

Editor's note — April 2016

Posted on [April 29, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [2 comments](#)

Looking Back, Looking Forward

by Janet Lee (Emdeber, 1974-76)

More than 3,615 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Ethiopia since the program was established in 1962. Currently 235 Volunteers are in country working on projects in education, the environment, and health. For the majority of us, Ethiopia touched us in ways that are difficult to explain, but touched us nevertheless.

Nearly 100 Returned Volunteers participated in the “Return to Ethiopia” in 2012, a most remarkable adventure. Many Returned Volunteers have had opportunities to return since, some for the first time in over 50 years, others on multiple return trips to work on projects of the heart. Within this issue are a few of their stories and their ongoing projects.

Highlighted in this issue are Doug Mickelson’s (Yirgalem, 1962-64) personal “Return to Ethiopia,” and Dwight Sullivan (Yegalem, Dodola, 1970-72) and my new RPCV Legacy Program project. Current Volunteer Matt Westerberg (Yichila, Tigray) describes the success of a project, funded in part by E&E RPCVs and Current Volunteer Grace Kabel (Agula, Tigray, 2015-17) enlightens the reader on the Action for Gender Equality (AGE) Summit held in Addis Ababa. Board member Amanda Sutker (Adaba, 2012-14) is leading the charge for E&E RPCVs’ participation at the National Peace Corps Association conference in Washington D.C. Ethiopia is one of four countries spotlighted in the documentary *A Towering Task*, directed by RPCV Alana DeJoseph (Mali 1992-94). Alana describes the documentary and why Ethiopia was so important to include.

We introduce three new board members, Rebecca Beauregard (Motta, 2009-11), Steve Cristofar (Adi Quala, Debarla, Eritrea, 1962-64) and Randy Marcus (Asella 1966-68). *The Herald* also pays tribute to RPCV and famed author Mildred D. Taylor (Yirgalem, 1965-67) on the fortieth anniversary of the publication of her award-winning book *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*.

Don't forget to “like” us on Facebook and stay current with the news and events in Ethiopia and Eritrea:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/eerpcv/>

Journeys

Posted on [April 29, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [1 comment](#)

My Return to Ethiopia: 54 years Later

by **Douglas Mickelson, Ethiopia I**
(**Yirgalem, Sidamo, 1962-64, Ras Desta School**)

I have followed the experiences of many of the RPCVs who returned to Ethiopia. As a member of Ethiopia I, 1962-64, I had always hoped to return and be one of those Volunteers who were able to visit and re-connect with their past experiences. As time went by, the window for returning seemed to close. I was unable, because of work commitments, to join the “Return to Ethiopia” group in September, 2012. At the time, I thought I had missed my only opportunity.

A return is possible

Upon my retirement on June 1, 2015, however, the opportunity and desire to return came together. My wife, Annette, who is not a Returned Volunteer, and I began to organize and plan a return trip. After researching various travel agencies that organized trips to Ethiopia, we selected Ghion Travel, an Addis-based travel agency with offices in Washington D.C. Our plan was to travel the northern historical route, the Omo Valley, and end our trip with a visit to Ras Desta School in Yirgalem, where I had been a teacher.

On a personal level, I was very fortunate that Janet Lee (Emdeber 1974-76), Editor of *The Herald*, had continued her work in Ethiopia in establishing libraries, and had worked with one of my former students, Yohannes Gebregeorgis. With her providing me Yohannes’ contact information, I followed up with him and we arranged to meet in Addis. Yohannes also had continued relationships with others who were in my grade 9C class at Ras Desta School.



So our journey began with huge amounts of excitement and enthusiasm. With the expert assistance and guidance of Ghion Travel, we visited Ethiopia, February 10 to 28, 2016.

And what a trip it was! I hope to share my experiences with you and to encourage those of you who have not yet returned, to make every effort to do so. For me, the return after 54 years was memorable.

Arrival

Compared to a trip in a DC 6 that was 44-hours long in 1962, this time we flew in a Boeing 787 Dreamliner in 2016, non-stop flight from Dulles to Addis, we arrived at Bole airport at 6:30 am, Friday, February 12. We

proceeded through immigration and customs and walked out the door to a beautiful Addis morning. We were met by our driver who took us to the hotel.

