
Amigos de Honduras

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Special email edition

August 2015

WELCOME TO AMIGOS DE HONDURAS

Loren Hintz (Olanchito 1980-82)
Newsletter Editor
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This is a special edition of the **Amigos de Honduras** newsletter being sent to all members of the Peace Corps Honduras database. **Included is updated information for the Feb. 2016 PC Honduras reunion.** Besides the regular articles of the August 2015 edition I am including a few older articles from recent editions of the newsletter. Please consider joining Amigos de Honduras (an affiliate group of the National Peace Corps Association). We hope you will also write articles for the newsletter, donate to the Amigos de Honduras Grant Fund, serve on committees, attend the 2016 reunions, take advantage of Alan's Best of Amigos collection offer and visit Honduras again. **Disfrute!**

PCHONDURAS REUNION NEWORLEANS

Terri Salus (1978-80, Teguc)
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Things are falling into place nicely for our upcoming Peace Corps Honduras Reunion Feb.11 to 15,

2016 in New Orleans thanks to hard work by Jon Lind (Website), Desiree Loeb-Guth (Publicity and Party Planning), Piero Caserto (Meetings and Party Planning), Terri Salus (Coordinator), and many others. Attached is the Peace Corps Honduras Reunion 2016 in New Orleans Brochure that Desiree prepared and following is a summary of what you can expect. **To take advantage of availability and lower prices, make your plans now!**

Planning for Peace Corps Honduras Reunion 2016 in New Orleans:

(<http://www.peacecorphondurasreunion2013.com/>): Jon Lind (Tegucigalpa, 1980-82) has very generously agreed to update the website so that we can share information expeditiously. Check the website often to get up-to-date information. Note that while you may post to the website (blog tab), do NOT expect reunion planners to respond to inquiries posted to the webpage. Please ask questions via email.

Facebook Group ("Honduras Peace Corps"): Desiree Loeb-Guth (El Rosario, Comayagua, 1983-85) has been posting, from time-to-time, updates to the "Honduras Peace Corps" Facebook group. **"Peace Corps Honduras Reunion 2016 Brochure,"** designed by Desiree, provides an overview of the 2016 Reunion.

Amigos de Honduras and Master (Contact) List: Steve Phelan

(Tegucigalpa, 1973-74) will send out two emailings to the group, once in late summer 2015 and once in early winter (late December 2015 or early January 2016). The summer 2015 email will include a complimentary copy of *Amigos de Honduras*, edited by Loren Hintz (Olanchito, 1980-82) **If you wish to join Amigos de Honduras** and receive future issues of the newsletter and updates, contact

amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com
or send your \$15 *Amigos* membership dues to Joan Larimore (San Francisco de Valle, 1986-88) at 2334 Sunset Avenue, Enumclaw, WA 98022; indicate whether you wish to receive the *Amigos* newsletter by email as an Adobe pdf file or by US Postal Service (and include your address).

Conference Calls: we will continue with our monthly conference calls and all are welcome to participate. To join in, call our FreeConferenceCall bridge line at 1-605-475-3200 and provide the participant code: 710386#; in the event that the primary line is problematic, we have established a back-up line, 1-712-775-7031 with participant code: 477-841-138#. All calls run from 9-10 PM Eastern and are scheduled for 9/21/2015 (Monday), 10/20/2015 (Tuesday), 11/18/2015 (Wednesday), 12/21/2015 (Monday), 1/19/2016 (Tuesday), and 2/1/2016 (Monday).

Registering for Peace Corps Honduras Reunion 2016 in New Orleans:

To register for the Reunion, send checks (\$50/person), payable to "Therese Salus/Peace Corps Honduras" to 8501 Aragon Lane, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. The registration fee will cover fixed costs, and, perhaps, the Sunday night Fiesta. If your plans change, the registration fee will be refunded if requested before January 10, 2016. With your payment, include your name, contact information—including mobile numbers (to be shared), lodging, group/years of service, and site. An updated registration list will be posted to the website the beginning of every month, starting in September 2015.

Travelling to Peace Corps Honduras Reunion 2016 in New Orleans:

New Orleans is serviced by Louis Armstrong International Airports, which is about 16 miles from the French Quarter. Shuttle buses, city buses, and taxis provide service between the airport and downtown New Orleans. Cars can be rented from the airport (I have always been happy with Enterprise, which also offers a training program for Tulane students), but parking is limited and expensive around the French Quarter. We chose our date (a holiday weekend just after Mardi Gras) to avoid extreme heat and humidity, but there is a cost—travel and lodging are at peak rates. If you are staying in the French Quarter, you will be able to get around locally by foot, Pedi cab, taxi, and, of course, the famous streetcar!

