

Two years in a remote village

By Sam Bari

After growing up in Jamestown and completing his education in Washington, D.C., David Reynolds decided to join the Peace Corps. He was assigned to the remote village of Alcalá, in Bolivia.

Via e-mail, Reynolds shared his story of his travels and work with the Corps.

"The Peace Corps was something I had wanted to do for as long as I can remember. The desire was reinforced through a number of experiences in college. During my freshman year I traveled to Guatemala for a service trip where we built three houses for elderly widows who had lost their husbands during the Guatemalan civil war. I discovered there that the most important part of the trip was not the donation of work to build the homes. What they cared about the most was simply that we were there, we had come to listen to their stories and cared about what they had to say. The trip was only a week, and I wanted more.

"I took a few more trips abroad over my college career and each time would find myself surrounded by a group of people from the local population, be it the Bedouins of Morocco in the desert or 25 children in the hills of northern Thailand on the border of Cambodia. The point is, I suppose, every chance I had to interact and learn about new cultures on a personal level, I took it, and always yearned for more.

"So, upon finishing college I signed up for the Peace Corps.

"I tried not to have any expectations going into the Peace Corps because I really had only a vague idea of what I was getting myself into. After a three-day orientation in Miami, I got on a plane with 20 other 'trainees' and flew to La Paz, Bolivia. It snowed the morning we landed. After some delay, we boarded a second plane to Cochabamba, where the whole group spent the next three months in training. There, I lived with a family, had classes in Spanish, and technical training on agriculture-business matters in Bolivia. Following the three months of training, 19 of the original 21 swore in as official Peace Corps volunteers



David Reynolds and friends, who are wearing surplus bicycle race T-shirts contributed by the Jamestown Rotary Club.

and traveled off to villages all over the country.

"A Peace Corps service really only begins at this point. I would spend my two years in a small village called Alcalá. I was the first Peace Corps volunteer to go to this town and the first American any of the people had really ever met. The village sat in a small valley of the Chuquisaca region of Bolivia. The town was home to about 300-400 people. There was a single telephone shared by the whole town. I was fortunate enough to have Internet access sometimes, it was sort of off and on for the two years I was there. There were a few stores in town with basic supplies, but most groceries had to be brought in from the regional city of Sucre. Sucre was about a five to six-hour bus ride from the town, depending on road conditions, which varied quite a bit. There was one four-month period where a landslide forced the bus to drive about 20 minutes in the riverbed before it could climb back up to the road.

"My assigned project was agriculture-business. The town had petitioned for a volunteer who could help them transform their agricultural goods into finished products for sale in markets. It took a long while to get things going, but eventually I settled into a project with two of the outlying communities. In one, where the community grew a lot of peanuts, we focused on making peanut butter and peanut bars. The other grew quite a lot of peaches. There, we canned peach

halves and made peach marmalade. We experimented with a variety of other products like pumpkin butter and applesauce, but peaches and peanuts were the most successful.

"After much practice and experimenting, it was clear that to bring the project from a small idea to a viable business and an actual income generator, the communities would need a sort of industrial kitchen to make the products. We had done all our previous work over open fires with a few borrowed pots. In total, for the two "transformation centers," we needed around \$6,000 to make things work. I was able to get \$2,000 from a USAID Small Projects Assistance grant, a generous \$2,500 from the Jamestown Rotary Club, and the rest was filled in by a number of small donations from Jamestown residents and organizations as well as other friends and family. Raising the funds and then actually building the two centers in such remote areas took up the remainder of my service. The inauguration of both happened in my last few weeks of service. Now, a second volunteer has started his service in Alcalá and is continuing the project I began. Now that the production is essentially up and running, he will focus primarily on the marketing and commercialization of the products in the city as well as start other projects of his own, should he so choose."

Reynolds, 24, was raised in Jamestown. According to his mother, island resident, Sandra Reynolds, he graduated from North Kingstown High School, then attended George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics and history. He has lived in Jamestown, Washington, D.C., London, and Alcalá, Bolivia. He is currently again living in Washington, D.C., where he has been given a conditional offer to work as a Foreign Service officer for the State Department. In the meantime, he is looking for work until that position actually begins.

Upcoming

Project runway meets Ophelia

Child & Family Services of Newport County and its Ophelia Sessions Program invite young women to "Project Runway Meets Ophelia," an evening of promising new designers from the Rhode Island School of Design Apparel Department.

The event will take place at the Castle Hill Inn & Resort in Newport on Sunday, March 4, from 5 to 7 p.m.

The CFS Ophelia Sessions are an innovative and inspiring series of community forums for young women in Newport County. The program welcomes and engages girls between the ages of 11 to 18 from diverse backgrounds in a safe and inviting environment to explore the social, psychological and cultural issues which have a lifelong impact on their development. The program offers dinner, fashion and dialogue for young women. For reservations or more information, call Sharon Rust-Bottone at 848-4206.

NKHS to hold next PTSO meeting

The North Kingstown High School PTSO will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, March 6, at 7 p.m. in the Media Center. All parents are welcome.

At the meeting, staff from the guidance department will help parents determine their child's schedule for the next academic year. If you have any questions regarding your child's course choices and electives, this is the meeting for you. Staff members will discuss what is best for your child — AP vs. CP, foreign languages, fine arts choices, and graduation requirements.

Principal Foley will also present his monthly report. The Teacher Appreciation Luncheon scheduled for the second week of May will also be discussed.

KRISTINE S. TROCKI

Attorney and Counsellor at Law



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Newport Neurology Physicians Welcomes Michael J. Vecchione, DO



Michael J. Vecchione, DO

Dr. Grace Medeiros and Newport Neurology Physicians are very pleased to announce that Dr. Michael Vecchione has joined the practice as a full-time staff member and is accepting new patients and referrals.

Dr. Vecchione is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and a member of the American Academy of Neurology, Rhode Island Neurological Society, Rhode Island Medical Society, and American Medical Association. The

practice is eager to offer his wealth of expertise and experience to that already provided to Newport Neurology patients.

Newport Neurology Physicians is located in Newport Hospital's Borden-Carey Building, Suite 160. Dr. Vecchione can be reached at 848-6042.



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