On the way, I closed my eyes and took in the sounds and smells of the city. It seemed the same as over 50 years ago! Then, I opened my eyes and the changes were dramatic. From construction sites, to automobile traffic, to light rail, to crowds of people, Addis was a different city. Blue and white taxis were still there, but they were no longer Fiats! Juxtaposed with trucks and cars, horse-drawn buggies still shared the streets. The contrast and similarities of 2015 with 1962 continued throughout our trip.

My students

Yohannes met us at the hotel and we spent time with him. He had arranged to have us meet with six of my former students in the afternoon. He also arranged to have Brannon Brewer, Peace Corps Country Director join us. Later, two more former students joined us. What a time we had!

When I walked in, almost in unison, they stated that I had shrunk! I had to remind them that they were 15 at the time and had not yet grown up! I had sent pictures to Yohannes of the 9C class, which had generated huge excitement among the group.



l-r rear: Doug and PC/Ethiopia Country Director Brannon Brewer; front: Former Ras Desta School 9C students, Yohannes Gebregeoris, Eshetu Gixaw, Tafesse Mesfin, Zelalem Wakwyo.



9C — 1963

We reminisced, shared life stories, and talked about our journeys.

It is interesting what they remembered. They all cited their positive experiences in my classroom and how I had influenced them. Specifically, they remembered three things: I was their homeroom teacher. I introduced them to American short stories; they still remember and enjoy them. Their favorites were “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” “Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” and “Rip Van Winkle.” By far, their favorite was “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.” And finally, they remembered hula hoops! Does anyone remember how we were able to get them?

The achievements of this group of Ras Desta alumni, given the adversity they experienced, are remarkable. From being a refugee and escaping through Sudan and then to the US, to being jailed and surviving two years before being released when the regime changed, to surviving the difficult years of the Dirge.

The journeys of this group are testament to their determination and commitment to Ethiopia. Particularly noteworthy are the achievements of General Kassaye Chemada who was recognized as an Ethiopian war hero and [honored in Washington D.C., 2009](#). These students came from remote villages; some from over 350 kilometers, to begin 9th grade in Yirgalem. Ras Desta was the only secondary school in Sidamo at that time. They lived in small groups in single rooms with a single light bulb hanging from the rafters. Electricity was only available from 6:00 pm – midnight. Their learning conditions were stark yet they succeeded! In an earlier 2008 article in *The Herald*, I noted that the students were remarkable by their motivation, desire, and commitment to Ethiopia. They were/are an impressive group.

When the time came to leave, there was sadness and joy. Yohannes mentioned that there were other former Ras Desta Students who were not able to make it.

Those who heard of our visit and were unable to come were really sad. Those who came were so excited they would not stop talking about it. Me, too! For me, it was one of the most memorable experiences I have had. It was amazing to hear their stories and to describe the importance and impact we Peace Corps Volunteers had on their lives. I am so proud to have been a part of their journey.



l-r: Zelalem Wakeyo (lawyer in private practice); Eshetu Gizaw (electrical engineer and owner of a successful electrical business); Doug Mickelson (RPCV); Kassaye Chemada (Brigadier General, retired); Medhane Zeratsion (statistician retired); Yohannes Gebregeorgis (librarian); Tafesse Mesfin (veterinarian and researcher of veterinarian medicine).

Seeing the country

After these rewarding and emotional events, we proceeded with the rest of our trip on to the northern historical route. This trip also brought back memories. During the summer of 1963, Bob Savage, Debra Berhan, and I were assigned the task of conducting an inventory of the Ministry of Education bookstores in this area. We had a Land Rover and spent six weeks traveling and working from Bahr Dar, to Gondar, Axum, Adowa, and

Asmara. At the time, Lalibela was not accessible by motor vehicles. Now, there is a significant amount of road construction underway and access to the historical sites is improving dramatically.