Lodging for Peace Corps

Honduras Reunion 2016 in New Orleans:

Because February is a very popular time to visit New Orleans, you are encouraged to reserve lodging as soon as possible. We have had the following hotels, in or near the French Quarter, set aside blocks of rooms for our group (Of course, you are welcome to find lodging elsewhere, such as through AirBnB, Degas House B&B, etc.):

- Hampton Inn (226 Carondelet Street, 504-529-9990, \$169/breakfast included, 55 rooms) (Note: Hampton Inn is allowing us to use the Breakfast Room, during the afternoon and evenings, for informal gatherings.)
- La Quinta (301 Camp Street, 800-642-4239, \$229/breakfast included, 100 rooms)
- Bienville House (320 Decatur Street, 800-535-7836, \$199/breakfast included, 40 rooms)
- Maison Dupuy Hotel (1001 Toulouse Street, 800-535-9177, \$149 weekday+\$229 weekend/no breakfast, 25 rooms)
- Hotel Monteleone (214 Royal Street, 504-523-3341, \$249/no breakfast, 20 rooms)
- Hotel Mazarin (730 Bienville Street, 504-581-7300, \$189/weekday+\$239/weekend—we have not reserved a block)
- Clarion Inn (1300 Canal St, 504-299-9900, ~\$139/night—a group, but not planning committee, has reserved a block)

Meeting, Playing, and Eating at Peace Corps Honduras Reunion 2016 in New Orleans:

We are arranging for the following group activities. We will post to the webpage recommendations for sightseeing, dining, etc. You can also contact the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau

(www.NewOrleansCVB.com) for tourist information. You will be able to choose which, if any, planned activities you wish to sign up for. For many activities, you will need to make your own reservations in advance and for the Saturday Natchez boat ride in particular, you should purchase your tickets early as the boat has limited capacity. To register for our group's planned activities via GrayLine, go to <http://www.neworleanssteamboat.com/2016/PCHR/reserve.html>

Thursday Eve (2/11/2016): **GrayLine Cocktail Tour (Sign up via GrayLine--\$26), followed by Bowling and Dancing at Rock 'n Bowl (Sign up January 2016)**

Friday Lunch (2/12/2016, Noon): Dooky Chase Creole Restaurant by Leah Chase (2301 Orleans Avenue). We have reserved the private dining room in this Treme landmark restaurant for lunch, which will cost approximately \$30/person, including Creole cuisine, ice tea, taxes, and gratuity, payable at lunch. If you wish to participate, note on your registration (spots will be allocated first come, based on Reunion registration date).

Friday Eve (2/12/2016): GrayLine Walking or Bus Tours (Sign up via GrayLine--\$23.50-\$66.50).

Saturday Lunch (2/13/2015, 11 AM-1:30 PM): GrayLine Cruise up the Mississippi River aboard the Steamboat Natchez and enjoy lunch while listening to live music. (Sign up now via GrayLine--\$37.75; if you miss the lunchtime cruise, there will be other public lunches throughout the weekend.)

Saturday Eve (2/13/2016, approximately, 5-8 PM): Desiree Loeb-Guth (El Rosario, Comayagua,

1983-85) is planning an early evening party for us on Frenchman Street.

Sunday Afternoon (2/14/2016, approximately, 2-5 PM): Piero Caserta (Catacamas, Group 8: 1967-69) arranged for meeting space at the Tulane University School of Social Work (TUSSW) (127 Elk Place). Folks are needed to plan a program (or we can meet casually in areas designated for each decade).

Sunday Eve (2/14/2016, approximately, 5-8 PM): Desiree Loeb-Guth and Piero Caserta are planning a Fiesta Hondureño. This will be an opportunity for folks, especially musicians present their talents. We have reserved the TUSSW for the Fiesta, but, depending how many reserve by early November, we may have to move to a larger venue. Food and drink are being take care of, but we need folks to plan the program.

