of the contributions they make to their communities. They described the way they link traditional and biomedical models of care and provide access to higher levels of care when needed. Many expressed frustration that they could not do



Nicole Warren (far right) with participants in the Mali Midwives program. Photo courtesy of Robert Akers.

their job as well as they would like, struggling to meet their responsibilities with few supplies, little supervision, and little continuing education. In a place like Mali, where the health care system is severely under-resourced, I knew that these front-line matrones would struggle to find that support.

Back at home, the matrones' stories stayed with me. They had told me about women bleeding to death because they did not have the drugs they needed. They grew tired of delivering stillborns caused by malaria. Like so much of maternal and newborn mortality, most of these tragedies were preventable.

So, in 2006, I formed an organization called Mali Midwives to support continuing education for matrones.

With enormous support from other returned Peace Corps Volunteers, U.S.-based nurse midwives, family, and friends, Mali Midwives raised enough funds by 2009 to sponsor a pilot project: a continuing education event for matrones in Koutiala.

The medical director and the midwifery supervisor I had known in Koutiala in 2004 had both been replaced in the intervening years, so the first Mali Midwives event was organized with nothing more

than a few phone conversations and a couple of awkward emails. The day before the event, three of the region's top clinical staff—two *sage-femmes*, the most highly trained midwives in Mali, and a physician specializing in reproductive health—sat down to adapt the training materials to fit the matrone's education, skill level, and preferred language (Bambara, not French).

The matrones were scheduled to arrive the next morning. I woke up feeling anxious and hurried down to the medical center, trying to keep my expectations low. But as I turned the corner to the health center's courtyard, I was greeted by dozens of matrones chatting with old colleagues and friends. Sali flashed her broad smile at me from the back of the crowd. I had not seen her in four years.

Over the next six days, 82 matrones participated in the continuing education event, focusing on "essential newborn care." At the end of each session, matrones were initially hesitant to ask questions. The first few shy inquiries gave way to a barrage of questions well beyond the session materials. They did their best to take advantage of having three supervisors at their disposal.

One matrone asked, "If I hear heart tones at the first prenatal

visit but not at the second, what should I do?" Another asked, "How many pills of iron should the woman take?" A third tried to clarify when and how much malaria prophylaxis should be given. These discussions had the others on the edge of their seats. The matrones had been waiting for an opportunity to ask these questions, to have an audience with more highly skilled colleagues, and to discuss common problems with peers. When the matrones were satisfied, the session broke up and matrones lingered, exchanging stories and ideas about caring for women and newborns.

This was, by far, the shortest trip I have ever taken to Mali—barely two weeks. But as I said goodbye to Sali and watched her start her journey back to the village where we had first met 15 years earlier, I felt like I had come full circle. To learn more about Mali Midwives please visit [malimidwives.org](http://malimidwives.org) or email Nicole at [malimidwives@gmail.com](mailto:malimidwives@gmail.com).

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Would you like to see yourself in the Fellows/USA newsletter? We would like to increase the visibility of individual Fellows and programs. If you have a story to share about your experience as a Fellow, or your Fellows/USA program, let us know! Email story ideas, profiles of students and staff, and photos to [fellows@peacecorps.gov](mailto:fellows@peacecorps.gov).



# Walking the Walk at the 2009 Coordinator's Conference



From left are Jordan House manager Marco Murillo, Kathleen Kennedy, Julie Driver, Kate Reinsma, Sarah Van Auken, Henry Schwalbenberg, and Georgia Ehlers. (Not shown is Michael Garcia)

This year's Peace Corps Coordinator's Conference was attended by representatives of nearly 30 Fellows/USA partner universities.

Through the variety of sessions offered, coordinators learned new ways to use existing tools, such as social media marketing and grant writing, to strengthen their programs. Coordinators also delved deeply into topics that are central to the program, attempting to answer questions like "What is service learning?" and "Which evaluation metrics are most appropriate?" As usual, one of the primary benefits to coordinators was the opportunity to exchange ideas and best practices.

On a lighter note, coordinators brainstormed ideas for celebrating Fellows/USA's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010 and [Peace Corps' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary](#) in 2011. These two anniversaries promise to bring welcome attention to the many positive contributions Fellows/USA programs make to communities across the country.

