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Subject: RPCVSF's Summer 2022 Newsletter
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Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of South Florida is *your* group—please join us for fun get-togethers, community service activities, job/life networking, great events, stimulating conversation, and much more. Read on and get involved!



Tropical Currents

The RPCVSF Newsletter

Summer, 2022

Summer is here!

and RPCVSF has some very summery events planned ...

- 1) a Marlins game on June 23 and
- 2) a picnic at Crandon Park Beach on July 16.

Please register on our [website](#).

And check back for additional Marlins games!!!

Recap of Recent Events!

Happy Hours - Beginning the week of 5/20, we seemed to be dedicated to Happy Hours! On May 26, there was Happy Hour with a Purpose ... the purpose being to raise funds for the two Afghan families RPCVSF is ...

sponsoring. (The recommendation is to have \$5,000 available for each family for emergency uses. The initial support the families received is gone and the families are on their own. The funds will assist in covering shortfalls.) The May 20 Happy Hour had no "purpose", just to connect, get to know each other a bit better and have a good time ... which we did!!!

Cinco de Mayo Fiesta (May 7) - After a 2-year hiatus (you know why), the Cinco celebration was back in full force at the home of Helene Dudley. The Mariachis entertained us with gusto, the pinatas were a smash hit and there was an abundance of food and MANY lovely people.

Everglades Outing (March 19) - After last year's virtual outing, we were all happy to be back in the Everglades. This year we sponsored 46 children from Chapman Partnership and Genesis Hopeful Haven. Assisted by park rangers, members of Kiwanis and RPCVSF volunteers, the children learned, had their questions answered and were fed. In the group I was in, a young boy was fascinated by the bugs! And an older girl was really interested in the fish and was wondering if you could eat gar; she knew a LOT due to fishing with her grandmother over the years. Yes, it was great to be back!

Ongoing Volunteer Teams

Assisting Afghan Refugees - Most likely you know ... two RPCVSF teams have been assisting Afghan refugees for the past few months. Team 1's family consists of father (27), mother (20) and three sons (3, 2, and 4 months). And Team 2: father, mother (23), plus son (7) and daughter (5). Here are current updates from the teams!!!

Team 1 is still making tremendous progress in assisting Afghan families to resettle in South Florida. RPCVSF Team 1 has now raised \$4,707 of our \$5,000 goal. In the month of May, our Afghan family of five, the husband and wife, and their three young kids attended two BBQs hosted by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of South Florida members, Helene Dudley and David Garcia. Our Afghan family integrated really well meeting new folks, seeing a live Mariachi group, and the kids experienced a few fun Pinata games.

Additionally, the baby of the family has received his birth certificate. The family received their Medicaid card and also is now enrolled in the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. Finally, Mr. David Michael has joined our team to provide English Tutoring to our family twice a week. We are really thrilled to have Mr. Michael. The first visit was on May 26th teaching our Afghan family common English greetings and the alphabet. Weekly family visits continue from the team and more exciting events are forthcoming!

Team 2 (reported by Taylor Majher; this is a joint team with Coconut Grove Rotary) has accomplished a lot in the last few weeks. The husband,

Mohammad has continued working and with the help of one of our team members has set up a bank account and deposits all of his paychecks there. He is enthusiastic about saving up for a car and a new apartment for after the year that they have in Little Havana.

The wife of the family, Asma has started taking English classes three times a week at a local school, she enjoys the classes and has reported her teachers and fellow students are all nice people. She has also completed multiple health appointments and just has one more consultation before beginning normal check-ups.

The children have physicals scheduled for the month of June, they have received all routine immunizations and two volunteers have worked on completing their school registration so they can begin in the Fall. Another volunteer has successfully picked up their uniforms, the children are very excited to start school soon!

Finally, the entire family received support from three team members in finally setting up their internet! They are using the donated laptop that was given to them back in March to practice typing and work on English language skills.

