

The Herald

News for those who served with the Peace Corps in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

MONTHLY ARCHIVES: OCTOBER 2016

Editor's note

Posted on [October 28, 2016](#) by [janettlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Editor's note

by *Janet Lee (Emdeber 1974-76)*

My heart breaks as I hear about the news coming out of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government has declared a state of emergency and has prohibited many activities subject to severe penalties. [These are outlined the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia website](#). The U.S. Government has also issued a travel warning advising U.S. citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Ethiopia. Although the Internet and social media has been blocked or severely curtailed, I have received occasional Facebook posts from Ethiopian colleagues. Peace Corps is taking the necessary precautions, consolidating Volunteers as needed, relocating or giving options for early leave. It has also been reported that the 2017 training class has been cancelled. Please follow Facebook for continuing updates.

The focus of this issue of *The Herald* is on activities related to the National Peace Corps Association conference in Washington, D.C. including the dinner at the Ethiopian Embassy, the business meeting of E&E RPCVs, introduction of our new board, an update on our RPCV Legacy Program projects, and the goals of our co-presidents. In some ways, our evening at the Ethiopian Embassy seems like months ago. What a wonderful event!

I was fortunate to have traveled to Ethiopia just a month prior to the conference including visiting Adama, Axum, and Adwa. I didn't let the shutdown of the Internet or a cancelled flight curb my enthusiasm for this beautiful country.

Steve Johnson (Dese, GhoaT'sion 1969-71) provides an update on the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Project (ESFP). Anyone up for injera made from potatoes? Yum!

Finally, we have my favorite topic: Book Reviews. This issue reviews *Afan Oromo: a Guide to Speaking the Language of Oromo People in Ethiopia* by Abebe Bulto and edited by Andrew Tadross ((*Endodo, Tigray & Mekelle, Tigray 2011-13*) Previous titles written by Andrew Tadross include guides on both Amharic and Tigrinya.

During the group business meeting, someone recommended that we publish a link to our Facebook page. I close with a call to “like” us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/eerpcv/>

Posted in [Editor's Note](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

Tagged [October 2016](#)

EeE RPCVs Group News

Posted on [October 28, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

NPCA 55th Anniversary Celebration at the Ethiopian Embassy

Over 115 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from Ethiopia and Eritrea, family, and friends attended the banquet reception hosted by Ambassador Girma Birru on Friday, September 23rd in conjunction with the National Peace Corps Association Conference: Peace Corps Connect held in Washington, DC. Returned Volunteers from the 1960s mingled with Volunteers who left Ethiopia in just the past year and shared experiences.

Never one to miss a gathering of his Ethiopian RPCV colleagues was Senator Harris Wofford, former special assistant to John F. Kennedy, one of the founding fathers of the Peace Corps, former Director of Operations in Ethiopia from 1962 to '64 and Associate Director of Peace Corps from 1964 to '66. The National Peace Corps Association's Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award named in his honor, is awarded each year at the NPCA annual conference. Last year's recipient was Ethiopian



Senator Harris Wofford with Janet Lee, editor of The Herald



A group of RPCVs who all served from 2012 to 2014: Joel Ziebell (Mertulemariam), Jessi McAllister (Mekelle), Scott McAllister (Mekelle), Pamela Cayemitte (Korem), Anthony Navarett (Mizan-Aman), Elle Brown (Emdeber, Mekelle), Marissa Henderson (Agaro), Amanda Sutker (Adaba, West Arsi). -click-

Berhane Daba, President and Founder of Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA), an organization that works to empower women with disabilities.

Also spotted in the crowd were E&E RPCV past-president Marian Haley Beil (Debre Berhan 1962-64), Barry Hillenbrand (Debre Marcos 1963-65), past editor of *The Herald*, and board member John Coyne, author of many novels, books on Ethiopia, and golf.



Barry and Marian, past editors of *The Herald*



RPCV Tom Andrews (Mekele, Addis 1964-66) and Ted Vestal (Staff 1964-66)

Theodore Vestal (Associate Director, PC/Ethiopia 1964-66), Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Oklahoma State University author of *The Lion of Judah in the New World*, among others (Addis Ababa 1962-64) was also there.

A vast array of Ethiopian food, including doro wat, kitfo, atakilt wat, miser wat, and injera, was served buffet style to the delight of all of the guests. Ethiopian wine and beer were also available. Good company. Good food. We were all in Ethiopian foodie paradise.

