

CONNECTICUT RPCV

Newsletter — April 2016



Peace Corps

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CTRPCVs advocating for the Peace Corps on Capitol Hill.
Photo courtesy of Ed Pikaart (Kenya 2013–2014).



UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, April 2, 2016
[WESTERN MASS RPCV EVENT](#)

Saturday, April 16, 2016
[DARIEN BOOK AID PLAN, INC.](#)

Saturday, July 2, 2016
[HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP](#)

CTRPCV OFFICERS

President: Terese Maineri
TMaineri@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Bryan Garcia
Bryan.Garcia@ctgreenbank.com

Treasurer: Mike Hilton
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Secretary: Jillian Corley
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If you can help with the packing of books, please contact Maureen so that she will know who is planning on attending this event.

(MaureenShanley@hotmail.com or 203-775-9222)

ADDRESS: 1926 Post Road, Darien, CT 06820

DATE: Saturday, April 16, 2016

TIME: 9 am–12 pm

One year when we were packing books at Danbury Book Aid, a PCV on his way to the airport to return to his PC post in Africa stopped by DBA to thank them for the books they had sent to him and to tell them the difference that these books were making in his village. His visit made us (CTRPCVs) realize that our few hours of packing boxes of books for PCVs IS REALLY IMPORTANT. Perhaps some of you read books that were in the PC library in your country that DBA had sent. Please give a few hours to return the favor and support a PCV who is now serving.

Darien Book Aid is a non-profit, all volunteer organization dedicated to fostering peace and friendship through the distribution of free books. Approximately 60% of DBA's shipments fulfill requests from current PC Volunteers. DBA needs volunteers to pack boxes, select books to ship, sort books and much more. As Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, you know how much of an impact educational materials can have on a community.

You can also bring books! Frequently requested books include:

- * Children's books - for all ages - preschool to teen levels, fiction and non-fiction
- * Classics - and simplified classics
- * Dictionaries in English, Spanish, French and picture dictionaries
- * Encyclopedias on CD-ROM. Other information on CD-ROM (PC format)
- * English readers and grammar books
- * Crafts & how-to books
- * Health, "Where There is No Doctor" type books
- * Science
- * Agriculture, vegetable gardening, beekeeping, animal husbandry
- * Ecology and environment
- * Books in Spanish or French for native speakers in all subjects
- * Paperback editions of recent novels (mysteries, fiction, etc.)
- * National Geographic - no more than 5 years old
- * Textbooks
- * Textbooks (not older than 10 years) with up-to-date content are accepted.

For more information about Darien Book Aid, you can visit their website at <http://dba.darien.org/>. If you are interested in volunteering individually, you can call 203-655-2777 or email darienbookaid@yahoo.com.



a seriousfun camp

On Saturday, July 2, 2016 we will be volunteering our time at the [Hole In The Wall Gang Camp](#) in Ashford, CT. Since 1988 the camp has served as a non-profit residential summer camp and year-round center for children coping with life-threatening diseases. All of the camp's services are free of charge. This unique camp, created by Paul Newman, provides a sense of normalcy for children who may have missed out on aspects of their childhood.

We will help to change bed linens (about 150 beds) for the campers who will arrive the following day. It will truly be a rewarding project and well worth our time and efforts.

If you would like to attend, or for more info., please contact Lois Fucci at lafj@att.net.

If you attend any of our events, please make sure to take photos to share on our website! You can send photos with a short description to president@ctrpcv.org



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WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS RPCV EVENTS

We recently received an email from Matt Vaughan of the Western Massachusetts RPCV group who wished to share some event information happening very soon!

"A group of area RPCVs will be getting together on **Saturday April 2nd from 5-7pm** to help prepare a meal and lead some arts and crafts for families at The Ronald McDonald House in Springfield, MA.

Will you join us?

RSVP to Matt Vaughan directly (mattjohnvaughan@gmail.com) or [RSVP to our Facebook event here](#).