The next leg of our trip took us to the Omo Valley from Addis via Toyota Land Cruiser. We covered over a thousand miles in our journey to the south. It was a part of Ethiopia I had not visited. The area is very different from the north; there are many more tribes, cultures, and languages. More than any other area of Ethiopia, time seems to have stood still. I'm sure that much of the peoples' lives have not changed significantly in the past 100 years. It is a fascinating part of the country.

The final leg of our trip was to Lake Awassa, now a large resort city, where we stayed and used as our base to visit Yirgalem. I had brought along pictures of the single restaurant in Awassa where our group spent New Year's Eve, December 31, 1963. The staff at the reception desk was thrilled. They couldn't believe it. Most of them were born in the early 1990s and the changes at Awassa were part of their lives.

Finally to see Yirgalem

I barely recognized the countryside along the 45-kilometer trip from Awassa to Yirgalem. Before, hardly any people; today, lots of people. The road is lined with shops and vendors. Local artifacts, fruit and food are on sale. If I had been driving, I would have missed the turn off to Yirgalem. While I had expected change, I was stunned by how dramatic the population had increased. This continued into Yirgalem. It had changed from a village to a city. We had to ask directions to the school. In 1962, Ras Desta was at the far eastern edge of Yirgalem; today, it just past the middle as the city has expanded eastward significantly.

We were directed to the school and changes were evident as we approached. Again, and this I expected, the school had expanded dramatically. It was in the same location, but there were many more buildings and students, and it is now an elementary school only. We walked to the school grounds and were directed to the Headmaster's office. He was very interested in my early experiences and the Headmaster, it turns out, had a Peace Corps teacher when he was in 7th grade.

We then went on a tour of the school grounds. Students are the same the world-over. They crowded around us and wanted to know where we were from and what brought us to Ras Desta School. They were thrilled to hear of my experiences with Ras Desta students. Note the similarities between 1962 students and 2016 students.



Doug and the headmaster



Ras Desta Students, 2016



Ras Desta Students-1962.

Our home

The final task was to find my previous home in Yirgalem. There were six of us, all male Volunteers, assigned to Ras Desta School. No women were assigned to Yirgalem because of the distant location and concerns for their safety. We were assigned to two houses; a two bedroom house for two and a four bedroom house for four of us.

The Peace Corps provided us with a gas stove and kerosene powered refrigerator. We also had a hot water heater and running water. The Yirgalem water supply did have a central distribution system that provided water throughout the village for about six hours a day. Everything had to be boiled. We had a storage tank on the roof of the house that provided us with water. Electricity was available from 6:00 pm to midnight. Our “indoor bathroom” did have a shower, bath tub, and commode. The commode was connected to a deep hole in the ground in our back yard. The system did work, but I’m not sure of the long term consequences of the sanitary system. All in all, it was comfortable — or so it seems looking back over the 50+ years.

The house for 4 was just off the school grounds, so even after all this years Annette and I were able to identify the location. Much has changed as you can see in the photographs.



1962 our Peace Corps home; white house on the left.



2016 site of former home; note changes and construction of a mosque.



We concluded *our* Return to Ethiopia trip with our visit to Yirgalem. During our 2 ½ weeks in Ethiopia, we traveled by plane, van, and Toyota Land Cruiser and covered about 2,000 miles. We experienced modern Ethiopia in Addis and the unchanging people of southern Ethiopia. We met and discussed issues and trends of Ethiopia with many Ethiopians representing different sections and groups.

Wherever we went, I was asked what are the differences and changes I observed. By far, to me, the biggest change was in population growth. People, people, people everywhere. I was stunned by the growth along with the huge increase in traffic; Addis was unbelievable. And this is connected to another significant change; construction of roads and buildings. The Chinese have a large presence, particularly in the countryside in updating and paving the roads. There has also been a very noticeable and dramatic increase in the construction of mosques. Many Ethiopians expressed concerns about the impact of the expansion of Islam on the identity of Ethiopia as a Christian nation. The other major change was the explosion in the number of schools — from elementary schools to universities. In Gondar, for example, the university was expanding to accommodate over 25,000 students.

Ethiopia is changing and is confronting the increase in population, improving the nation's infrastructure, and strengthening schools. Interestingly, many expressed concerns about the decline in the quality of education since the time of Haile Selassie. It's the same issue we are experiencing in the U.S.: access vs. quality.