In early May Asma, her children and one of her friends (who is also from Afghanistan) joined our volunteer team and the RPCVSF/RAA Team 1 and their family for a backyard BBQ at Dave Garcia's (Leader of Team 1) home in Homestead. We brought a dish to share, Dave set up a pool for the kids to play in and the adults enjoyed mingling and relaxing in Dave's large, serene backyard. It was a great way to bring everyone together and have some fun on a Sunday afternoon.

Note: Many of the Afghans evacuated were granted "humanitarian parole". This allows them to stay in the country for 2 years; so their one year anniversary is fast approaching. To stay longer, it is necessary to apply for asylum or a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV). However there is a tremendous backlog in processing these applications. The [Afghan Adjustment Act](#) provides a remedy for this situation. If this path sounds good to you, please contact our Senators and your Representative. In addition to the above link, further information can be found on our [website](#).

Changemaking Education Award

Our Spirit of Service-Learning Award has evolved into an award with a broader reach, the Changemaking Education Award. Service-learning is still included; however, also included are Project-Based Learning with a civic focus and community engaged research ... some kind of curriculum oriented activity that has the students interfacing with the community. As we know (or can imagine) the past two years have been particularly challenging for educators. So especially this year we want to celebrate and recognize K-12

educators. So especially this year we want to celebrate and recognize K-12 and higher education teachers who go the extra mile by creating educational experiences that intentionally prepare students for informed, engaged participation in their communities' civic and democratic life.

Do you know of such a teacher? Perhaps in the school where you teach or the school your child (or grandchild) attends? If so, please let them know of the award. More information and downloadable nomination forms can be found [HERE](#).

And, SAVE THE DATE: **October 1** will be the Award Potluck Dinner!!!

Peace Corps Reports the Return of Volunteers to Service Overseas

"To date, Trainees and reinstated Volunteers have returned to nine posts: Zambia, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Namibia, Uganda, Mexico, Ecuador, Eastern Caribbean, and Belize. The Peace Corps anticipates that Volunteers will return to nearly one-third of the total countries where Peace Corps is invited to serve in the coming months. All 32 posts issuing invitations have met the Peace Corps' robust reentry criteria which involve health, safety, and other logistical factors."

T r a v e l !!!

Something's Coming, Something Good!

By travel@rpcvsf.org

Travel has spent several weeks working with our travel agent, Africa Adventure Company, on the itinerary for our March, 2023, **safari to Namibia**. Some things are certain: 1. The travel company requires ALL travelers to be vaccinated and boosted. 2. All travelers are required to take an anti-malaria drug. *Travel* will help you obtain generic Malarone. 3. Single rooms will be scarce and have a price supplement. 4. It is not too soon to shop for a wide-brimmed straw hat, (NO baseball caps) 5. Our safari vehicles will likely be 2 Toyota Land Cruisers with A/C carrying 7 passengers + driver/guide each. If we have an overflow, we will try to get a third vehicle. The real problem is lodges. There could also be testing and mask requirements we will deal with later.

We are trying to replicate our previous wondrous trip. What next? We are Peace Corps so we improve. Right now we are trying to add an overnight at one of the largest conservancies in the country. (A conservancy is a large tract of land leased by the government to an entrepreneur who must fence and develop it with a lodge, electricity, clean water, sewage/waste provision, and roads. It is often adjacent a national park with a gate in the fence to insure genetic variety.) We visit nearby Africat Conservancy, home to dozens of cheetahs and a leopard. The mothers of these cats were poached before they had a chance to teach their cubs to hunt. They can never be returned to the wild and the mercy of other animals

Our safari starts in Johannesburg at the Met-Court hotel in The Emperor's Palace complex, a 5 minute walk from the airport. We do not walk it. Too dangerous. We take an airport-hotel shuttle. We note the 10 foot fence topped with razor wire and the gate guarded by men with AK-47s. This is one of the largest casino operations in South Africa. We stay 2 nights to fight jet lag. SA is not on daylight savings time but we are so the time difference is only 5 hours.