Remembering Peace Corps Honduras Reunion 2016 in New Orleans:

You will be able to order SWAG between September 15-October 12, 2015 (another order window may open in December 2015). Proceeds benefit Atlanta Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Santa Barbara Peace Corps Association.
T-Shirt: <http://www.booster.com/hondurasT2016>
Hoody: <http://www.booster.com/hondurashood2016>

Finally, to get you into the spirit, check out:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kouWAr-itY>

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan M. Larimore (San Francisco del Valle 1986-88)
amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com

Thanks to all you wonderful members who donate to the Grant Fund and also pay your membership dues of \$15, our Bank account is now at \$3403.40. We are finally back on track with NPCA. I am once again able to access the appropriate records to find out who has paid directly through NPCA. Just so you are aware of how it is done, by mid-month, an amount appears in our back account but no names are attached. I go to NPCA records to find out who has paid. For those of you who pay NPCA dues through Amigos there is no problem in seeing who has paid.

So hopefully, I now have accurate accounting and the due date on your mailing label is correct. As always contact me if there are any mistakes. REMEMBER, please send me a change of address if you moved. (And send email and other database changes to Steve.) For the May issue two more newsletters were returned: addressee unknown.

A very big gracias to Brant Miller who volunteered to be our electronic mailman! He not only takes care of our Amigos pdf tasks but works with Fred Corvi to introduce Honduran RPCVs as they are found to our association. Consequently we have picked up some new members.

Not only are the Washington State Incorporation dues (\$10.00) for **Amigos de Honduras** paid for

another year but we are also once again paid members of NPCA (NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION). At almost 200 members, **Amigos de Honduras** is considered a medium sized affiliate group and our yearly dues are \$100.00.

What does that get us? Loren and I are in constant touch with Washington DC Headquarters and are kept updated on all NPCA doings. It is also our tie to the other "Friends of ____" groups.

Many of our Amigos members have been with us since the start of **Amigos de Honduras** 25 years ago. Thank you for hanging in there with us through our growing pains and helping us to become the incorporated association we are! A special note of thanks to **Marilyn Watts and Phyllis Bloch Shelton** who did all the initial hard work and got us off to such a good start! You two ladies are THE BEST!

GRANT COMMITTEE

Would you like to help Amigos de Honduras but prefer to not work very hard? Hey! Come join Judith Whitney -Terry, our editor Loren Hintz and me, Joan Larimore, on the Grants Committee. Three or four times a year we have grant requests submitted and the task of the Committee is to read the grant with its monetary request and decide if we wish to support it.



AMIGOS DE HONDURAS DONATIONS 2015

BRENDA CRUMPACKER

RON REAFS

ARIETTA WEIDMANN

KATE RAFFERTY

MAGGIE MCQUAID

IRENE NOWAK-COE

PETER AND ANN BAUER

MIL GRACIAS A TODOS!!!

More RPCVs are learning that Amigos de Honduras can help fund projects. Typically a RPCV is involved with an NGO in Honduras or shares with the Grant Committee a project and we communicate by email to decide if we can help fund it. In 2013 we donated \$1000 to two organizations. In 2014 \$500 to one organization. In 2015 we have been able to donate \$2800 to four organizations. Recipients write an article for the newsletter and often send additional emails with thanks. **Remember donations to Amigos de Honduras are tax deductible.**

A 25 YEAR CELEBRATION

**(2/15)Joan M. Larimore (1986-
88 San Francisco del Valle)**

In the fall of 2015, Amigos de Honduras will turn 25 years old! As a review for those of you who have been with us since the beginning and for the edification of whom are

recent members, the story of our beginning is well worth repeating.

In 1990 the National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers held its first Conference on the west coast. Marilyn Watts, Phyllis Bloch Shelton and Joan Larimore, who became friends at our Miami PC Staging in 1986, decided to attend. At the very first meeting where all attendees gathered, these gals entered, looked around the room at tables with signs reading "FRIENDS OF" and not one said FRIENDS OF HONDURAS. At every available time during the three day Conference, these three had their heads together planning.

Marilyn became the first Editor. She learned how to construct and publish a Newsletter on her computer. Phyllis managed the data base. Joan was busy with her job as a PC Recruiter in Seattle and supplied some articles.

Then, as often happens, Marilyn and Phyllis were temporarily swamped by Life and a computer, printer and all records to date were passed on to Joan. She sent out a plea to the membership and one brave soul responded. Unfortunately, he became ill and had to quit as editor.

We "coasted" for a while, reluctant to give up completely. Following Hurricane Mitch (1998), which hit Honduras hard, concern for friends in our country of service brought Amigos back to life once again. Alan Waugh, who went to Honduras to help in the wake of "Mitch", volunteered to be our editor.

He continued until his retirement and involvement with Habitat for

Humanity and other agencies began to absorb more of his time. Joan became editor (with Alan's help) for a few editions of Amigos. But the task of Secretary/Treasurer was more than enough to keep her busy so Loren Hintz took up the reins in the beginning of 2014.