You don't have to be a chef to help as we'll plan to cook something simple like pizzas.

We'd also like to lead some arts and crafts project with the children so if you have ideas and/or supplies please let me know.

RPCV Happy Hour Friday April 1st

It's no April Fools, we've been invited by Dan Kramer, a local RPCV to have our next RPCV Happy Hour on **Fri April 1st at 6pm** at [Element Brewery in Millers Falls, MA](#).



Great fun and food!!!

Who knew the CTRPCV would predict that March 21, 2016 would be the actual date that the President of the United States would go to Cuba to start the reconnection process between our two countries... but months ago that was the date that CTRPCV arranged for our restaurant meeting at Soul de Cuba in New Haven. Okay... it was just a coincidence, but that thought made us laugh. We filled the restaurant with cheerful laughter and serious discussions. Cuban music played in the background as we ate delicious meals and drank mojitos. Our instant raffle, which helps fund our Community Service Project Fund, brought in \$125. The raffle items included: home brewed beer, handmade note cards, scented candles, wine, photos from PC projects, Nigerian baskets, and a novel written by Catherine Onyemelukwe, just to name a few. Everyone went home a winner with a newly found treasure.

During the short meeting, we elected new board members: Al May as Member-at-Large and Jillian Corley as Secretary. In addition, Allegra Itsoga volunteered to take over managing the membership of our group because Jonathan Rosario expects to be moving to Washington, DC in the near future. On that note... we are looking for someone to manage the monthly newsletter because that is another "hat" that Jonathan has been wearing!

Would you like to see a restaurant meeting near you? Arranging a restaurant meeting or a potluck gathering at your home is really easy to do. Find a restaurant that will either give you a menu with a set price or arrange to have separate checks. A restaurant with ethnic cuisine is preferred, but not mandated. If you plan on hosting an event, please contact our new Membership Coordinator, Allegra Itsoga, through our Facebook group page to request the contact information for RPCVs in the area. It is really easy to do. We would LOVE to have more food outings, but someone in your area has to organize it. Is that person YOU???

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The following is an email we received from the creators of a new documentary about the Peace Corps called "A Towering Task". The CTRPCV is not in any way affiliated with this documentary either directly or financially. We have, however, agreed to help promote it as we believe it will be an important documentary that will shed light on the realities of the Peace Corps as an organization. The email has been edited for length.

Dear RPCVs,

I want to thank you again for you and your group's support for A Towering Task. We could not do it without you!

I'm reaching out to remind everyone that it's not too late to get involved and support the film. We are trying to get to 435 donors by the end of this month, at which time we will receive a 5k matching donation. So far, more than 275 supporters have contributed over \$53,000. The goal is \$100,000 with at least 435 supporters. If you can donate even \$5, it will help us reach our goal. Please join us!

Additionally, we have an excellent social media campaign that has taken a lot of steam. This hashtag connects everything to our campaign - #IgnitePeaceCorps.

There has never been a more important time than now to tell the extraordinary story of the Peace Corps. Whether it's \$10, \$25, or more, please consider donating to *A Towering Task* today by clicking on this link: <http://igg.me/at/O70fcwI6A9M> #IgnitePeaceCorps

How You Can Help

1. **Donate.** Donate to the crowd-funding campaign by clicking here: <http://igg.me/at/O70fcwI6A9M> (All donations are tax-deductible.)
2. **Spread the word.** Share the crowd-funding link with your friends and family. For social media, please use the hashtag #IgnitePeaceCorps.
3. **Ask your organization or company for their support.** Ask them to donate, match donations, or host a fundraiser (e.g. Jeffersonian Dinner, 5K run/walk, or inter-department competition).

If 1 out of every 5 RPCVs donated \$25, we'd exceed our goal.