Stephen Cristofar (Asmara, Adi Quala, Debarola — Eritrea 1962-64) served as Master of Ceremonies for the evening's program. Ato Misgina Tesfay Gebreselassie, Minister Counselor at the Ethiopian Embassy, introduced Ambassador Girma Birru, who in turned welcomed the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and spoke of the ongoing relationship between the RPCVS and the people of Ethiopia. E&E RPCV Vice President Leo Cecchini followed with short remarks.



Dwight and Janet speak about their RPCV Legacy Project

Janet Lee (Emdeber, 1974-76) and Dwight Sullivan (Yergalem, Dodola, 1970-72) made a presentation about their new Legacy Project, [Axum Children's Library Enhancement](#). The Embassy staff presented to the community a short video travelogue that highlighted the country that we have all grown to love.

Amanda Sutker (Adaba, West Arsi, 2012-14) eloquently closed the program through words of appreciation of the efforts of the Volunteers who broke ground in Ethiopia in the early days and the opportunities ahead for all Volunteers to work together on common goals.



Amanda and Janet, the new co-presidents

Many thanks to the local arrangements committee: Stephen Cristofar, Amanda Sutker, and Randy Marcus (Asella 1966-68) for organizing this event for all to share.

In closing, the Ambassador and staff gathered all those resplendent in their *habesha libs* to join him for a final photo.



Herb Resnick, Jess Himmelfarb, Meg McCuen, Judy Armayor Smith (Asmara 63-65, Mark Brecker (Asmara 64-66), Embassy staff member, Amanda Sutker, Alyssa Shumaker, Ambassador Girma Biru, Janet Lee -click-

Posted in [E&E RPCVs Group News](#)

Tagged [embassy reception](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

E&E RPCVs Group News

Posted on [October 28, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Notes from the business meeting of E&E RPCVs

*Crystal City Marriott Hotel, Arlington, Virginia
September 24, 2016*

Ethiopian Ambassador



Ambassador Girma Birru speaks at the E&ERPCV business meeting

At the general business meeting of the Ethiopia & Eritrea Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in conjunction with the National Peace Corps Association annual conference — Peace Corps Connect 2016, His Excellency, Girma Birru, Ambassador of Ethiopia, was in attendance to answer questions of concern and interest.

Ambassador Girma thanked the audience for the opportunity to speak, and commented on the close connection that RPCVs from Ethiopia have maintained with Ethiopia since their service. He appreciated the huge investment Peace Corps Volunteers have made on education and continues to make through the development process. Peace Corps teachers had a great impact on education, the success of which continues to today.

The Ambassador fielded questions respectfully submitted from the floor of an audience of approximately 50 individuals. The comments and questions were on topics including:

- the reports of civil unrest in the country and the response from the government,
- investment from outside,
- telecommunications,
- plans to increase per capita income,
- supplying power to the countryside through a variety of means including wind and hydropower,
- the success of government controlled Ethiopian Airlines,
- the significant influx of refugees from Eritrea, Somalia, and South Sudan,
- the border conflict with Eritrea,
- and the increase in girls' education.

Ato Misgina Tesfay Gebreselassie, Minister Counselor at the Ethiopian Embassy, took copious notes for further review. E&E RPCVS are grateful to the Ambassador and Ato Misgina for the time taken to have this conversation.

Coffee ceremony



Speakers included, from top — Sarah Pentico Samuel, Gerry Jones, Karen Blanchard and Chuck Kreiman



Sara prepares and serves the coffee, here to Ted Vestal and Laverne Berry (64-66)

Tebabu Assefa and his wife, Sara, Founders of [Blessed Coffee](#) performed a traditional coffee ceremony that was enjoyed by all in attendance.

Tebabu explained his journey in coming to the U.S. and eventually founding Blessed Coffee. He has graciously offered to work with E&E RPCVS in fundraising activities.



The E&E business meeting



Stephen and Leo run the business meeting

Leo Cecchini (Asmara 1962-64) ran the business meeting and Steve Cristofar (Asmara, Adi Quala, Debarola — Eritrea 1962-64) served as chief organizer of the program. Leo gave a brief overview of events during the last year upon the resignation of Marian Haley Beil (Debra Berhan 1962-64) a year ago.

The new board has five new members, several from the D.C. area. The financial operations will reside with Randy Marcus (Asella 1966-68), the new treasurer, who lives in the Maryland suburbs of Washington. All banking services have been transferred to a nearby bank. Leo introduced all of the board members in attendance: Amanda Sutker, John Coyne, Steve Cristofar, Randy, and Janet Lee. Leo announced that the board had voted and the new President would be a co-

presidency held by Amanda and Janet.

