



Chicago Area Peace Corps Association

2005 Annual Report

About CAPCA

The Chicago Area Peace Corps Association (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 2005, CAPCA's had a total of 255 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, 199 are dues paying members in good standing.

CAPCA Board

Trina Janes began her term as CAPCA President in September 2004 and was reelected in September 2005.

Several CAPCA board members completed their terms in 2005 – Stephanie Arnold, Marie Erdman, Berna Jacobson, Lee Losey, Robyn Michaels, Carol Wilkerson, and Scott Waguespack.

During elections in 2005, several new members joined the board. Ann Meehan and Donna Braden were elected for two-year terms. Kristi Schober and Eric Knepper were appointed for one-year terms.

CAPCA Receives Illinois Non-Profit Status

The federal government has deemed CAPCA a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit organization since 1981. Yet it was only in June 2005 that CAPCA became a tax-exempt charity in the eyes of the State of Illinois.

CAPCA has applied for the Illinois exemption on at least three occasions over the last 15 years. In each case, we were denied. Upon receiving the initial denial letter in fall 2004, CAPCA appealed. We were granted a hearing with the Illinois Department of Revenue. A trial date in the case of the State of Illinois versus CAPCA was set. The burden of proof was on us as the "taxpayer" to prove that we met the state's strict standards for a charitable organization. CAPCA witnesses included former CAPCA president Brian DeFilippo, CAPCA President Trina Janes, CAPCA Treasurer Eva Lord and Barbara Radner, director of DePaul University's Center for Urban Education. CAPCA's legal efforts were led by Dave Jolivette (India 65-67).

By Law Changes

To ensure that CAPCA's bylaws and articles of incorporation are in line with our mission and to clarify our educational and charitable purposes, CAPCA approved two changes to modify Section 1.2 of the bylaws so that they correspond to our mission and articles of incorporation. Changes were needed as part of the process of applying for exemption from Illinois state sales taxes.

RPCVs Honored by State of Illinois

Illinois Lieutenant Gov. Pat Quinn saluted RPCV mayors, judges, city leaders and civic leaders for volunteering in the Peace Corps and continuing their commitment to public service in Illinois. A press conference was held on June 3, the eve of CAPCA's annual fundraising dinner.

Lt. Governor Quinn presented proclamations to the following RPCVs: Chicago Alderman Ed Smith (India 66-68), Aurora Mayor Tom Weisner (Solomon Islands 80-85), Dana Peterson (Colombia 74-77), CFO of Chicago Commons; Cook County Circuit Court Associate Judge Rita Novak (Colombia 73-75); Cook County Circuit Court Judge Patrick Murphy (Somalia 66-67); Ken Lehman (Guatemala 66-68), chairman, Winning Workplaces; Oak Park Village President David Pope (Thailand 90-92); Suzanne Franklin (Turkey 67-69), executive director, Hebrew Immigration Aid Society; Frank Schell III (India 69-72), president and CEO, Chicago Commons; and Jerry Stermer (Ecuador 68-70), president of Voices for Illinois Children.

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".

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 2005, dinners were held at venues including Millennium Park Ice Skating (January), Edna's (February), Noodle Bar (March), Lalo's (April), Three Happiness (May), La Creperie (July), Ravinia concert & potluck (August), Reza's (September), Ethiopian Diamond (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 that gives them an opportunity to learn more about Peace Corps and answer their questions.

Volunteering

CAPCA aims to organize community service events during each quarter of the year. In January, volunteers joined forces with Chicago social service agency H.O.M.E. for activities that improved the life of low-income seniors. In May, a team of CAPCA volunteers participated in the Friends of the Chicago River Clean Up to spruce up a park at the river's edge. In November, a team joined the North Branch Restoration Project to cut down non-native, invasive buckthorn in the Skokie forest preserves.

Fundraising

CAPCA's hosted its annual fundraising gala celebrating Founder's Day Dinner on June 4 at The Crabhouse. The theme of the dinner was "A Salute to RPCVs in Public Service". CAPCA honored RPCV elected officials: Chicago Alderman Ed Smith (India 66-68), Oak Park Village President David Pope (Thailand 90-92) and Aurora Mayor Thomas Weisner (Solomon Islands 80-85). A silent auction was held during the dinner.

CAPCA also sold 200 Madison RPCV calendars as a fundraising project. Calendar sales generated nearly \$1000.

CAPCA Grants Program

CAPCA has been supporting Peace Corps Partnership projects for many years. In 2005, we formalized the grants program by creating deadlines, guidelines and a promotional brochure. CAPCA representatives spoke to future PCVs at the events sponsored by the Chicago Regional Peace Corps Office including the February Diversity Dinner and June Nomination Party.

In January, we donated \$1,090 to the Community Garden Project of the Niominka Organization of Women's Self Improvement in Sirmang, Senegal, a Peace Corps Partnership Project coordinated by Highland Park PCV Kasia Krynski. Having gone through a great deal of hardship from an invasion of locusts, the Community Garden Project will bring a great deal of hope to the people of Sirmang upon its completion.

In October, CAPCA donated \$1,000 to PCV Kristy Wegner's Peace Corps Partnership Project in Los Cocos de Jacagua, Dominican Republic. Wegner is from Frankfort, Illinois. The project will install 30 locally made water filters in a community wrought with water born diarrhea and disease.

Katrina Donation

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, CAPCA partnered with a Highland Park School to raise funds to assist two Gulf Coast schools in Mississippi that were destroyed in the hurricane. CAPCA passed the hat at its end of the year potluck and members donated over \$1000 to the project. The donations collected were matched dollar for dollar by CAPCA. A check for over \$2000 was sent to a school in Bay Waveland, Mississippi to purchase storage supplies for their school.

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, 2005 was an active year. We continued to build on the momentum from the 2004 NPCA Conference in Chicago and solidified some key administrative issues. We have a good infrastructure in place as we move into 2006.