

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 2007, CAPCA's had a total of 280 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, 230 are dues paying members in good standing.

CAPCA Board

During 2007, CAPCA expanded its board membership. Marnie Sanborn, Brian Peterson and Steven Ripes were appointed to the board to fill vacancies. After elections in October 2006, Jodie Barger, Marie Erdman, Kevin Rieder, Annisa Wanat and Mia Yankow also joined the CAPCA board.

Completing their terms on the board during 2007 were Eileen Gallagher, Wallace Goode, Tara Leitzell, Eva Lord Pearson, Brian Peterson, Mike Prokopeak, Chuck Sheftel, and Susan Suhling

Ex-Officio members of the CAPCA board include Sue Suhling and Trina Janes. They were both appointed in October.

Theresa Fernandez was elected in October 2007 as CAPCA President.

CAPCA Activities

Global Education

CAPCA continues to serve as a global education resource to the Chicagoland area. CAPCA

members are called on throughout the year 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 2007, dinners were held at venues including Indian Garden (January), Pearl’s Place (February), Bowling (March), Lulu’s (April), Tangine (May), BBQ in Highland Park (June), Folk and Root Festival (July), Grant Park Music Festival (August), Andi’s (September), Mama Desta’s (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 removal of non-native species at the North Park Nature Center. In November, CAPCA volunteered at the Living Room Cafe.

Fundraising

CAPCA’s annual fundraising dinner, Founder’s Day, was held at the Riva’s at Navy Pier in downtown Chicago. The keynote speaker was Jerome McDonnell, host of Chicago Public Radio’s World View. Jerome often taps former Peace Corps volunteers as guest on his show. A silent auction was held during the dinner. The event raised \$5,301.

CAPCA also sold 270 Madison RPCV calendars as a fundraising project. For the first time, we instituted two tier pricing and sold calendars to members for \$10 and non-members \$15. Calendar sales generated \$1449.

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.

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In January, we provided half the funding for a secondary school in Vardenis, Armenia. The project, initiated by Robert Gobble from Granite City, Illinois, sought to improve the teaching and learning environment at secondary school #2 in

Vardenis through the purchase of new school furniture and equipment. The total amount donated by CAPCA was \$2500.

In February, CAPCA funded an interactive educational classroom in Nahuala, Guatemala based on a grant proposal initiated by Eric Schroeder from River Forest, Il. The \$2695 grant went to fund child and adult sized tables and chairs, bookshelves, paint, posters and various other room décor items and a variety of interactive media equipment.

In March, Janet and William Ott from Dekalb, Illinois requested and received funding for a world map project at several secondary schools in Samoa. In total world maps were designed and painted on the walls of six schools.

CAPCA provided \$500 for the completion of this project.

In August, Alison Upton from Park Ridge Il, applied for and received a grant for \$991 for five schools in her Municipality of Santa Maria Ostuma, EL Salvador who were starting computer classrooms. They received the computers through a partnership with the Ministry of Education but they have to update their electricity and buy furniture for the computers. The Ministry would not have delivered the computers until they have grounded electricity and appropriate furniture. Additional equipment including printers, speakers and fans were also purchased.

In October, Bryan Long, from Cary, Illinois requested funds to compile his town's history into a book. The book highlights cultural resistance of the local people over the past 500 years by examining historic events and how they have affected the cultural cohesiveness of the village. The community group in the village, San Martin Sacatepequez, Guatemala, had found 75% of the funds needed for professional printing and laminating. The final 25% (\$1000) was donated by CAPCA.

NPCA Activities

NPCA Board

Former President and current board member Trina Janes continues to serve on the board of the National Peace Corps Association as Group Leaders Forum Coordinator. In this role, she also serves on the Executive Committee of the board.

Micro Enterprise Program

CAPCA has participated in NPCA's micro-enterprise program for several years. In 2006, we

doubled our investment from \$1000 to \$2000. The balance has remained the same throughout 2007.

Mentoring

CAPCA began a mentoring program in February 2007 which paired newly returned RPCVs with professionally established RPCVs. The goal of the program is to assist the new RPCVs with the professional and social transition as they return to the US and look for employment.

Thirty Chicago RPCVs (15 mentor/mentee pairs) participated in this pilot program which was part of a cooperative agreement between the National Peace Corps Association and Peace Corps. Three regions were chosen for the pilot program:

Miami, Portland, Oregon and Chicago. The program was kicked off with a training session at the Garfield Park Conservatory attended by the mentors and mentees and facilitated by representatives from NPCA and Peace Corps headquarters.

Feedback from both the mentors and mentees has been positive. Most have continued to meet monthly for the mentors to help the mentees with re-entry issues, career advice and networking. As all the participants are quite busy, most mentors and

mentees have commented that they wish they had more time to meet more often as the sessions are beneficial to both parties. Participants are hoping to plan group activities to trade their experiences working together.

A potluck was held in September 2007 for the participants. CAPCA plans to continue the mentoring program and will offer guidance to the new participants as well as coordinating the matching of mentors and mentees.

Other Activities

CAPCA members are involved in planning several related activities. CAPCA's "Culture Shocks" played softball in the summer and volleyball in the winter. CAPCA members also organize a winter and summer trip to Camp Vista in Dundee, Wisconsin.

In closing, 2007 was a transitioning year. We had a number of long time board members move on to bigger and better things, including our long time president Trina Janes who moved on to serve on the NPCA board. The new board members bring enthusiasm and a fresh set of ideas to the board. We had a successful fundraising year and our CAPCA Grants committee managed to fund more projects than any previous year. We are in a strong financial position and will be able to fund several Peace Corps Partnership projects next year.