At the end of the second day's sessions, four coordinators joined Fellows/USA staff at Jordan House, a Washington, D.C.-based psychiatric crisis stabilization program, as part of the White House's United We Serve initiative. Together, they landscaped part of the backyard. In moving dirt, they moved the idea of a tranquility garden a bit closer to reality. They also sorted clothes and organized the basement storage area so incoming residents could more easily find what they needed. Finally, they washed baseboards in anticipation of an upcoming open house that would showcase Jordan House to its neighbors and supporters.

Spending a few hours together outside of the office and doing work that Fellows do was a wonderful way to connect on a new level. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon and hopes it can become a permanent part of future conferences.

# Fresh Faces at Fellows/USA

Michael Garcia has been on staff with Fellows/USA since March of this year, but his work with Peace Corps began back in 2003 when he became a municipal development Volunteer in Guatemala. After completing his service in 2005, he became a Peace Corps Fellow at [Carnegie Mellon University](#) where he earned a master's degree in public policy and management.

Sarah Van Auken joined Fellows/USA in August. In college, she spent four years as a work study student with Peace Corps Returned Vol-



From left are Sarah Van Auken, Danielle Scism, and Michael Garcia.

unteer Services. She graduated in 2008 from [The George Washington University](#) with a bachelor's degree in religion.

Danielle Scism has worked with Fellows/USA since late

August as a federal work study student. She currently attends Georgetown University, where she is majoring in government with a minor in history.

## Director Named for Office of Public Engagement

David Medina currently serves as the director of the new Peace Corps Office of Public Engagement, formerly known as the Office of Domestic Programs. Medina previously served as deputy chief of staff to First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama.

Over the last 16 years, Medina has also worked for the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, U.S. Sen. John Edwards, the Democratic National Committee, the AFL-CIO, and U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun.

Medina has served on the University of Chicago's Alumni Visiting Committee and the national boards of the Human Rights Campaign and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute.

Medina received his bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago and his master of public policy degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

# Fellows/USA Fall Census

University of Denver .....	64
University of Arizona .....	57
Johns Hopkins University .....	48
Columbia University Teachers College .....	36
University of Michigan .....	26
Duke University .....	24
Carnegie Mellon University .....	20
Western New Mexico University .....	14
The New School .....	14
University of Maryland-Baltimore County .....	13
University of South Carolina.....	13
Western Illinois University .....	12
Marquette University .....	10
Illinois State University .....	9
Indiana University .....	9
New Mexico State University .....	9
Fordham University .....	8
University of Missouri-Columbia .....	8
University of Oregon .....	8
University of Vermont .....	8
University of New Orleans .....	7
Bowling Green State University .....	6
Duquesne University .....	6
Florida Institute of Technology .....	6
Southern New Hampshire University .....	6
University of Maryland-Baltimore .....	6
Yale University.....	6
Seton Hill University .....	5
University of Cincinnati .....	5
University of Maryland-College Park .....	5
University of Southern California .....	5
George Mason University .....	4
Kennesaw State University .....	4
Loma Linda University .....	4
University of Pennsylvania .....	4
George Washington University .....	3
University of Colorado Denver .....	3
University of Missouri-Kansas City .....	3
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee .....	3
Cornell University .....	2
Georgia College & State University .....	2
Rutgers University .....	2
Xavier University .....	2
Northern Arizona University .....	1
University of Rochester .....	1
University of Wyoming .....	1
Drew University .....	0
Humboldt State University .....	0
Monmouth University .....	0
University of Alabama-Birmingham .....	0
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point .....	0
Wichita State University .....	0

Total

512

# Peace Corps Returns to Sierra Leone



A Peace Corps Volunteer works with young boys in Sierra Leone in the 1980s.

United States and [Sierra Leone](#) government officials signed an agreement to re-establish a Peace Corps program in Sierra Leone after a 16-year absence. Glenn Fedzer, the Chargé d’Affaires for the U.S. Embassy in Freetown, and Sierra Leone Minister of Foreign Affairs Zainab Hawa Bangura signed an agreement to officially re-establish Peace Corps/Sierra Leone at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Freetown. Fedzer was accompanied by Lynn Foden, Peace Corps’ acting regional director for Africa.

“We are delighted that the government of Sierra Leone has invited Peace Corps Volunteers to return and work shoulder to shoulder with the people of Sierra Leone,” said Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams. “The partnership between Peace Corps and Sierra Leone was established in the era of President Kennedy and it is an honor and a privilege for us to have the opportunity to work with the communities of Sierra Leone once again.”