Best regards,
Heather Schultz (RPCV '10-'12)

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Good Afternoon,

I am a recruitment specialist with the Social Security Administration. We have a position opened for a Claims Specialist in Hartford CT. I am recruiting returned Peace Corps Volunteers under the special non-competitive eligibility (NCE) hiring status. I was wondering if you could make this known to your CTRPCV group members by posting this on your website. This is a great career opportunity. The position is currently posted on the Peace Corps website:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/resources/returned/careercen/careerlink/jobs/13673/>

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like to get more details about the position. Thank you!

Mary E. Lynch
Regional Recruitment Specialist
Social Security Administration
960 Main St, 2nd FL, Hartford, CT 06103
Phone: [1-877-638-3943](tel:1-877-638-3943) x23203 Fax: [860-522-6420](tel:860-522-6420)



Volunteer opportunity in Bridgeport

The International Institute of Connecticut (IICONN) is a non-profit, non-sectarian agency dedicated to helping foreign-born persons achieve self-sufficiency. Their services include refugee resettlement, English and citizenship classes, counseling, translation/interpretation services and legal assistance. IICONN advocates for fair and equitable treatment of immigrants, refugees and others, and works to increase public awareness of the contributions of foreign-born persons to American culture and values.

IICONN is looking for volunteers to become mentors to our refugee client one day a week for one hour. When a refugee arrives in Bridgeport, they often come with nothing and know no one. A mentor would be a liaison between the client and the Bridgeport community. Mentors can do a variety of activities with their mentee. They may bring refugees grocery shopping, they may cook a meal together or they may just do something fun to build a friendship.

For more information, please visit the IICONN website at www.iiconn.org/.

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Please support a local campaign: Connecticut Returned Peace Corps Volunteer member, Philippa Wood (Guatemala, 2009), is looking to raise funds for [Outside Perspectives](#), a nonprofit expedition program that aims to partner with youth development organizations to provide transformative outdoor experiences. Their immersive wilderness expeditions for under-served youth from New York City and larger cities in Connecticut will help create focus for teens who are often looking for direction. [Find out more and donate HERE!](#)



Below is an email we received recently from CTRPCV supporter Dan Rossano:

I wanted to share some exciting news! I've officially started up a bike touring company called BikeTrex! We're based out of northern Connecticut and plan to lead bike trips all around the New England area to start, then eventually expand to other states and ride international trips!

Why choose us?!

Because we're awesome! I've been riding with groups for over 3 years and have lots of experience. We know where to find the best views, the best restaurants and pubs, and the many hidden treasures of each area we tour. And our leaders are qualified, medically trained, and professional. Get out of the city get out of the house and come enjoy being outside!

Please help me by sharing this information with your friends and family. Sign up for our mailing list for all the latest news and updates. Our first tour starts in May 2016 from Monroe, CT!

Please visit our website: <http://www.ridebiketrex.com/>

Thanks!
Dan

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COME JOIN US FOR FREESTYLE DRUM & DANCE



THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

FROM 5:00 PM TO 6:30 PM \$5.00 DONATION PER SESSION

AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER - YALE CAMPUS

211 PARK STREET, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT ALY "TATCHOL" CAMARA

203-887-2737 OR ALYTATCHOLCAMARA@COMCAST.NET

At the Guinea-inspired drum and dance circles that form in the large E Room of Yale's Afro-American Cultural Center the last Sunday of every month, it's organizer Aly Tatchöl Camara's drumming that most often takes that lead. Camara wears shoulder-length dreadlocks and a silver pendant in the shape of Africa. There's a slight slant to his teeth, showing often through wide-rimmed smiles. When excited, his English comes out fast and light, in the Caribbean way. "Speed" becomes "spee." "Everything" becomes "e'ryt'ing."

A spiritual man, Camara treats his drums as conscious beings. "They need people to touch them. Like human beings they need attention." When he feels they've sat unused too long, he'll climb up to the balcony of the E Room and touch the drums, one by one, some 50 in all. "If it wasn't for these drums..." he says wistfully before trailing off. It seems safe to finish the thought by saying that if it wasn't for the drums, Camara probably wouldn't be here.