According to the "Peace Corps/Ethiopia Annual Report 2015," since 1962, nearly 4,000 Volunteers have served in Ethiopia in education, community development, business development, agriculture, and health. Today, nearly 250 Volunteers are serving in Ethiopia and play a significant role in the country's development. I am proud to have been a part of the first group of Volunteers to serve in Ethiopia and wish the current Volunteers the best in their journey and continued development.

On our very long flight home and since our return, my wife and I have discussed and shared our experiences and the impact of my Peace Corps Volunteer experiences over 50 years ago. It seems almost surreal. The trip, more than anything, confirmed my deep appreciation for my experiences as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Ethiopia will always remain in my heart. It was a life changing experience for me.

Posted in [Journeys](#)

1 Comment

Tagged [Doug Mickelson](#), [Yirgalem](#), [Yohannes Gebregeorgis](#)

PCVs in Ethiopia

Posted on [April 29, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Summit Teaches Students to Promote Gender Equality

by *Grace Kabel (Agula, Tigray, 2015-17)*

On Thursday, March 3rd, ten Peace Corps Volunteers traveled to Addis Ababa from the Amhara, Tigray, and SNNPR regions of Ethiopia for the third annual "Action for Gender Equality (AGE) Summit." Each Peace Corps Volunteer brought with them four of their best students to the four-day leadership training. The Summit was hosted by Peace Corps/Ethiopia's Gender and Development Committee that was established in 2012 to encourage and support grassroots efforts to promote sustainable gender equality efforts in Ethiopia.

To gain a spot at the Summit —

- Volunteers from across Ethiopia completed gender-related activities at their sites for points.
- Each Volunteer worked with a counterpart from her/his local community to lead a gender club for their students.
- Five outstanding counterparts were selected to join their PCVs at the Summit due to their initiative and commitment to gender equality in their home country.
- The competition activities introduced students to the concepts of gender norms, gender roles, gender-based violence, and other important topics, and the students used this working knowledge to delve into

the topics more in depth at the Summit.

- The Volunteers with the most points at the end of the three-month competition were invited to bring two female and two male students to the Summit.

The purpose of the Summit was twofold: to prepare the students to become junior counselors at Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) this summer, and to become ambassadors for gender equality in their communities through their gender clubs. Many of the sessions at the Summit used the topic of gender equality to develop the students' leadership and life skills. Through various activities, participants explored leadership styles, teamwork practices, interpersonal skills, and effective communication methods. At the end of the Summit, the participants gathered with their PCV leader, fellow students from their town, and a counterpart to plan an activity to lead at Camp GLOW. Additionally, they creatively sought solutions for common scenarios at camp by performing skits that demonstrated ineffective and effective methods for solving problems.



Participants with Ambassador Page (standing, 7th from left)

In the spirit of leadership, the [Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Mission to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Susan Page](#), gave the opening address. Ambassador Page spoke to the students about her career, including the humanitarian concerns she witness during the civil war in South Sudan during her time there as U.S. ambassador. She emphasized the importance of working collaboratively to accomplish common goals.

[U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Patricia Haslach](#), disappointed at being unable to attend, showed her support by creating a video message for the students. She spoke about some of the specific gender inequality issues prevalent in Ethiopia and applauded the students for their efforts to make change in their local communities.



Participants with Berhane Daba (left-center holding certificate)

Berhane Daba, founder of the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association and winner of the Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award from the National Peace Corps Foundation for her work empowering disabled women in Ethiopia, gave the keynote address. One of the themes of this year's Summit was service, so it was only fitting to have such an iconic woman speak about her work towards creating a more equal and inclusive Ethiopia.



In keeping with the themes of gender equality and volunteerism, six accomplished Ethiopians spoke about their lives and jobs as part of the career panel. On the panel were:

- Beletshachew Tadesse, the manager of the rehabilitation center at Hamlin Fistula Hospital;
- Amen Taye Bekele, a student at Addis Ababa University and a member of the Yellow Movement, an AAU group that works to speak up for women and girls' rights;
- Aklile Mekuria, program manager of Girls Gotta Run;
- Bezuhun Endale, a football player on the Ethiopian women's national team;
- Michael Alemayahu, an actor and journalist; and
- Tirubrhan Getnet, director of the Good Samaritan Association.