The first group of approximately 40 Volunteers is scheduled to arrive in Sierra Leone in June,

with additional [Peace Corps Response](#) Volunteers also arriving in 2010. The Volunteers will focus on secondary education in public schools and work together with communities on grassroots initiatives and community development throughout the country.

“On behalf of Ambassador June Carter Perry, I am honored to participate in the signing of this agreement welcoming the Peace Corps back to Sierra Leone,” said Fedzer at the signing ceremony in Freetown. “This ceremony is the culmination of the dedication of dozens of Americans and Sierra Leoneans, including President Ernest Bai Koroma, U.S. State Department and Peace Corps officials, and many former Peace Corps Volunteers who continue to serve the people of Sierra Leone long after their return to the United States.”

Peace Corps/Sierra Leone was first established in 1962 when 37 Americans volunteered to serve as secondary school teachers. Since 1962, more than 3,400 Americans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers in Sierra Leone.



# Seventh Annual Peace Corps Graduate School Fair Has International Audience

The seventh annual graduate school fair was held September 24 at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. The event drew over 100 people from as far away as [Cameroon](#). More than half of the attendees were returned Volunteers.

The fair, hosted by Fellows/USA and Master's International, began with an informative panel composed of both current and former students.

Panel members included Alison Case from [Carnegie Mellon University](#), Andy Cruz from the University of Maryland–Baltimore County, Cameron Caswell from [Johns Hopkins University](#), and Kristina Owens from [Michigan Technological University](#).

Following the panel, over 20 partner universities, from both [Fellows/USA](#) and [Master's International](#), were present to speak with attendees and answer questions about their respective programs.



RPCVs at Peace Corps Headquarters

## ..... NCE: What Does it Mean to Me?

Peace Corps Volunteers are all too familiar with acronyms, and it's understandable if you are acronymed-out. But NCE might just be an acronym worth learning if you are a returned Volunteer looking for a federal job.

NCE stands for noncompetitive eligibility. As an RPCV who successfully completed Peace Corps service, you were given NCE for one year from the date of your close of service. Essentially, NCE permits a federal competitive service agency to hire a NCE candidate, such as an RPCV, who meets the minimum qualifications for the position, without going through all of the procedures usually involved in hiring an employee.

It is important to understand that NCE does not require an agency to hire you, it just makes it easier for them to do so. In addition, while NCE only applies to federal jobs, there are some excepted service agencies that don't have to abide by the pro-

cedures that govern the use of NCE.

The Peace Corps just happens to be one of those excepted service agencies, but, luckily for you, it recently began accepting NCE from RPCVs. So, if you've considered applying to work for Peace Corps behind the scenes, you've just been given a leg up on the competition!

NCE has further advantages for RPCVs. For starters, NCE allows RPCVs to compete for positions not available to the general public. Of particular interest to Fellows, NCE can be extended for an additional two years if, following your Peace Corps service, you become a full-time student at an institution of higher learning. This means, as long as an RPCV doesn't wait more than a year to enroll in a Fellows/USA university, and as long as their graduate program doesn't exceed two years, they would be able to take advantage of both the Fellows/USA program and their NCE sta-

tus. Peace Corps recommends that RPCVs apply to federal jobs during their last semester of school in order to capitalize on all remaining NCE.

So, Fellows, have your cake and eat it too! Make sure to take advantage of all the perks that come with being a returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

### Quick Facts:

- NCE permits (but does not require) a competitive service agency to hire an RPCV who meets the minimum qualifications for the position.
- NCE allows RPCVs to compete for positions not available to the general public.
- NCE can be extended for two years (a total of three years from the COS date) under certain situations (one of which is full-time enrollment at a recognized institution of higher learning).