We have continued to grow, involve our organization in activities which support the Honduran people, and keep our membership updated on what is happening. Oh yes! We recorded in Washington State in 1999 as a non-profit corporation. And we have also published two Directories of Amigos members.

So, as we venture into 2015, we are still holding true to our original objects of keeping in touch with each other, staying current on events in Honduras, and exploring ways to fund projects that support Hondurans.

Amigos, we share a proud and enduring history of our stay in our Peace Corps country, Honduras. Despite the drug trafficking, the sad closing of the PC Honduras Office in Tegucigalpa and the withdrawal of PC Staff and Volunteers from Honduras, Amigos de Honduras continues on

THE BEST OF AMIGOS Alan Waugh (SPS 1973-75)

The title and subtitle tell everything. This book includes 102 articles written by former Honduras Peace Corps Volunteers and staff published in the Amigos newsletter over 14 years, 162 pages in all. **Alan Waugh (San Pedro Sula 1973-75), long-time editor of the Amigos newsletter, created this assemblage**

of wonderful writing which includes maps and some of the original photos and graphics for the articles. The book is published in pdf format, 12.5 MB in size, and is available at no charge.

To obtain a free copy, e-mail your request to Alan Waugh at awaugh@q.com. The book will be e-mailed back to you.

A **paper copy** may be ordered: write a check for \$24.00 (which includes xeroxing & postage), payable to Alan Waugh, and mail it with your request to Alan Waugh, 2103 N.E. 70th Street, Seattle, Washington 98115.

UPDATE: PALISAL(5/15)

Dale Schmitz (Yamaranguila, Intibuca 1967-69)



In April Frances and I returned from two months in Honduras.

THE BEST OF THE AMIGOS



DE HONDURAS newsletter

1999-2013

Life & Times in Honduras

Then & Now

Stories, Personal Narratives & Travelogues Published Oct. 2013

This is information and pictures about the \$1,000 donated by Amigos de Honduras to Tools for Opportunity to train and equip carpenters in Honduras.

The photo is from the 7 days I spent with 2 woodworkers from our group who came for a week. We trained

and provided tools to 12 young, new, young carpenters at the Colosuca Training Center in Gracias, Lempira; and to 5 beginning carpenters at PALISAL, a lumber cooperative in Yamaranguila, Intibucá. It was our second year at Colosuca and our first at PALISAL.

These men will earn their tools after one year during which they will have mentored another person in carpentry, planted 5 trees and donated 40 hours in a project for their town, a school, a park, or other non-profit group/entity.

We will visit and interview everyone next year to check their compliance, and to gather information about their increased earnings because of the training and donated tools.

The carpenters at the cooperative lumber mill PALISAL in Yamaranguila, Intibuca built the new workshop before we arrived to use to build products and to store tools.

While there, I arranged and took a trip with them to the Honduran National Forestry Institute and University in Siguatepeque to view several models of solar kilns.

They plan to build a solar kiln, which will dry the wood with about a week down to a moisture level of about 15%. This will allow them to sell dry wood at a higher price and for carpenters to make better products that will not warp.



Thanks to Amigos de Honduras and those who contributed for the donation to Tools for Opportunity. More information and pictures are available on Facebook or Tools for Opportunity's website. (FYI: I'm the one in the blue T-shirt in the photo with the sign for Amigos de Honduras.)

PARQUE NACIONAL SANTA BARBARA(5/15)

Loren Hintz (Olanchito 1980-82)

Despite the pull out of Peace Corps from Honduras in early 2012, many projects begun by volunteers are still working. **Alicia Ward and Alex Osteen** were two volunteers who worked in small villages near Santa Barbara National Park. They overlapped in their PC service there and since they left an Australian, **Robert Lambeck**, arrived and is helping the community.

Alicia Ward was one of the last group of volunteers what was able to COS before Peace Corps pulled out. From 2009 to 2011 she was in the Protected Areas Management Sector in the small village of El Dorado. She now works for an environmental consulting firm in Seattle, Washington.