Bezahun Endale (2nd from left) speaking at the career panel

Most of the students who attended the Summit had never been to Addis or thought about the numerous career opportunities that await them if they go to university. The aim of the career panel was to show a diverse range of careers that students could pursue here in Ethiopia. It was also meant to be inspiring. While none of the

students may qualify for the Women’s National Football Team, they can relate to the discrimination and hardship felt by Bezu Endale as she fought to achieve her dream.

The AGE Summit was funded by the U.S. government’s PEPFAR program – the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Many of the students attending the Summit were in the trenches of puberty, so Population Services International and Girl Effect sent staff to teach the students about their changing bodies. Once they had a grasp on the facts, we talked a lot about family planning. Everyone knows abstinence is the best policy, but the students were interested in other options to consider in the future. We talked about all of the birth control options available in Ethiopia, but emphasized the importance of condoms in preventing STIs and pregnancy. The students then completed a condom relay race with their teams. Each team member — girls and guys — had to correctly put a condom on a penile model. It was a new challenge made all the more difficult by the uproar in the room.

One of the most popular activities at the Summit this year (and every year) was “Walk a Kilometer in Her Shoes.” It’s an obstacle course relay race that places boys literally in girls’ shoes and dresses to complete stereotypically gendered chores — like caring for a baby, washing clothes, and making food. Afterwards everyone sits down to discuss gender roles in Ethiopia. One male student from SNNPR explained: “Just as we are men, it doesn’t mean we can’t do things; it doesn’t mean we can’t make buna.” Coffee ceremonies are a large part of everyday Ethiopian life. Girls and women prepare coffee by washing, roasting, and grinding the beans by hand multiple times a day for their families. This creates obstacles to their education because they are encumbered with a large amount of housework. It is important that household labor becomes more balanced if girls and women are going to truly achieve equality in Ethiopia.



Competing in the “Walk . . . in Her Shoes”

Rarely do boys hear from girls about what life is like for them. That’s why the activity “Gender Stadium” is so impactful. All of the female students and counterparts sit in the middle of a circle while the males sit in a circle surrounding them. The boys listen but do not speak as the girls answer discussion questions about their experiences and the difficulties that they face due to their gender. Once the girls are finished, they switch places with boys and listen to their answers to the discussion questions. It’s always an emotional activity, but it’s one that creates a deeper empathy and understanding of the opposite sex afterwards.

On the last morning of the Summit, everyone participated in the “Women’s First 5K Race.” This is Africa’s largest all-female footrace, and all of the girls completed the race! Although the boys weren’t allowed to run in the race, they showed their support by painting their faces and cheering us on with motivational signs. One of our favorites read: “Don’t be late! Our girls are winners!”

The theme for this year’s International Women’s Day, which took place one day after the Summit, was “Pledge for Parity.” Students took that idea home, with many saying they pledged to fight for gender equality and share



Boys cheering on the girls at the Women's First
5K

the knowledge they gained at the Summit with their classmates, friends, and family when they returned to their towns.

Posted in [PCVs in Ethiopia](#)

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Tagged [AGE Summit](#), [gender equality](#), [Grace Kabel](#)

PCVs in Ethiopia

Posted on [April 29, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Matt Westerberg "Peace Corps Partnership Program Grant a Success"

In January 2016, Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs made a donation to a [Peace Corps Partnership Program](#) project initiated by PCV Matt Westerberg to build chairs for a classroom and adequate toilets for his school in Yechila. We recently heard from Matt that the project is complete and that our donation was well spent.

The following letters of appreciation and photos demonstrate the spirit of cooperation from the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the PCVs in country. Congratulations to Matt for a job well done!

Please continue to check the [Ethiopia Peace Corps Partnership Program grant page](#) for new and exciting projects and opportunities for you to help.

The Editor, The Herald.