Camara, a shy boy in his youth, says he spoke through his drum. He grew up with maternal grandparents in Kouffin, Guinea, where he learned the traditional mask-dances and drum rhythms of his village. "There are drum rhythms for weddings, baby namings, farm work... circumcisions," says Camara. After gaining independence from France in 1958, Guinea began an effort to preserve the diverse quilting of drum and dance that enshrines the nation's cultural heritage.

Through school and travel, Camara carried his village's patch of the quilt. He remembers inter-school folkloric drum and dance competitions and friendly inter-tribal tournaments where villages were pitted against each other to see who could produce the most impressive display. In this atmosphere of artistic competition, Camara honed his practice, then began performing professionally in 1984 with a variety of groups. First he joined Les Ballet Dougoufissa in Guinea, then the Ballet Variety and Ballet Unite Africa in Senegal. In 1993, Les Ballets Bougarabou of Senegal snagged him. He recalls being told, "Hey man, pack your bag. Let's go." Just like that, Camara was off to North America.

Bougarabou toured from Canada to North Carolina to New York City, where they performed until 1995. In 1996, after Bougarabou had dispersed, Camara made the hop to New Haven and started Kouffin Kanèkè, his very own drum and dance company, with which he's been teaching and performing for the last twenty years.

Kouffin (the village he was raised in) Kanèkè (a word loosely translated as "one who comes and clears space for a village") is currently made up of a core of eight drummers and dancers. Kouffin Kanèkè also has a name more familiar to English ears: the New Haven School of African Drum & Dance. It's been a presence at Educational Center for the Arts for six years, Neighborhood Music School for 10 and the Afro-American Cultural Center for 15.

If you're not a student at ECA or NMS, you can still attend the classes at the Afro-American Center, which are open to the public. Camara gives back-to-back drum and dance classes—\$15 for one, \$30 for both—Mondays (drum: 6 to 7:30 p.m., dance: 7:30 to 9 p.m.) and Saturdays (drum: 3:30 to 5 p.m., dance: 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) and organizes a donation-based, free-form drum circle on the last Sunday of the month.

Later, for the dance class, Camara changed into long white pants with purple, yellow and green ribbons hanging off the waist and green frills around the ankles. With Camara at the lead, his dreads whipping back and forth, the dancers hopped, bounded and whipped in kind. They moved with vigorous full-body motion down the length of the hall towards the front of the room, where Kouffin Kanèkè member Grey Freedman—on the dundun—and Camara's son Seny—on the djembe—set the beat.

When Camara returns to Kouffin, Guinea, the people that knew him when he was young are amazed at how far he's gone in the world. "They look at me now like I have some kind of power," he says. Camara hopes to take his son back to Kouffin some day to show him where his roots lie, and though Seny can't speak his father's native tongue, Camara is sure he'll have no trouble communicating the way his father still does: through his drum.

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The Peace Corps Advocacy Report

Ed Pikaart, his wife Margie, and I visited the offices of both of our Connecticut Senators and all five of our Representatives. We were well received everywhere and were able to get each one of them to sign on to the Peace Corps funding letters for House and Senate. This is quite an achievement! Only two other states can boast of 100% sign on: Massachusetts and Hawaii.

Please, please, please write to our Senators and thank them. Chris Murphy, who is on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, should get an extra push as it will be difficult to get the \$450 million we are asking for. The budget is tight and we did get an increase last year, **BUT** be sure to point out that in fiscal year 2015, 25,000 Americans applied to serve their country and the world with Peace Corps, but funding could only support 3,140 opportunities. At \$410 million, the Peace Corps budget is just 0.76% of the international affairs budget. Clearly, the Peace Corps gives the biggest bang for the foreign affairs buck.