Like most volunteers she had many projects. One effort was the development of a local ecotourism project to help generate income for the local communities near the national park. About 100 visitors a year passed through the area. Her village of El Dorado had 801 residents and was next to the larger San Luis Planes where Alex worked. Right next to the park was a very poor village called El Sauce. Each town has lots of local mistrust and jealousy with each other and much of Alicia's time was spent moderating

meetings. Folks developed a network of trails to access the park and hoped to develop a visitor center. One ongoing fear was that some foreigner would build a fancy hotel and take advantage of their own work. They wanted to obtain a co-management agreement with the park service but were unable to do that. Instead someone from the other side of the National Park was able to obtain one. His focus is far away, so the El Dorado, San Luis Planes and El Sauce continue their own ecotourism project.



Alicia was able to do an inventory of the amphibians and reptiles of the park which helped her with her M.S. research. She coordinated efforts with the Honduran National University and a botanist from there was able to inventory the unique flora of the mountain. She learned about the native stingless bee and helped with developing its honey production. (Its clear, white honey is believed to have medicinal properties by locals.) She was also successful in helping her community create a library and community center. She managed to get the mayor of the municipality to donate half of the cost and used the Peace Corps Partnerships fund raising opportunity. Unfortunately as coffee prices fell, the community was unable to put more resources into. Even though the library is within the

school grounds the teachers seem unwilling to help open the library and there is very limited access to it.

Communication at her site was always an issue. Some villagers have an antenna which lets them phone, others climb up the mountain until they have phone reception. During the rainy season the bus could not make it to her site and she would have to stay over at Pena Blanca or Cerro Azul. Sometimes she felt unsafe but if you follow your training for well-educated travelling there should be no problem. For example it is foolish if you are a female to ride the bus wearing shorts and or look at laptop while travelling. Dress appropriately, carry cell phone with emergency numbers entered, don't bring valuables and travel light.

She has been able to visit once in Feb. 2014. For her community it was as if she had never left and friends wanted to share their problems and get advice.

Alex Osteen was in the PC Business Development Program but had an unusual situation because his site was a very rural area. His primary job was with a Coffee Cooperative at San Luis Planes. Santa Barbara produces some of the best coffee in Central America. Each year someone in the area wins Taza de Excelencia rating. Besides working with the coffee industry he helped with the local health clinic committee and is pleased that three years after he left, the committee is still organized and holding local fund raisers for the health clinic. He also began working with Alicia Ward whose site was at El Dorado with folks near the National Park developing an ecotourism project.

Alex was very disappointed when he learned that Peace Corps was pulling out because of safety concerns in the country. First volunteers were told to “stand fast” and told to stay at their sites and not travel. Finally they were told that the decision was made for Peace Corps Volunteers to be sent home. PCVs had the opportunity to spend the Christmas holidays in site, pack and say good bye. Before leaving the country, they were put up in a Tegucigalpa Hotel, the Maya, for three or four days. It was nice being able to talk and visit with other volunteers but a very bittersweet moment. He wished he could have stayed around longer. (After the pull out he even managed to complete his health clinic project while in the US.) They had already lined up next set of Honduran PVCs to continue their local projects up until 2016.

I asked Alex about problems of violence and drugs. He felt safest in the campo. His village people would keep an eye out. He was not concerned about drug nor security issues in his area. Drugs/gang violence was definitely a problem in the big cities. There was also highway banditry on the highways for example roads to Olancho. Random violence in smaller cities was also a possibility.

Alex felt he lived at the best site in the Honduras. He wished he could have stayed longer. It was on the border of a national park. Santa Barbara is second tallest mountain in the nation. It has old growth cloud forest with Quetzals. An endemic salamander is found there. Its natural beauty is not matched anywhere else. He loved staring at the mountain in the mornings before work, as the clouds rolled in. It produces some of

the best coffee in Central America and he enjoyed drinking it and learning about it.

After Peace Corps Alex went to Duke for grad school and now lives in Portland Oregon working on energy efficiency. Alex has managed to get back once a year to visit. To get to site a bit difficult. You need to leave early from San Pedro Sula or Santa Barbara towards Lago Yojoa because only one local bus to village and it leaves at 11:30. Some locals have trucks are willing to shuttle you. \$50 for the trip. There is no cell phone coverage in the mountain so communication is difficult.

He encourages RPCVs to visit there. Going there would be a special vacation and meet special people.



LAKE YOJOA BIRDING BLITZ Nov 19-22 2015

William Orellana

One way to visit Honduras is on a birding trip. This announcement was shared by Jim Barborak (Teguc 77-79).

In a joint 3-day effort, we will attempt to record the more than 500 bird species in the Lake Yojoa area, which includes protected areas and private reserves such as the national parks Santa Bárbara and Cerro Azul Meambar, BIOPARQUE "Paradise" and more. This great birding experience will be attended by many enthusiastic birdwatchers who will contribute to the monitoring of birds in this amazing region.