Dear ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVS, MARIAN HALEY BEIL,

I would like to give you a final update on the project you have generously donated to in Yechila, Ethiopia. Our project has been completed, with one latrine's support system being completed at the secondary school, making a functioning bathroom there, a second latrine foundation being finished and ready for further work by the community this semester, and 14 new desks having been completed and in current use by students. The grant has succeeded in its aims, increasing sanitation and the quality of education at the secondary school. Class overcrowding has been diminished with the use of the new desks. The preparatory school's latrine foundation allows the community to use previously saved funds to complete the bathroom by the end of this current semester. Thanks to your generosity, sanitation and comfort for students and teachers has drastically increased. Thank you for your kindness and support.

Attached to this email is a letter written to you by the community project leader, Director Kidanamiriam of the Secondary School. Please read it, as it represents the sincere feelings of the community with regards to your support for this project.

Thank you for all you have done. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at any time. In emails to follow, I will attach pictures of the completed latrine components and desks.

Matt Westerberg
Education PCV
Peace Corps Ethiopia
westerberg.matt@gmail.com

DATE 03/11/2016 (Edited for clarity)

LETTER OF APPRECIATION to: ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVS, MARIAN HALEY BEIL

First and foremost the community and the Wereda administration of Tanqa Abergele Yechila Secondary school would like to thank you for your special donation.

Not only this but also the U.S government helps our students by allotting Peace Corps teacher enhancing our students skill.

Such as students desk and teacher's toilet and also the community at large. As a result of this, the students of Yechila Secondary School have a good vision to achieve our goals and score good results.

Then, we hope that we will be the successors of you so as to contribute to the community of Yechila.

Thus, the residents of Yechila will improve their living standard and develop our community as a whole.

Generally, we don't have a word to express our gratitude for your golden reward to our students.

With best regard



With mountains behind them, workers are digging a very shallow hole that is the beginning of the Preparatory School's latrine foundation.



The concrete and rock structure slightly above ground is the final foundation for the Preparatory School. The School will continue

adding an above-ground structure with community raised funds this semester.



Digging the hole for the Secondary School latrine.



The concrete slab being watered is the final completed foundation for the Secondary School. Note in the lower right a trench leaving the hole.

The end result is two functioning latrines, drastically increasing sanitation in both schools.



14 new desks will allow the secondary school to utilize a new classroom that was previously empty. This will decrease the number of students in other, overcrowded classes. The quality of teaching and learning has already dramatically improved, with more personalized lessons.

Read [another article](#) about this project that we published in January.

Posted in [PCVs in Ethiopia](#)

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Tagged [Matt Westerberg](#), [Peace Corps Partnership](#), [Yechila](#)

RPCV Legacy Program

Posted on [April 29, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

New Legacy project is approved: Axum Children's Library

Championed by **Dwight Sullivan (Yergalem, Dodola, 1970-72)** and **Janet Lee (Emdeber 1974-76)**

Since 2004, E&E RPCV has provided opportunities for RPCVs to raise funds to support projects in Ethiopia and Eritrea through the E&E RPCV Legacy Program. In that span of time, RPCVs have raised \$240,304.23.

E&E RPCVs is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit tax-exempt organization; consequently all donations to the projects are tax-deductible. All work by RPCVs to administer the projects is done on a volunteer basis, so the entire amount of each donation is used for the projects.

An RPCV (or staff member who served in Ethiopia or Eritrea) who wishes to propose a project submits a Preliminary Project Proposal (PPP) of at least one page to Kristen Baredo (Kristen.Straw.Barredo@gmail.com), Manager, E&E RPCV Legacy Program. She will distribute the PPP to the Board members, who will review it, suggest changes if needed, and make a decision on feasibility.

If the proposal is approved, applicants will then be asked to prepare a Final Proposal that follows guidelines on the E&ERPCV website: <https://eandeherald.com/rpcv-legacy-program/be-a-champion/>

The Board is pleased to announce that it has approved a proposal by *Champions Dwight Sullivan (Yergalem, Dodola, 1970-72) and Janet Lee (Emdeber 1974-76)* for a Children's Library within the Axum Heritage Foundation Library and Cultural Center, Axum, Ethiopia. The library operates under the auspices of the [Ethiopian Community Development Council](#). ECDC's founder, Dr. Tsehaye Teferra, was a Peace Corps Language instructor for training groups that began service in the 1960s.