We gather in Tribes Cocktail Lounge and Restaurant for intros and a 5 minute ceremony to initiate newbies who have never been to Africa. The large restaurant has an even larger menu so food cultists will find lots of kale. I recommend the ostrich (farm raised) steak in berry sauce, a little chewy, but nice. *Travel* will also provide each table with a bottle of South African bubbly.

The next day we are shown landmarks in the city while never leaving our locked vehicles until we reach the townships, specially built residential areas for blacks under the Apartheid regime. We see Archbishop Tutu's home which is not open to the public and Nelson and Winnie Mandela's home across the street which we tour. Today the townships all have piped water, electricity, and paved streets. Most homes have huge additions with no attempt to blend with the original structure.

Then we fly to **Windhoek**, the bustling capital of Namibia where we meet our driver/guides and vehicles (No assigned seating) We head due west to see the largest sand dunes in the world. These are national monuments no one is allowed on. The government has set aside one, nicknamed Old Man, for tourists to climb. It is an easy walk to the top or you can take a couple of steps and turn back. Most people who go to the top sit down and slide down. Suggested apparel: slacks. The sand is hot. Just outside the city, we spot our first animals, a herd of impalas, a medium sized antelope, the largest animal group in Africa. They are so cute. We stop for pix. We come across more impalas. They are so cute. We stop. We come across more impalas. They are so cute. We do not stop until we spot the magnificent oryx, a large solitary antelope, the national symbol. They mate for life so sometime the bride is with him. If a bachelor is with him, they are not gay, just good friends beyond mating age. *SUCH A DEAL OPTION*: sunrise hot air balloon ride over the dunes. See how vast they are; watch them change color as the sunrises; all topped off with a bubbly breakfast on the beach.

The seal rookery is next, hundreds of adult seals and pups in a small space. This means a lot of pee and a lot of crap and a big odor. We do this before lunch. We may even see some vessels stuck on the rocks while small waves

often. We may even see some vessels stuck on the rocks while small waves 24/7 break them up, toss them onshore giving the country the nickname **Skeleton Coast**.

Passing through Walvis Bay, we remark, "What a lovely English seaside town." And it is.

If you *sprechen*, you can practice in **Swakopmund**, a resort city and home of the descendants of the original German settlers. We stay at the Hotel Hansa, a beautifully restored colonial hotel. Hansa means Germany in Old German. This is where Brangelina popped out twins. Outside the city, we change to dune buggies with guides who will dig out some of the many critters who live under the desert. They are very sensitive to light so we are asked to stand shoulder to shoulder to form a sun shield. The guides will find a sidewinder to show us one of the deadliest snakes in the world.

Finally **Etosha National Park and Namutoni fort** are our northernmost destinations. Etosha is one of the oldest and largest national parks in Africa. We do at least 2 game drives, one to the west and one to the east for a wander through a fort from colonial times, used during 2 world wars and the war for independence to hold upstarts demanding freedom.

Heading home, we stop at a tented camp. Not real tents: wood frames covered with canvas with a concrete block wing to provide an *en suite* bathroom. All this is so you can see desert-adapted elephants, Darwin in action.

Back in Windhoek, we luxuriate in the Hilton hotel and our farewell dinner at Joe's Beer House. This is also my birthday dinner which I have postponed too many months.

Remember: this is an official event of RPCVSF which gets no money from the event.

The Trip Leader is a volunteer and unpaid. This is NOT a strenuous trip. Due to arthritis in knees and hips, I use the wheelchair service in airports.

There are 2 packages. This email concerns the land package and is subject to final adjustments. More information will be given on the air package.

When the land package is made public and sent out, 8 to 10 days will be given to email *Travel* of acceptance. 2 or 3 days will be needed for me to sort out rooms and sleeping arrangements. The following day we all call Africa Adventure Company with our credit cards in hand to make a deposit and choose a payment plan. The time for acceptance is very short because there is great demand for lodge rooms. A deposit holds them.

Then on to the air package from your home to Johannesburg.

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