



Chicago Area Peace Corps Association

2004 Annual Report

About CAPCA

The Chicago Area Peace Corps Association (CAPCA) celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2004.

CAPCA brings together Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) in the Chicago area. Organized in 1979 and incorporated in 1991 as a non-profit organization, CAPCA is affiliated with the Washington, D.C. based National Peace Corps Association (NPCA). CAPCA's primary objective is to fulfill, in the Chicago area, the mission of the NPCA – continuing to work for world peace, understanding, and well-being, with an emphasis on bringing the world back home.

CAPCA carries out this mission by providing speakers on global education and cross-cultural understanding to organizations interested in the Peace Corps and international development, participating in volunteer activities throughout the year and raising funds to support Peace Corps Partnership projects that offer leadership and cross-cultural experiences.

CAPCA also provides numerous social and networking opportunities and several communication channels to reach its membership. CAPCA publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, has a well-utilized electronic list serve, and maintains a frequently-visited website – www.capca.org.

Membership

At the end of 2004, CAPCA's has a total of 307 members - comprised of joint CAPCA/NPCA paid memberships, CAPCA/NPCA free memberships (for RPCVs in their first-year back) and CAPCA-only memberships. Of these, 172 are dues paying members in good standing.

CAPCA Board

Wallace Goode served as CAPCA President from September 2003 to September 2004. Trina Janes became CAPCA President in September 2004.

Several CAPCA board members completed their terms in 2004 – Holly Denniston, Marie Erdman, Hannah Leiterman, Judy Ossello, Kori Scurlock, Kara Malenfant, Liz Thomas, Elizabeth Versten and Lara Weber. During elections in 2004, several new members joined the board. Tara Leitzell and Scott Waguespack were elected to two-year terms and Berna Jacobson, Robyn Michaels and Susan Suhling were appointed for a one-year term .

Former CAPCA President Stephanie Arnold was elected to the NPCA board in 2003 for a one-year term. Following nomination by CAPCA, Arnold was re-elected in 2004. At the August 2004 NPCA board meeting in Chicago, Arnold was elected vice-chair of the NPCA board.

CAPCA Receives Peace Corps Award

In October 2004, CAPCA received the second-ever Group of the Month award from the U.S. Peace Corps Office. The award commended CAPCA for 25 years of promoting Peace Corps' third goal, bringing the world back home through its global education programs and its recent hosting of the 2004 NPCA Conference.

2004 NPCA Conference

The highlight of 2004 was CAPCA's hosting of the 2004 NPCA Conference. . The conference theme was "Celebrating a Legacy of Service". A team of CAPCA members had been working on the conference planning for over two years. The conference coincided with the 25th anniversary of both CAPCA and NPCA.

The four-day event was held from August 5 to 8, 2004 and saw over 1000 RPCVs and friends from around the country arrive in downtown Chicago for a long weekend of reunions, 36 workshops, 2 plenary sessions, over 60 country of service activities, an exhibit hall with nearly 100 exhibitors, a flag procession and numerous special events including a film festival, global education workshop, fundraising dinner, silent auction and more. The conference was based at the historic Palmer House Hilton Hotel with other events at DePaul University, the Art Institute and Grant Park. Conference speakers included MSNBC Hardball anchor Chris Matthews (Swaziland 69-71), Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle (Tunisia 67-69), Ohio Governor Bob Taft (Tanzania 63-65), Peter Yarrow of Peter Paul & Mary, Former Thailand Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan and Afghanistan Vice-President Hedayat Amin-Arsala. A conference website – www.rpcv2004.org – provided the latest information on speakers, programs and plans.

The conference received rave reviews from the attendees, many of whom described it as "the best conference ever". The CAPCA team led by Conference Chair Trina Janes and Vice-Chair Chuck Sheftel was comprised of nearly 30 active volunteers. This number quadrupled to nearly 120 people who volunteered over the course of the conference.

CAPCA Activities

Global Education

CAPCA serves as a global education resource to the Chicagoland area. During the year, CAPCA members volunteered to share their global experiences with many school and community groups. Many of these educational sessions are conducted in the first week of March during "Peace Corps Week".

In conjunction with the NPCA conference, a day-long global education workshop was held to train Chicago Public School teachers to bring the world into their classroom.

Ethnic Dinners

CAPCA continued its tradition of hosting monthly dinners at ethnic restaurants throughout the Chicago area. Dinners provide opportunities for RPCVs to meet and network while tasting and learning about the food and traditions of the designated restaurant. They also serve as opportunities for CAPCA members to share information and recruit volunteers for its other activities. In 2004, dinners were held at venues including Café Iberico (January), Red Fish (February), Latin American Restaurant (March), Mama Desta's Ethiopian Restaurant (May), Lulu's (June), Heartland Café (July) Ravinia concert & potluck (August), Andies Restaurant (September), Topho Café (October), Oak Park Council on International Affairs Annual Dinner (November), Map Room (November) and our annual holiday potluck at the Corinthian Yacht Club (December).

CAPCA has partnered with the Chicago Peace Corps Recruiting Office for several activities. In February, we co-sponsored a "Diversity Dinner" for RPCVs and prospective Peace Corps Volunteers. Additionally, CAPCA underwrote the cost of food for the Peace Corps Office's annual nomination party in June. The Peace Corps office invites its prospective volunteers and their families to this event which gives them an opportunity to learn more about Peace Corps and answer their questions.

Volunteering

CAPCA volunteers joined forces with Chicago social service agency H.O.M.E. for activities that improved the life of low-income seniors. In February, over 40 volunteers painted and weatherized homes of low-income seniors on Chicago's south side. In August, a group traveled to Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood to do various home-improvement projects.

Fundraising

CAPCA's annual fundraising dinner is our Founder's Day Dinner normally held in June to celebrate the founding of the Peace Corps by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Money raised at the dinner goes to support projects being done by current Peace Corps Volunteers.

This year's Founder's Day Dinner was held in conjunction with the NPCA conference in August. As a result, we had a much larger and national attendance with nearly 300 attendees from all over the country. Chris Matthews served as a the keynote speaker and Peter Yarrow provided the entertainment by singing many of his classic songs. An event highlight was Yarrow inviting the attendees on stage where he and nearly 30 RPCVs sang "Puff the Magic Dragon". A silent auction was held during the dinner.

Other Activities

CAPCA members are involved in planning several related activities. A softball team comprised of RPCVs and friends, known as the "Culture Shocks" plays softball each summer. CAPCA members also organize a winter and summer trip to Camp Vista in Dundee, Wisconsin.

In closing, 2004 was a very busy and eventful year for CAPCA. We hope to use 2005 to build on the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the NPCA conference and the events leading up to it.