Janet then gave a report on the [RPCV Legacy Program](#) projects for Kristen Barados (Fenote Selam from 2007-2009), board member and Legacy Project lead, who was unable to attend. The E&E RPCV Legacy program started in 2003 and has raised \$260,000 for eight projects. E&E RPCV is a 501 (c) 3 and donations through the organization are tax deductible. RPCVS are urged to consider planning a Legacy project, and submitting a proposal to the Board for approval. The champion of the project must personally pledge 10 percent to the project. Once sanctioned, the project is included on the [E&E RPCV webpage](#) and fundraising may begin. Current projects include:

- [Axum Children's Library Enhancement](#) championed by Dwight Sullivan and Janet Lee
- [Borana Student Advancement](#) championed by Fuller Torrey
- [Health Guides for 200 Communities](#) championed by Marian Haley Beil
- [ITC \(computer\) Lab for Metu](#) championed by Patti Garamendi and her daughter, Faith.

Janet also notified the membership that back issues of *The Herald* have been scanned and can be found at: [The Herald Archives](#)

Janet also encouraged members to “like” the [E&ERPCV Facebook page](#).

Finally, Janet announced that the next NPCA conference will be held in Denver, June 23 and 24, 2017. She will form a local arrangements committee to work on housing, an Ethiopian meal and the business meeting.

As the meeting closed, Co-Presidents, Amanda Sutker and Janet Lee presented Marian Haley Beil a small bouquet of flowers and a gift certificate on behalf of the membership.



Past and present
presidents

[Leave a comment](#)

Posted in [E&E RPCVs Group News](#)
Tagged [business](#), [business meeting](#)

E&E RPCVs Group News

Posted on [October 28, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

E&E RPCV Board Updates

by Janet Lee (Emdeber 1974-76)

Amanda Sutker and I agreed to a co-presidency of the E&E RPCV over the next year. A co-presidency will afford a smooth transition as the board adds recently Returned Volunteers to the mix and “seasoned” board members let go of the reigns. I have found in co-editing journals and articles and co-chairing committees the division of duties and responsibilities naturally fall into place. Each partner in the team has strengths to bring to the joint position, urges the other on, and makes decisions collaboratively. Over the course of this next year, I anticipate that Amanda and I will find a natural groove. The co-presidency also makes much sense coming off the National Peace Corps Association Conference: Peace Corps Connect held in D.C. (Amanda’s current residence) and looking toward the next conference in Denver (my residence and workplace).



Board members meet in DC:
Stephen Cristofar, Leo Cecchini,
Janet Lee, Randolph Marcus,
John Coyne, Amanda Sutker -
[click_](#)

To begin our year of service, we have come up with the following goals:

E&E RPCV Presidential Goals for 2016-17

- Reach out to recently Returned Volunteers for Board membership to ensure continuity and diversity of ideas.
- Investigate and implement a web presence that is integrated with the National Peace Corps Association building upon the strong foundation of current and past board members.

- Increase membership and involvement of recently Returned Volunteers to Ethiopia & Eritrea Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.
- Investigate opportunities for fundraising to support operations of the membership and the Legacy Program grants.
- Establish a fund and set criteria for support of current Peace Corps Partnership Program grants for volunteers in country.
- Plan for E&E RPCV activities in conjunction with the NPCA Peace Corps Connect conference in Denver June 23 & 24, 2017

These seem doable, don't you agree? I like goals that are achievable such as our first goal of reaching out to recently Returned Volunteers.

New Board Member

In fact, I would like to introduce you to our newest board member: Anthony Navarrete (Mizan Teferi 2012-2014). Anthony served as an English Teacher Trainer in Mizan Teferi, SNNPR, approximately 160 km southwest of Jimma. While in Mizan he implemented training workshops for English teachers, managed the opening of the Aman Primary School English Language Improvement Center providing 65 teachers and approximately 3,000 students with English language learning materials and a venue to study, and facilitated a weekly club for about 20 students to expose them to interactive learning activities.



Anthony Navarrete in Bonga

Since returning to the U.S., Anthony completed a Master of Arts in International Studies as a Paul D. Coverdell Fellow at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver, concentrating on Project Management and International Development. While at DU, he served as the Communications and Events Coordinator for the Latin America Center and managed high profile guests such as the Ambassador of El Salvador, former President of Peru, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile.

He has recently relocated to the Washington, D.C. area as he awaits his enter-on-duty date to begin his career in the federal government with the Foreign Agricultural Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture as an International Trade Specialist for the Africa and Middle East Division.