Early construction of the new Axumite
Heritage Foundation Library and
Cultural Center

In 2000, ECDC repurposed a badly damaged historic building — the Governor's Palace in Axum — into a public library. The Governor's Palace had gone into great disrepair following the Derg and Communist rule when it had been used as a headquarters and prison. The library has since served its community well, but cannot meet all the needs of a growing and more sophisticated population in Axum. Enter [Dwight Sullivan who concluded that a newer, more modern building needed to be constructed that could provide expanded services to the community.](#)

This RPCV Legacy Program project will focus on a finite project within the overall building project — the children's library. Both Dwight and Janet Lee are committed to the success of this project and have contributed the 10% minimum required.

The Project goal is to raise \$10,000 in the initial phase. In addition to the beautiful furniture donated by CNN (see photo), the project will enable the acquisition of shelving, theatre seating, curtains for DVD projection area, adult office furniture, computers, local language books, signage, and decorative rugs.

Contributions may be sent to the new E & E RPCV treasurer:

E&E RPCVs
c/o Randy Marcus
1634 Martha Terrace
Rockville MD 20852-4134

Please mention: Axum Children's Library



The children's library within the new Axumite Heritage Foundation Library and Cultural Center

Posted in [RPCV Legacy Program](#)

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Tagged [Axum](#), [Axum Library and Cultural Center](#), [children's library](#), [Dwight Sullivan](#), [Janet Lee](#)

Peace Corps and NPCA

Posted on [April 29, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Peace Corps Beyond: Peace Corps Connect 2016 — September 22-25, 2016: The Annual Conference of the Peace Corps Community

E&E RPCVs will be there. Will you?

Peace Corps Connect is the Peace Corps community's annual conference hosted by the National Peace Corps Association and its local affiliate groups and the [2016 conference will be held in Washington D.C](#) to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Peace Corps.

E&E RPCV is planning programs, social events, and networking geared specifically toward RPCVs from Ethiopia and Eritrea. New Board Member, Amanda Sutker, and her fellow RPCVs in the DC area, are hard at work planning the events. They have held a block of rooms for Thursday, September 22 – Sunday, September 25 at the Crystal City Marriott at a rate of \$109/night. To reserve your room, please call Marriott Reservations at 1 (800) 228-9290 or (703) 413-5555 and identify yourself as a part of the Ethiopia/Eritrea RPCV group.

Save the date: September 22–25, 2016 and watch for details on our [group Facebook page](#) and a future issue of [*The Herald*](#).

Volunteers interested in making a 15-minute presentation at the Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs group meeting should send an outline and presentation proposal to Amanda at amsutker@gmail.com by August 1.

In addition we will join our colleagues who have served around the world in celebration of 55 years of Peace Corps recognizing the impact that Peace Corps has had both home and abroad, and the hopes for the future.

Join us at Peace Corps Beyond



EVENT DETAILS

National Day of Action

Join fellow RPCVs on Capitol Hill to advocate for a bigger, better Peace Corps

Location: Capitol Hill

Date: Thursday, September 22, 2016

Save the date! Registration will open shortly.

Affiliate Group Network Annual Meeting including E&E RPCVs

Location: TBD (Washington, DC)

Date: Thursday, September 22, 2016

Peace Corps Beyond

Location: George Washington University in Washington, DC

Date: Friday and Saturday, September 23–24, 2016

Save the date! Registration will open shortly.

NPCA Walk for Peace

Location: Walking route through downtown Washington, DC

Date: Sunday, September 25, 2016

Save the date! Registration will open shortly.

Posted in [Peace Corps and NPCA](#)

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Tagged [2016 RPCV conference](#), [DC](#), [NPCA](#)

Friends

Posted on [April 29, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

A Towering Task in Ethiopia

by *Alana DeJoseph (Mali 1992–94)*

I am in the midst of directing a documentary entitled *A Towering Task** that will tell the important story of the Peace Corps, both as a peacemaking agency with a rich and complicated history, and as a container for the intimate personal stories of individuals impacted worldwide. The film will use these different angles to evaluate how the Peace Corps is relevant in today's context, and where it might go moving forward. Our story is that of an agency founded on grand ideals such as world peace and friendship, and the struggles that it faces as those ideals fade not just for the Peace Corps, but also for our society as a whole. The film will chronicle the agency through the captivating stories of those who lived it — then open a dialogue with historians, journalists and international experts about how to translate the past into a map for future success.