Lake Yojoa Birding Blitz is organized by the Honduran Ornithology Association (ASHO) and supported by the Chamber of Tourism. In order to register the birds along the 16 selected routes, participants will be divided into groups each led by an expert bird watcher.

The guiding team will consist of experts such as **OLIVER KOMAR**, PhD, professor at Zamorano and in charge of e-Bird in Honduras; **ROBERT GALLARDO**, author of the Guide to the birds of Honduras, expert birdwatching guide and operator of Mt. Gem Tours; **WILLIAM ORELLANA** and **ALEXANDER ALVARADO**, expert birdwatching guides; and others.

DAY 1: Bird count (05:30 - 11:30 am), lunch (12:00 - 2:00 pm) (Hotel Honduyate Marina), entering bird lists into e-Bird Central America (2:00 - 4:00 pm), free birdwatching (4:00 - 6:00 pm), dinner and cultural activity (6:00 - 8:00 pm).

DAY 2: Bird count (5:30 - 11:30 am), lunch (12:00 - 2:00 pm) (Cabañas La Posada de Don Julio), entering bird lists in e-Bird Central America (2:00 - 4:00 pm), free birdwatching (4:00 - 6:00 pm), dinner and cultural activity (6:00 - 8:00 pm).

DAY 3: Bird count (5:30 - 11:30 am), lunch (12:00 - 2:00 pm) (BIOPARQUE "Paradise"), entering bird lists in e-Bird Central America (2:00 - 4:00 pm), free birdwatching (4:00 - 6:00 pm), closure of event, prizes for participants, dinner and cultural activity (6:00 - 10:00 pm).

info@beaksandpeaks.com

www.beaksandpeaks.com

www.hondurasaves.org/blitz



NEWS FROM NPCA

There is nothing quite like a large gathering of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs). There's a special spirit ... an energy. The National Peace Corps Association's (NPCA) fourth annual conference, Peace Corps Connect – Berkeley 2015 was no exception.

On June 5-6, 2015, some 500 RPCVs came together alongside political figures, entrepreneurs, Peace Corps and NPCA staff members, and a number of groups and organizations to share stories and create connections. In the sessions and panels, topics ranged from corporate leadership to writing a memoir to climate change. And through it all, the Peace Corps experience provided the unifying thread.

In the coming weeks look for some more blog posts on the conference (Here's the first: [Spreading the Word About Health Justice](#).) But in the meantime, do check out our [Facebook album of photos](#) from the conference and a [Storify](#) which draws together some of the social media from the event.

Thanks to PC Affiliate Groups signing onto the letter to the President supporting PC funding. (Amigos de Honduras is a Peace Corps Affiliate Group.)

Save the Dates and Start Making Your Plans - Peace Corps Connect 2016 Peace Corps Connect 2016, in conjunction with the Peace Corps' 55th anniversary, will be held in **Washington, DC from September 22-25, 2016**. The conference itself will take place on Friday and Saturday, September 23-24. It will be preceded by the National Day of Action (all day) and the Affiliate Group Network Annual Meeting (1 pm - 5 pm) on Thursday September 22.

We wanted you to know so your groups can begin organizing reunion events around the conference. We recommend Wednesday, September 21 as the ideal day for any full day programming, and the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for any embassy or dinner events you plan to organize.

As plans develop, we will be creating a master calendar to share your group events with the broader community. Watch these emails (and our [website](#)) for further information and instructions on how to list your group events.

THE EARLIEST CHOCOLATE DRINK OF THE NEW WORLD
New Chemical Analyses Take Confirmation Back 500 Years and Reveal that the Impetus for Cacao Cultivation was an Alcoholic Beverage



The earliest known use of cacao—the source of our modern day chocolate—has been pushed back more than 500 years, to somewhere between 1400 and 1100 B.C.E., thanks to new chemical analyses of residues extracted from pottery excavated at an archaeological site at **Puerto Escondido in Honduras**. The new evidence also indicates that, long before the flavor of the cacao seed (or bean) became popular, it was the sweet pulp of the chocolate fruit, used in making a fermented (5% alcohol) beverage, which first drew attention to the plant in the Americas.