Anthony in DC

Anthony and I became Facebook friends because of the DU connection, but shared a similar interest when he interned for IREX in Washington, D.C. IREX manages significant grants dedicated to promoting and improving access to information, workforce development and early grade literacy on behalf of USAID and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (See the library connection?)

Anthony and Amanda are also friends, Peace Corps cohorts, and she is even willing to vouch for him. We welcome Anthony!

In Gratitude

As the board expands, John Coyne (Addis Ababa 1962–64) has decided to resign. He has served on the E&E RPCV Board for many years in many capacities. He was with the first group of Peace Corps Volunteers to go to Ethiopia and taught English at the Commercial School in Addis Ababa. Upon completion of his service, he worked for the Peace Corps Office in Washington, D.C. before returning to Ethiopia as the Associate Peace Corps Director.



John Coyne in Ethiopia

Upon hearing of John's retirement, board member Randy Marcus wrote, "My memory is still good enough to remember your involvement in our training program at UCLA, and recall that you were the first person I shook hands with on our arrival in country in 1966."

John is a legend in the Peace Corps community and an authority on the history of Peace Corps. In 1995 John returned to the Peace Corps as Special Assistant to the Associate Director for Volunteer Support.

He and fellow Ethiopia RPCV, Marian Haley Beil, (Debre Berhan 1962-64) formed [Peace Corps Worldwide](#), as a way to celebrate the Peace Corps experience by publishing stories written by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and current Peace Corps Volunteers serving around the world. Together they also founded the imprint, Peace Corps Writers, publishing 68 books since 2011. Last but not least, each year since 1990 John and Marian have presented in total 143 named awards to Peace Corps writers for their books of outstanding fiction, nonfiction, poetry, travel writing, photography and the Peace Corps experience.

John has written over 25 books about Peace Corps, writing, works of fiction, and his favorite pastime: golf. His latest book, [Long Ago and Far Away](#), is a love story set in Ethiopia.

Not one to let grass grow under his feet, John has arranged with National University in California to offer an online-only MFA (Master of Fine Arts) degree for Peace Corps writers. He will teach the introductory course that focuses on the Peace Corps experience.

Thank you, John, for your service to the board, service to Ethiopia, and service to the Peace Corps. Although you are no longer on the board, I know that the first email of the day that I receive is one from you related to books, authors, Peace Corps, or Ethiopia. On behalf of the E&E RPCV Board, we are forever grateful.

Posted in [E&E RPCVs Group News](#)

Tagged [board update](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

An Update on the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Project

By Steve Johnson (*Dese, GhosTzion 1969-71*)

The [Ethiopian Sustainable Food Project](#) (ESFP), founded in 2007 by Dr. Charles (Charlie) Higgins (Haik 69-71) and Dr. Fred Bechard (Dese 69-73), continues to make progress in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. The project works under the auspices of the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute (ARARI) located in Bahir Dar. ARARI reports to the Ministry of Agriculture in Addis.



Checking the potatoes . . . North of Debra Tabor, 2013. Ato Windem (ARARI), Fred Bechard, the farmer, Ato Alemu (ARARI), and Charlie Higgins. -click-



Charlie Higgins and Fred Bechard return to Ethiopia each November for an audit tour. Together they work with ARARI field staff to assess year's project growth, acceptance, production, as well as challenges and pending needs.

. . . and the books.

During the audit tour Charlie and Fred meet with ARARI staff at ARARI HQ to assess compliance with the plan and uncover obstacles to future growth. They also 'go over the books' to ensure expense and income (donations) are not out of line. Further, they are often asked to lecture at the near-by Bahir Dar University on subjects suggested by their contacts there.

As the project and the needs it serves continue to grow it became apparent a more formal approach is needed to ensure long term success as well as funding, and during the August 2015 Wisconsin bi-annual reunion of PC XII (there have been 20 since 1976 according to Nancy Schewe (Gambella, Addis Ababa 69-71) a proposal was brought forward by Attorney Joe Bell (Alamayata 69-71) to move forward to form the project as an unincorporated association with the longer term goal of reaching 501(c)3 status. With the assistance of Attorney Tom Countryman (Ghos Tzion 69-71) a slate of officers and a Board of Directors has been established, the stated purpose of which is to ensure the continued flow of necessary gifts to support the stabilization of the food supply in Ethiopia. Funds are directed by the ESPF Board Chair through the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture and the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute, however the best way to do this is to eventually move the project to a 501(c)3 tax status, which will facilitate fund raising, open the project to a broader donor pool, and ensure the project's mission continues into the future.