President Jimmy Carter talking with Director,
Alana DeJoseph

of history and 220,000 returned Volunteers could fill a library with stories and insights. So it is challenging, but crucial to decide which stories and which angles to pick to provide the big-picture understanding of this complex topic. With 141 countries the Peace Corps has been in, there could easily be 141 documentaries each telling the history of the agency in that particular part of the world.

Why have we decided to travel to Ethiopia and feature it as one of the four countries to explain the Peace Corps and its history to America?

It is through powerful voices that we will tell the story of the Peace Corps and the parallel challenges that face the entire global community. We will combine a variety of interviews with host country nationals, Peace Corps Volunteers and staff, and scholars and journalists who put the story of the Peace Corps into context. Voices from all over the world will share not only the work and impact, but also the complications and mistakes of the Peace Corps. This diverse set of stories will come together to explore the lessons learned by half a century of peace building and diplomacy.

Producing a documentary about the Peace Corps is in itself a towering task. 55 years



Alana DeJoseph,
Director, *A
Towering Task*

Since we first embarked on our journey to tell this important and urgent story, Ethiopia has continuously popped up, beckoning us to follow the threads of its enticing tale.

When RPCV Haskell Ward told us in our interview with him about what it was like to be an African American Volunteer serving in this mesmerizing country while back home civil rights protests were gripping the nation, when RPCV Chic Dambach told us about the peace negotiations between Ethiopia and Eritrea aided by RPCVs, when Ethiopian activist Berhane Daba told us of her

efforts to help handicapped women in Ethiopia and “her” Peace Corps Volunteer Mary Myers-Bruckenstein explained what it was like to get a new family far from home, and when John Coyne, the Peace Corps’ unofficial historian, tied together those threads that weave this tapestry of a bold tale, it became clear that Ethiopia demanded attention. We are thrilled to be planning a production trip to Ethiopia this year.

The puzzle piece that is the RPCV ripple effect is one of the most overlooked parts of the Peace Corps – and how better to illustrate that than through the voices of these thoughtful “Ethies.”

And through the lens of Ethiopia, the Dominican Republic, the Ukraine, the Philippines, and our own country, the American public will learn of the immeasurable ripple effect that is the Peace Corps.

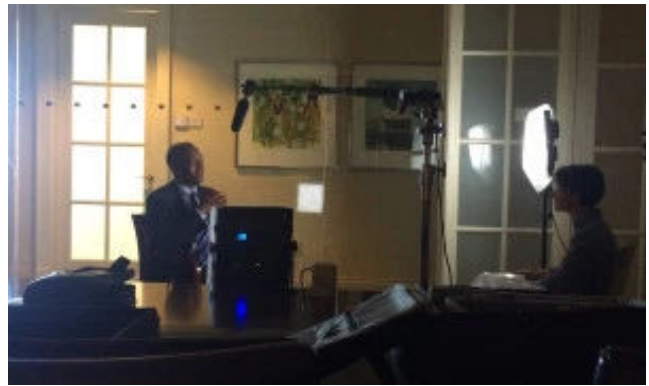
Our Peace Corps community has never effectively come together as a constituency of 220,000 strong. However, now, for the first time we will tell this big-picture story to American and to the world, and we will bring back the Peace Corps into the national discourse.

The crowd funding endeavor was highly success and has ended, but further donations are welcome. Please visit [web page](#) and add your donation to our story.

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* [A Towering Task: Warren Wiggins’ Architecture for the Peace Corps](#) was a memo drafted by Warren Wigeons and Bill Josephson that became the blueprint for the Peace Corps.

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Talking with Haskell Ward, Ethiopia II, 1963-65, Nazareth



Talking with Berhane Daba, recipient of the 2015 Harris Woffard Global Citizen Award.

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