That cacao's popularity on the world stage began with its role in an alcoholic beverage does not surprise archaeochemist Dr. Patrick McGovern, Senior Research Scientist at the Univ. of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and one of five authors of the scientific research

article on the discovery. 27 November 2007 print issue of PNAS USA (pp. 18937-18940, v104)

“This development probably provided the impetus to domesticate the chocolate tree and only later, to prepare a beverage based on the more bitter beans,” suggested Dr. McGovern. “An alcoholic beverage from the pulp, carrying on this ancient tradition, continues to be made in parts of Latin America.”

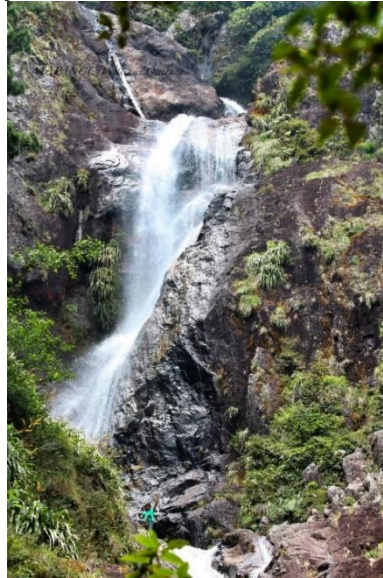
The famous chocolate beverage of the Mayan and Aztec kings, served at special ceremonies and feasts, came later. It was made from the cacao beans, often mixed with chilies, special herbs, honey, and flowers. The liquid was frothed into a foam, and both inhaled and drunk.

RPCV IN THE NEWS

According to NPCA Worldview Magazine long time Amigos de Honduras member **Steve Lenzo** (1985-87) is now Asst. National Director of Job Corps. . He is enjoying the new job, way different from managing public lands and environmental issues. Over the past 35 years he had various assignments in both the National Forests and also with the **Job Corps Program** and has enjoyed both. He is excited that Job Corps is initiating wildland fire fighting training (and permanent jobs) for Job Corps students.

Carly Kadlec via Facebook sent: Hi Honduras RPCVs! Some cool news to share from Gracias, Lempira. RPCV **Justin Aaron** (H17 PAM, 2010-2012) worked with Celaque National Park during his service and just this week they got recognition as a **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve** (one

of only 122 in Latin America & the Caribbean). Justin worked with the Park during his service to lay groundwork for this recognition and specifically supported them through biodiversity monitoring. Congrats to the folks at MAPANCE (La Mancomunidad de Municipios del Parque Nacional Montaña de Celaque and **Celaque National Park** on this achievement! Major shout out to Justin.



NY/HELP

Gordon Comstock (Ghana 66-68)

I am a member of Amigos de Honduras, although my Peace Corps experience was as a PCV in Ghana. After that experience, I kept saying I should "do something Peace-Corps like", and finally in 1989, my family encouraged me to go to Honduras with NY/HELP on their inaugural trip. I've been going back most every year since then, and am slowly learning Spanish -- and Honduran culture!

On our August 2014 trip, Ruth Shatzel, a RPCV from Honduras joined us; back in 2009, we had the privilege of having four PCVs work with us during our trip. I enjoyed the May issue of "Amigos de Honduras" -- Maggie McQuaid and Mark Bonta had thought-provoking articles. And

I am always interested in learning from what other programs are doing.

NY/HELP Honduras began in 1989 as an ecumenical project of the NY Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ helping the indigenous Toupan communities in the mountains of Honduras. Since then, many people from all across New York State have participated, some by working in Honduras and others by providing financial and spiritual support.

In May 2014, **NY/HELPers**, led by David Makepeace of Honeoye UCC, labored alongside people living in communities down in the far valley to build latrines at several schools and a house for an Elderly widow.

In August, a group of six, led by Dr Gordon Comstock of Arcade, made the trip. Dr Gordon worked in the medical clinic, assisted by nurse-practitioner Ruth Shatzel of Buffalo.



Besides the medical care part of the trip, one of our **NY/ HELPers**, David Woodruff, spent time giving out school supplies and working in the gardens, and computerizing the pharmacy.

Several of the group, along with Honduran families and children, worked with three schools interested in developing school gardens. **NY/HELP** bought the wire for the fences necessary to keep stray livestock out, and we

worked together with parents and students at each school to prepare the gardens. The garden work continued after we NY/HELPers returned to the States.



August 2015 Blogs This morning, four volunteers left for Honduras for a 10-day mission trip. This is the first trip since the abrupt loss of our in-country coordinator earlier this year, which halted the trip scheduled for February. This trip will be the first time to see how our new coordinator, Joel Rodriguez, who lives in the local area, is doing, and see if we can improve our communications system. Expected projects will be seeing patients in the clinic and working with one or more of the schools. For more see:

<http://ny-help.blogspot.com>

CURRENT EVENTS

Thanks to everyone who has shared articles about Honduras and Hondurans.