The Board meets twice a year, generally by conference call. During the most recent call Charlie told the board that potato tuber production at ARARI had increased from 25,000 in 2014 to 100,000 in 2015; about 250 farms have been positively impacted by the program to date; seven new large screen houses are to be built south of Bahir Dar at Adet, and that the mini-screen house project is taking hold in Sekala, Injibarra and Debra Tabor. Five more mini screen houses are to be built this year at a cost of \$60 USD. The mini screen house is critical as it offsets the bacterial wilt seed from Adet prior to distribution to farmers. Finally, Charlie introduced oats as an excellent crop opportunity for higher altitude towns such as Debra Tabor and Adet.

It is to be seen how well the Amhara region fares in the current drought crisis, but it is expected the ESFP's efforts will provide a bridge over the past "hungry times" for a growing number of farmers.

Of course, it is not all work during the tour and the chance to once again enjoy Ethiopia and its people, hospitality and countryside brings back many old memories and makes new memories and new friends. The team is ever mindful that it is working in a 3,000-year-old culture, and as desirable as change may be, *kas ba kas* is still the order of the day in so much of everyday life ... but even that is changing.



Near Debre Tabor, a local farmer (in green dress) shares locally produced injera where a key ingredient is fresh-from-the-field potatoes. She learned, presumably via mobile phone, that the team was on the way to her farm and was able to whip up a batch of potato infused injera for the team. Ato Alemu, from ARARI, is at the far left.

Also see a [2013 article in The Herald about the ESFP](#).

Posted in [RPCV Projects](#)

Tagged [ESFP](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

RPCV Legacy Program project

Posted on [October 28, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

A Tale of Two Cities

LIBRARY PROJECTS PROMPT A RETURN TO ETHIOPIA

and offer an opportunity to experience diverse transportation modes

by Janet Lee, (Emdeber 1974-76)

Having taken advantage of an opportunity to visit Kenya this past summer with a Regis University colleague, I traveled through Ethiopia on my return home with two goals in mind.

I especially wanted to connect with a University of Denver colleague, who had been on sabbatical since January and was teaching at the Adama Science and Technology University. We are both librarians and library projects were the focus of my trip.

I also wanted to visit the site that will benefit from the RPCV Legacy Program project that I am championing.



First Adama

As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer/Ethiopia from the 1970s, I have seen many changes on recent visits. The most striking change on this visit was the express/tollway (40 Birr each way) from Addis Ababa to Adama — which I knew as Nazaret.



Expressway from Adama



Wind farm outside Adama

As we approached Adama my colleague and I were met by a wind farm of 50 to 100 wind turbines that supplies this region with much needed electrical power.

It was remarkable to travel 80 km per hour on the freeway unrestricted by traffic, donkey carts or herds of cattle. It was also remarkable to see the heavy influence of Chinese investment in the infrastructure. Railway tracks that would guide trains to Djibouti were visible nearby, running parallel to the abandoned Ethio-Djibouti Railway originally built by the French between 1894 and 1917. I clearly remember traveling to Dire Dawa by train as if it were yesterday.

My main form of transportation in Adama (and later in Axum) was by *bajaj*, the three wheeled mini-taxis that inexpensively take people from place to place.

Back to Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa is still a bustling city and traffic jams impeded movement in many areas. Some routes were surprisingly free from congestion, although two very serious mini-bus accidents did give me pause on my first full day in Addis. I watched in curiosity as a man, most likely the driver of one mini-van, was waving his arms in the air and then clasping his head in disbelief that this could happen to him. The other van was a charred mess, although there was no evidence that anyone was seriously hurt.



Bajaj ride in Adama

A few years ago, I navigated mud paths that circumnavigated rising railroad trestles around Meskel Square that would soon support the rails of the first electric light-rail to operate in a city in sub-Saharan Africa. On this visit I could see the train overhead carrying passengers on one of the two lines that run through the city. My time was limited in Addis and other circumstances prevented me from having an opportunity to take a ride on the train, although it was on my list of things to do.



Commuter train in Addis Ababa.

A side trip to Adwa

After having flown to Axum from Addis, we took a mini-van to Adwa to visit Rick (*Addis Alem 68-70; Training 72-75*) and Elizabeth Stoner's cultural museum project (see Rick's article in the last issue of *The Herald* "[Old Adwa Cultural Museum](#)."