The Representatives and Senators' contact information is listed below:

Rep. John Larson—1st District (@RepJohnLarson) 202-225-2265
1501 Longworth House Office Bldg

Rep. Joe Courtney—2nd District (@RepJoeCourtney) 202-225-2076
2348 Rayburn House Office Bldg

Rep. Rosa DeLauro—3rd District (@rosadelauro) 202-225-3661
2413 Rayburn House Office Bldg

Rep. Jim Himes—4th District (@jahimes) 202-225-5541
1227 Longworth House Office Bldg

Rep. Elizabeth Esty—5th District (@RepEsty) 202-225-4476
405 Cannon House Office Bldg

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (@SenBlumenthal) 202-224-2823
706 Hart Senate Office Bldg

Sen. Chris Murphy (@ChrisMurphyCT) 202-224-4041
136 Hart Office Bldg

In Peace & Fellowship,
Joan Leonard, CTRPCV (Kenya, 1969-1972)



Above photo was taken outside of Representative John Larson's office. Pictured left to right: Ed Pikaart (Kenya, 2013–2014), Ed's wife Margie, Joan Leonard (Kenya, 1969–1972), Srđan Banjac (Foreign policy advisor to Rep. Larson), and Owen Dodd (Aide to Rep. Larson).

Photo at right was taken inside Representative Joe Courtney's office. Pictured left to right: Ed Pikaart, Joan Leonard, Beata Fogarasi (Rep. Courtney's Legislative Correspondent), and Margie Pikaart.



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And the winner is...



Peace Corps Paraguay Volunteer Jamieson Cox won the Peace Corps Week Video Challenge. [Watch the winning video.](#)

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Celebrating Women



A Unique RPCV Group



Get Peace Corps Swag



Berhane Daba

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MISCELLANEOUS

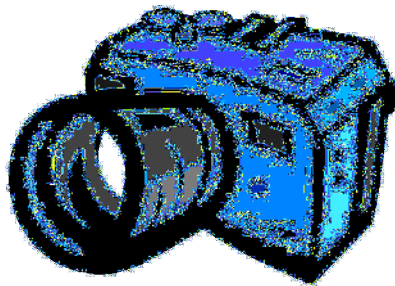
Have an event or community service idea?
Let's make it happen!!



Share your ideas with us and let's make your ideas come to life. We can help spread the word through our social media platforms and the monthly newsletter. Events can be as simple as "Let's meet up at [restaurant name] on [date]". Email us at president@ctrpcv.org.

CALL FOR PHOTOS!!!

We are redesigning and updating our website and we need your help! If you have any photos from your service or from any of our past CTRPCV events, and wouldn't mind sharing them with us, please send them to our email address, president@ctrpcv.org. For each photo, please attach a description of the photo's contents and yourself. Please include your name, country and years of service along with who/what is shown in the photo and a caption for the photo.



Peace Corps Response (PCR) provides qualified professionals the opportunity to serve in rewarding, short-term assignments, in various programs around the world. When you serve as a PCR Volunteer, you bring your skills and experience to projects in places where you are needed most. PCR is recruiting talented Volunteers to serve in a wide range of positions and countries including Georgia, the Philippines and Vanuatu. Opportunities are available in all six program areas and selected applicants can be in the field as early as January.

If you are interested in learning more about Peace Corps Response, please visit <http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/response/> or send an email to pcresponse@peacecorps.gov to schedule an informational interview with your local Peace Corps recruiter.

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Vice-President: Bryan Garcia

Bryan.Garcia@ctgreenbank.com

Treasurer: Mike Hilton

Mjhilt@comcast.net

Secretary: Jillian Corley

JillianOCorley@gmail.com

Newsletter: Jonathan Rosario (interim)

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Member-at-Large: Al May

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Comm. Svc. Fund: Maureen Shanley

Maureenshanley@hotmail.com

CONTACT US

E-MAIL: President@ctrpcv.org

POST MAIL: CTRPCV, P.O. Box 1803, Hartford, CT 06144

[Official website](#)

[Facebook](#)

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MISCELLANEOUS

We are updating our website and need your help! We will be debuting a new section of our website called 'CTRPCV Profiles' in which we will briefly share our members' stories. If you would like to take part, please fill out the questionnaire below and email your responses, along with photos from your service that you would like to have published on our website, to president@ctrpcv.org.