### Helpful Websites:

NCE info for RPCVs  
[www.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/former/hotline/hotline051508.pdf](http://www.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/former/hotline/hotline051508.pdf)

Major excepted service agencies  
[www.usajobs.gov/EI6.asp](http://www.usajobs.gov/EI6.asp)

General NCE info  
[www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/howjobsgetfilled.asp](http://www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/howjobsgetfilled.asp)

### Upcoming Events:

RVS Career Conference  
February 9–12  
Peace Corps Headquarters  
Register by February 4 at [rvsevents@peacecorps.gov](mailto:rvsevents@peacecorps.gov)

RPCVs with Noncompetitive Eligibility Hiring Event  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
March 19, 11:00am–4:00pm  
CDC Atlanta, GA  
Register by February 5 at [rvsevents@peacecorps.gov](mailto:rvsevents@peacecorps.gov)

For More Information: 202.692.1430 [rvs@peacecorps.gov](mailto:rvs@peacecorps.gov) [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/events](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/events)



# Where Are They Now?

Brian Goercke (RPCV/Zimbabwe, 1998-2001, Fellow/Duquesne University, 2004)

I've had many exciting and eventful experiences following my graduation from [Duquesne University](#).

From 2004-05, I served six months in [Namibia](#) as a Crisis Corps Volunteer. Working with the Namibian Ministry of Education, I helped create a speaking program titled "Making it Real." The program was composed of four HIV support groups, who visited and spoke with secondary school students about living positively.

Following my service with the Ministry of Education, I worked as a program officer with Family Health International/Namibia to provide supervision and technical assistance to community-based organizations across three regions of the country. This position provided me with valuable curriculum development and training experience.

In 2006, I began working as monitoring and reporting officer for the Johns Hopkins University/Health Communication Partnership field office in Namibia. This office later transitioned to a Namibian-registered

nongovernmental organization, NawaLife Trust. In this position, I monitored program indicators across 11 regions countrywide and assisted in conducting and disseminating qualitative and quantitative research.

More recently, I became associate Peace Corps director for [Swaziland](#). I look forward to working with an amazing collective of host country colleagues, as well as the dedicated Volunteers at this post!

## Peace Corps Response Launches New Website

Peace Corps Response, formerly known as Crisis Corps, recently unveiled its [new website](#).

The redesigned [Open Positions](#) page makes it easier for qualified returned Peace Corps Volunteers to search for and apply to positions. New positions are added on a weekly basis, and a diverse array of assignments are offered.

The [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page is a great resource for people who want to learn more about Peace Corps Response. Among the FAQs, you can find the answers to the most commonly asked questions.

Navigate to the [Volunteer Stories](#) page to hear firsthand experiences from past and present Peace Corps Response Volunteers. Be sure to check back often, as new stories are added on a regular basis.

Lastly, if you would like to receive monthly updates about upcoming assignments, service stories, or other interesting facts about the program and the countries Volunteers work in, sign up for [Impact](#), Peace Corps Response's brand new e-newsletter. To subscribe, go to [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/info](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/info).



Brian Goercke (standing) at a research dissemination meeting in Namibia.

## From the Fellows/USA Program Manager

My all-time favorite Thanksgiving happened the year I lived in Taiwan.

Having lived in Asia before, and having experienced the feeling of being adrift in time due to the lack of familiar holidays cycling through the year, I knew that the creeping cold of winter had to be held back, for at least one day, with turkey.

In China, a traditional Thanksgiving feast could be had only at the poshest of Western-style hotels. But in downtown Taipei, I thought, "How hard could it be to find the proper ingredients?" After all, the only Starbucks in the country was on the corner of my block!

And so, with hope in my heart and cranberries on my mind, I set out on what would become an epic journey. I criss-crossed the city many times over a period of many days, stalking an elusive jar of pumpkin pie spice in a German bakery, risking frostbite in the freezer section of a French grocery store for a turkey, and cornering a bag of marshmallows in a tiny British café. I also had to buy an oven.

On the big day, I sat down at the dining room table with my roommates and a few friends, one of whom was Taiwanese and had, at best, only the vaguest idea as to why we were

staring at so much food. We tried to explain by talking about pilgrims, American Indians, and New World plants.

We also shared our memories of Thanksgivings past, and in the telling of those stories, not only did he begin to understand what the holiday meant to us, we understood more deeply, too.

Holidays mean more than days off from work or school, opportunities to have parties, or storming the mall in search of the perfect gifts. Holidays are supposed to be shared with family, whether it's the one you were born with or the one you choose. Holidays need traditions, like sweet potatoes baked with marshmallows on top.

Most of all, holidays should be celebrated for the richness they bring to our lives—connecting us with people we care

about, anchoring us in time and place, and adding chapters to our stories.

This year, my wish for all of you is that these winter holidays bring you peace, joy, and contentment.



Julie Driver