I sat in one of the front row seats of the mini-van and could clearly see the scenery along the winding mountain road to Adwa, not too unlike the steep curves of the mountains in my home state of Colorado. Adwa is a historic spot and I expected to see monuments and statues, but did not. It is no wonder that Rick and Elizabeth have taken on this tribute to history. My companion and I walked along the dusty streets with beautiful mountain peaks in the background.

We took a shortcut that led us down a steep path where we rock-hopped across a river (my years of experience in Colorado coming to my aid) and up another steep river bank to the cultural museum. Rick and Elizabeth have made great headway on this project and it is worth a visit if you are in the area.



Old Adwa Cultural Museum

Back to Axum

On the return trip to Axum, the only available seat was in the back row, next to the window, as far from the door as possible. Visions of the charred mini-bus in



Gari crossing

Addis kept going through my head. I

looked at the windows, planning my escape route should the bus roll over one of the steep banks. No amount of rationalization about the number of people who take this trip daily could calm my nerves. Opening the window and getting fresh air did help and obviously I did make it back to Axum safely and live to tell the tale.

Not surprisingly, that was not to be the last of my transportation issues. I knew better than to schedule my in-country flights too closely with my flight back to the States. Previously I had flown on flights that circled my destination only to return to Addis due to weather. Likewise, I have been stranded at that same airport hearing my in-coming plane circle overhead only to return to its origin. My flight to the U.S. was scheduled for late on Sunday and taking no chances I planned to fly to Addis on Saturday. You guessed it. My flight to Addis was cancelled.

After a series of checks and double checks with the one airport employee who spoke some English, I was assured that there would be an announcement if there were problems. And indeed there was an announcement in Tigrigna, Amharic, and English. Unfortunately, with the reverberations of the sound system and the speakers in the waiting area, the only word I understood in any language was “cancelled.” I was the only *ferengi* at the airport and I could feel all eyes on me. As I searched for the English-speaking staff member, a man approached me to explain the situation in perfect English. I asked if he was a passenger and he answered, “No, I am the announcer!” I knew I was in good hands. He even arranged for transportation back to my hotel, where there was an available room. A flight did eventually leave Axum on Sunday.

Back in Addis

I had booked a room in Addis for Saturday night and had made appointments to meet a number of people on Sunday, including my Denver colleague whose suitcase I was to bring back home. Due to the unrest and demonstrations against the government, both mobile phone and Internet services had been shut down for about four days. I was unable to reach anyone to warn of my delay. Some took the chance and showed up at my hotel.

I discovered later that a number of in-country Peace Corps Volunteers were consolidated during this time period, with some being unable to return to their sites. Some were able to take it in stride. For those PCVs who were not able to say “good-bye” to their colleagues in their towns, it was a much more heartbreaking situation.

Accomplishing my goals

Despite all of this, was my trip to Ethiopia fruitful? Did I visit the library programs that I had come to see? Absolutely! It couldn't have been better. I met with the Library Director of the Adama Science and Technology University as well as visited with the staff of three of the public libraries there (see [Aurora Sister Cities International/Adama Ethiopia](#)). The ASTU Director and I are looking at opportunities to present or publish together, most likely at the African Public Library Association conference in Addis Ababa in May 2017.

In Axum, I visited the University of Aksum Libraries and toured the traditional bricks and mortar library that held study spaces and of all things, books! Then off to the workspace of the Digital Library to meet the staff and get progress reports on both their institutional repository and online catalog. Three years ago, I was told that the online catalog had met its demise due to a virus. On this visit, the IT person had just successfully downloaded open



Eating *belas* on the side of the road

source software that would be the backbone of the new online catalog with the help of a series of YouTube videos. Now the real work begins. It was during the demonstration of the institutional repository that I was truly humbled, as a library staff member pulled the business card from his wallet that I had given him three years ago. I know that I will return.

The ultimate purpose

The focus of this trip was to get a progress report on the Axumite Heritage Foundation Library and Cultural Center in Axum. Three years ago, the building was a shell of cinder blocks and concrete. One could make out the accessible ramp and the stairwell, but little more. On this visit, I met with the foreman of the construction company and the building took my breath away. Although not complete, every small detail was thought out: the marble flooring, windows, stairwells, doors, and natural lighting. The building is a sight to behold. This visit is more fully described in a library-related blog: [Axumite Heritage Foundation and Cultural Center](#).



