



## Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin, Inc.

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### PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **LOCAL PEACE CORPS ADVOCATES URGE SUPPORT FOR AGENCY 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gathering Spotlights Critical Corps Needs**

Fourteen Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) from Wisconsin are back home following 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in Washington, DC. They went to the Nation's Capital with a message: Support legislation to honor and strengthen the Peace Corps' mission of promoting peace and friendship around the world.

The local volunteers were among 700 who committed themselves to participate in a September 22<sup>nd</sup> Capitol Hill advocacy day, organized by the National Peace Corps Association, the nation's leading non-profit organization supporting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the Peace Corps community. September 22<sup>nd</sup> marked fifty years to the day of final congressional passage and signing of the Peace Corps Act in 1961. More than 5,000 attended Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations from September 21-25.

Advocates urged continued strong support for funding of the Peace Corps, noting the positive role Peace Corps volunteers play in U.S. outreach to the world and emphasizing the forgotten dividend and many domestic benefits RPCVs provide to communities here at home. Earlier this year Peace Corps received a \$26 million cut to its \$400 million budget. Advocates are seeking to forestall further cuts. Some 8,655 Peace Corps volunteers are currently in the field – an increase of nearly 1,000 from a year ago and the highest number in 40 years. Since 1961, more than 200,000 citizens have served as Peace Corps volunteers in nearly 140 countries. The UW-Madison ranks as the all-time second top recruiter of volunteers, sending over 5,500 volunteers overseas. Today there are 220 Wisconsin volunteers serving in one of the 76 countries currently served by Peace Corps.

Advocates urged bi-partisan support and cooperation to ensure passage of the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act, designed to strengthen the agency's training and response to volunteers serving overseas who are subjected to physical or sexual assault. Since this issue received much attention earlier this year, Congress, the Peace Corps and victims advocacy groups have taken significant steps forward to address the concern. As a result of the advocacy efforts, the Senate unanimously passed this legislation on October 3, 2011.

Congress is also considering legislation to authorize the creation of a commemorative work near the National Mall to mark the historic significance of the founding of the Peace Corps in 1961, and the ideals represented by its founding. This project would be entirely funded by private donations. Peace Corps advocates say passage of this legislation would serve as a capstone to this year's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. As a result of the advocacy efforts, 20 new co-sponsors were added to the legislation by the close of the week.

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Bringing the World Back Home