CTRPCV Profiles

Who are you (please include name, country of service, years of service and anything else you want to add)?

Why did you choose to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer?

What did you do as a Peace Corps Volunteer?

Can you share your favorite memory from service?

How has serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer affected your life?

What advice do you have for prospective Peace Corps Volunteers?

Do you have anything else you would like to share with our readers related to you or your PC service (stories, poems, quotes, etc.)?

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, April 2, 2016

[WESTERN MASS RPCV EVENT](#)

Saturday, April 16, 2016

[DARIEN BOOK AID PLAN, INC.](#)

Saturday, July 2, 2016

[HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP](#)

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MISCELLANEOUS



**We
Need
Your
Help
Please**

HELP WANTED at CTRPCV!

We currently have openings for the following positions:

FUNDRAISER: Devises ways to replenish our CTRPCV Community Service Fund. All ideas are welcome.

SOCIAL EVENTS

COORDINATOR: Hosts/plans restaurant outings, pot-luck dinners, etc.

We are also searching for the following positions ASAP as Jonathan Rosario has accepted an employment position in Washington DC and will be this month:

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

- Design the newsletter as you wish! You can keep the current design or create your own. The current design was created using Microsoft Publisher, but you are free to use any program you would like.
- Incorporate new information into the newsletter including new events, advocacy updates, CTRPCV announcements, etc. (Most info. remains relevant for several months, so you would not have to create a completely new newsletter each month. You can simply update the previous month's newsletter)
- Eliminate outdated information.
- Correspond with CTRPCV officers to ensure all information is relevant and up-to-date.
- Email the newsletter at the end of each month to president@ctrpcv.org. Our email coordinator/website updater, Jonathan Rosario, will then make sure to send it to all newsletter recipients on the 1st of each month and upload to our website.

SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR:

- Maintain up-to-date information across our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).
- Create Facebook events as they are planned by the CTRPCV officers.
- Maintain email communication with CTRPCV officers.
- Engage with social media community members by responding to their questions.
- Increase membership.

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CTRPCV needs more PAID MEMBERS \$\$\$

If you are interested in participating in the above-mentioned CTRPCV events, please also consider joining our group. If you would like to join and/or pay your annual CTRPCV membership fees, please go to the NPCA's website at www.peacecorpsconnect.org. Login/Register at the top right of the page. Once logged in, you can choose to pay your CTRPCV membership dues only or make a donation to NPCA as well; the choice is yours.

Please also consider joining the Connecticut Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/37593849149/>.

WHY someone should join CTRPCV?

- A chance to break bread with people who are not only like you, but also LIKE you.
- Connect with an RPCV who might just be your neighbor!
- Ability to receive CTRPCV Directory so you can request help with your favorite community service project.
- If you are newly returned RPCV... we will LISTEN to your story because we too have been there! RPCVs are FAMILY. We never tire of hearing your stories, frustrations, what you miss and what you are finding strange about your return.
- Help an RPCV find a new job through the Mentor program. Mentor new RPCVs and help them navigate their transition.
- Help support PCVs and/or CTRPCVs through the CTRPCV Community Service Grant Program.
- Keep in the PCV loop, know about short-term stints if you are interested.
- Find opportunities to continue to serve locally or overseas.
- Find someone who: has kids the same age as yours; others who have married host country nationals.
- Let others know about YOUR art, social, sport or local community service project.
- Spread the GOOD WORD about the Peace Corps.
- We want to add a page to our website that would offer FREE ADVERTISING for CTRPCV members who own a business. Please let us know if you have a business that you would like to have posed on our website.

FYI: Your dues pay our expenses, e.g. room rental for meetings, supplies for potluck meetings, group NPCA membership dues, state filing fees, communication costs (postage, paper, internet costs), etc.

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