Grand entrance to the Axum library

E&E RPCVs has approved a Legacy Project related to this building, the Axum Children's Library Enhancement. Of the goal of \$10,000 approved by the E&ERPCVs board, Dwight Sullivan (Yergalem, Dodola 70-72) and I have raised nearly \$3,000 toward our goal, thanks in large part to fellow RPCVs. If you would like to support this project, more information can be found at: [Legacy Project: Axum Children's Library Project](#).

Checks may be sent to:

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

Make out your check to "Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs," and in the subject line enter "Axum Children's Library." Please include your email address so that we can send you a tax receipt.

In conclusion

Libraries in Ethiopia are faced with many challenges including the lack of training, professional status, library education, and general infrastructure. Yet, everywhere that I visited, there was optimism among the staff for the future and a drive to improve their skills and better serve their constituency.

Posted in [Journeys](#), [RPCV Legacy Program](#)
Tagged [Adama](#), [Axum](#), [libraries](#)

Leave a comment

RPCV Legacy Program

Posted on [October 28, 2016](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

RPCV Legacy Program projects & How to Help

FROM 1962 TO 1976, 1995 to 1999, and 2007 onward more than 2,500 Peace Corps Volunteers worked in education, health, agriculture, community development and other fields in Ethiopia and Eritrea, countries that remain among the poorest in the world.

In 2003 Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs established the RPCV Legacy Program™ to allow returned Peace Corps Volunteers from these two countries to continue their legacy of service and assistance. To be part of the Program each project must be proposed by an RPCV or EE Staff “champion,” and reviewed and approved by the E&E RPCVs board of directors.

The champion donates 10% of the goal for the project, is manager of the project working closely with a member of the E&E RPCVs board. Be a champion.

As of April 1, 2016, the RPCV Legacy Program has raised US \$260,000 for eight important education and health projects in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Five projects have met their goals while four others are ongoing.

Axum Children’s Library Enhancement

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



This RPCV Legacy Program project, championed by Dwight Sullivan and Janet Lee, has joined in the efforts of the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), founded by former Peace Corps language and cultural instructor, Dr. Tsehaye Teferra, in the building and development of the Axumite Heritage Foundation Library and Cultural Center in Axum, Ethiopia. This project is limited to supporting the development of a children’s library.

In 2000, the ECDC renovated the former Governor’s Palace in Axum, and repurposed the building into a public library, which, to date, has served the community well. Now under construction is a new building that will complement the existing building by providing: additional seating, community space, communication technology, universal access for the disabled, and, of primary importance, a space for children.

The Axum Children’s Library will provide:

- A welcoming area for all children of the community to read books, participate in story hours, participate in arts & crafts, and view movies.
- Child-sized furniture that is comfortable and suitable for a variety of activities.



- Age-appropriate books in English and local languages as they become available.
- Access to computers for older children for them to learn basic computer skills.
- Shelving for the books and a desk for the library assistant.
- Curtains for the windows that may be closed during video presentations.

Library with some early donations -click-

Operational expenses for the Children’s Library will be covered by an existing library budget provided by the Axumite Heritage Foundation, including but not limited to salaries, utilities, programming, and marketing and promotion.

Dwight and Janet’s RPCV Legacy Program project has established an initial goal to raise \$10,000 for the purchase of computers, shelving, furniture, books, area rugs, curtain, and audiovisual equipment for the Children’s Library.

To support the Axum Children’s Library . . .

. . . you can send a check to:

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

Make out your check to “Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs,” and in the subject line enter “Axum Children’s Library.” Include your email for tax receipt.

Borana Student Advancement

Championed by Fuller Torrey (Ethiopia staff: 64–66)

Since 2004 the Ethiopian registered charity Mega Vision Developmental Association (MVDA) has provided support for students from the Borana region in far southern Ethiopia, using donations to the RPCV Legacy Program project the Borana Student Advancement Project.

Students in the Borana region are disadvantaged because of the region’s location in the remote periphery where many of their families are semi-nomads.

Currently the Borana Student Advancement Project is funding a program to provide educational material support for girls who, as all know, face serious obstacles in getting more than elementary school level education.

Girls receive funding for school uniforms, books, school supplies, residential house rental costs for those who do not live with their parents, and biannual cash assistance was provided for those who are in colleges and universities.



Since 2011 there have been 120 girls in the program each year. For the 2014-2015 academic year they are distributed as follows:

- 12 girls in grades 7 & 8
- 68 in high schools
- 40 in colleges and universities

In 2014, 8 girls graduated from colleges and universities; all are currently employed by the regional government.

Mega Vision Developmental Association (MVDA) was established in 2004 by Teshome Shibre Kelkile, M.D., Ph.D. and Tirufat Bekele and is currently a registered charity in Ethiopia administered by five volunteer board members and a volunteer manager.



2014 – Some of the MVDA girls with Teshome Shibre Kelkile

To support the Borana Student Advancement . . .

. . . you can send a check to:

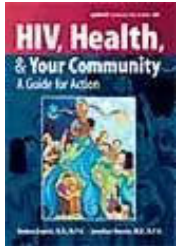
Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs
c/o Randy Marcus
1634 Martha Terrace
Rockville MD 20852-4134

Make out your check to “Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs,” and in the subject line enter “Borana Students.” Include your email for tax receipt.

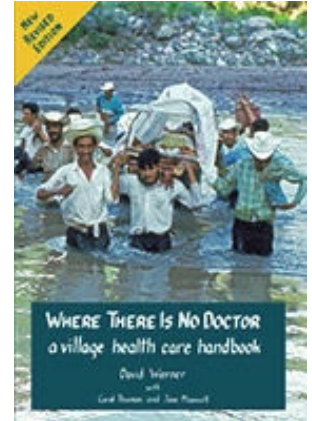
Health Guides for 200 Rural Communities

Championed by Marian Haley Beil (Debre Berhan 62–64)

FOR THIS PROJECT E&E RPCVs is partnering with the respected [Hesperian Health Guides](#), publisher of illustrated health guides for use by health workers in remote communities around the world (including the well known manual *Where There Is No Doctor*). Donations to our project will enable Hesperian to fulfill all book requests that they receive from Ethiopians or Eritreans in-country.



Because HIV and AIDS continue to be an incredible scourge in Ethiopia and to a lesser degree in Eritrea, our donations will also make it possible for Hesperian to include with each requested book a copy of their book *HIV Health and Your Community*.



Your donation of \$50 will provide the funding for one set of books to be shipped to Ethiopia or Eritrea. RPCVs are urged to make a donation to honor of your “other hometown,” and join in our effort to fight HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia and Eritrea and provide the healthcare workers in our communities with the health resources they need to identify and treat common health problems, as well as address the root causes of poor health.

* The all publications from Hesperian are available for FREE if requested by anyone in Ethiopia or Eritrea for \$219.95.

A Book for Midwives

The Childbirth Picture Book

A Community Guide to Environmental Health

Disabled Village Children

Health Actions for Women

A Health Handbook for Women with Disabilities

Helping Children Who Are Blind

Helping Children Who Are Deaf

Helping Health Workers Learn

HIV Health and Your Community

Pesticides are Poison

Sanitation and Cleanliness for a Healthy Environment

Setting Up Community Health Programs

Where There Is No Animal Doctor

Where There Is No Dentist

Where There Is No Doctor

Where Women Have No Doctor

Workers' Guide to Health and Safety

The Complete Hesperian Library in English can be order — for a school, a library — for

To support sending Health Guides for Rural Communities . . .

. . . you can send a check to:

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

Make out your check to “Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs,” and in the subject line enter “Health Guides.” Include your email for tax receipt.

ITC for Mettu School

Championed by Patti Garamendi (Mettu 66–68) and Faith Garamendi



This RPCV Legacy Program project has joined in the efforts of the Ethiopia-approved NGO Alumni Association of St. Gabriel School in Mettu, Ethiopia along with parents and community members to bring computer literacy and enhanced learning to the students of this primary-middle school through a project entitled “Enhancing the Quality of Education Through ICT (Information and Communications Technology) Labs at St. Gabriel Primary School.”

The long-term goals of the team are to:

- Set up, in existing space, a computer lab that will be furnished with 20 computers, appropriate furnishings, and necessary wiring.
- Provide computer literacy training to the school’s 25-30 faculty members.
- Assure that the faculty members are capable of designing curriculum and teaching students and community members using computers and the Internet in their own areas of study.
- Provide enhanced educational opportunities for the students and citizens of Mettu.



Patti and Faith’s RPCV Legacy Program project has established an initial goal to raise \$10,000 for the purchase of 20 computers, and 20 desks and chairs for the workstations in the ITC Lab.

To support the ITC Lab in Mette . . .

. . . you can send a check to:

Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs
c/o Randy Marcus

1634 Martha Terrace
Rockville MD 20852-4134

Make out your check to “Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs,” and in the subject line enter “Mette ITC Lab.” Include your email for tax receipt.

Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization

**100% of every donation goes to support
your specified RPCV Legacy Program project**

Posted in [RPCV Legacy Program](#)
Tagged [RPCV Legacy Program](#)

[Leave a comment](#)