Immigration continues to be an important theme. The number of children entering the US from Central America has decreased. Lawsuits are challenging the number of women and children placed in detention centers. The teenage mother who cut her wrist while in US Texas detention center said she was

separated from her son, forced to strip in front of guards and hidden in a hotel before being hastily deported to Honduras. Earlier in the year Honduran women at US detention center engaged in a hunger strike to protest conditions there. Gang violence in Central America especially in Honduras and El Salvador is driving a substantial exodus to other countries in the region. Teenagers in these countries are being recruited to join gangs; if they refuse, the gang will often retaliate against them and their families.

Presidential candidate Donald Trump's immigration comments struck a nerve. **Actress America of Honduran decent** was born and raised in Los Angeles and received a degree in International Relations from USC. An award winning actress, she is best known for her starring role in the ABC hit *Ugly Betty*. She wrote: "You've said some pretty offensive things about Latino immigrants recently, and I think they're worth addressing. Because, you know, this is the United States of America, where I have a right to speak up even if I'm not a billionaire. Isn't that awesome?"

"Anyway, I heard what you said about the kind of people you think Latino immigrants are -- people with problems, who bring drugs, crime and rape to America. While your comments are incredibly ignorant and racist, I don't want to spend my time chastising you. I'll leave that to your business partners like Univision and NBC, who have the power to scold you where it hurts. Instead, I'm writing to say thank you!"

"You see, what you just did with your straight talk was send more

Latino voters to the polls than several registration rallies combined! Thank you for that. Here we are pounding the pavement to get American Latinos to the polls, while your tactic proves most effective. Remarks like yours will serve brilliantly to energize Latino voters and increase turnout on Election Day against you and any other candidate who runs on a platform of hateful rhetoric."

Nearly three years after receiving a **CAFTA labor complaint** against Honduras, the US Department of Labor has released a report saying Honduras is failing to implement its labor laws related to freedom of association, child labor and acceptable conditions of work.

More and more protests are being heard due to the discovery that money embezzled from IHHS was used to finance the campaign of the National Party in the 2013 presidential election. "Don and I watch with interest the news of the *marchas de las antorchas*, Torch-lit Marches, in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Students and middle-income workers, who call themselves the *indignados*, the Indignant Ones, are calling for an end to government corruption."

"Then, one evening, we saw the Torches in our small town of Yoro. We heard rumors they would be marching in the evening, taking the protests country-wide. The march in Yoro was loud as protestors' voices blasted from loud speakers, but it was peaceful. They blocked traffic for a short time, but since our business district is only three blocks long, it didn't cause much disruption. They carried signs and banners denouncing corruption, demanding accountability from leaders and calling for the resignation of the President Juan Orlando Hernández."

“The protestors allege that the director of the **Honduran Institute of Social Security** (IHSS) created a network of sham companies, embezzling \$350 million and providing his wife, girlfriend and brother with extravagant vacations, fancy cars and real estate holdings in several countries around the world. In the meantime, the medical care system in Honduras left dying patients without life-saving medication or hospital care. Here in Yoro the government health center has no medications. No antibiotics. No analgesics.”

On a different note: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will list the rare **Honduran Emerald** as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Measuring less than four inches in length and the only bird species endemic to Honduras, this **hummingbird** is in decline due to degradation, fragmentation, and loss of its dry thorn forest habitat as a result of cattle grazing and

agriculture. The Service finds as a result of its review of the best scientific and commercial information available, the Honduran emerald is at risk of extinction throughout its range – the definition of an endangered species – and in need of protection.

An estimated 5,000 to 10,000 breeding pairs of the birds remain, located in small, isolated valleys within the country. With 90 percent of the birds’ habitat now lost, and with remaining habitat degraded and fragmented, the hummingbirds must expend more energy in search of food and suitable breeding and nesting sites. This additional energy expenditure may affect the reproductive success of the species.

Certain activities involving the Honduran emerald will be prohibited without a permit, including import into and export out of the United States, “take” (defined by the ESA as harm, harass, kill, injure, etc.) within

the United States, and interstate and foreign commerce.

In addition to the protective listing under the ESA, the Service has also helped conserve Honduran emeralds through the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act**. Grants for projects in Honduras have benefitted this hummingbird through habitat conservation for neotropical migrants that share the same forested habitat in parts of northern Honduras.

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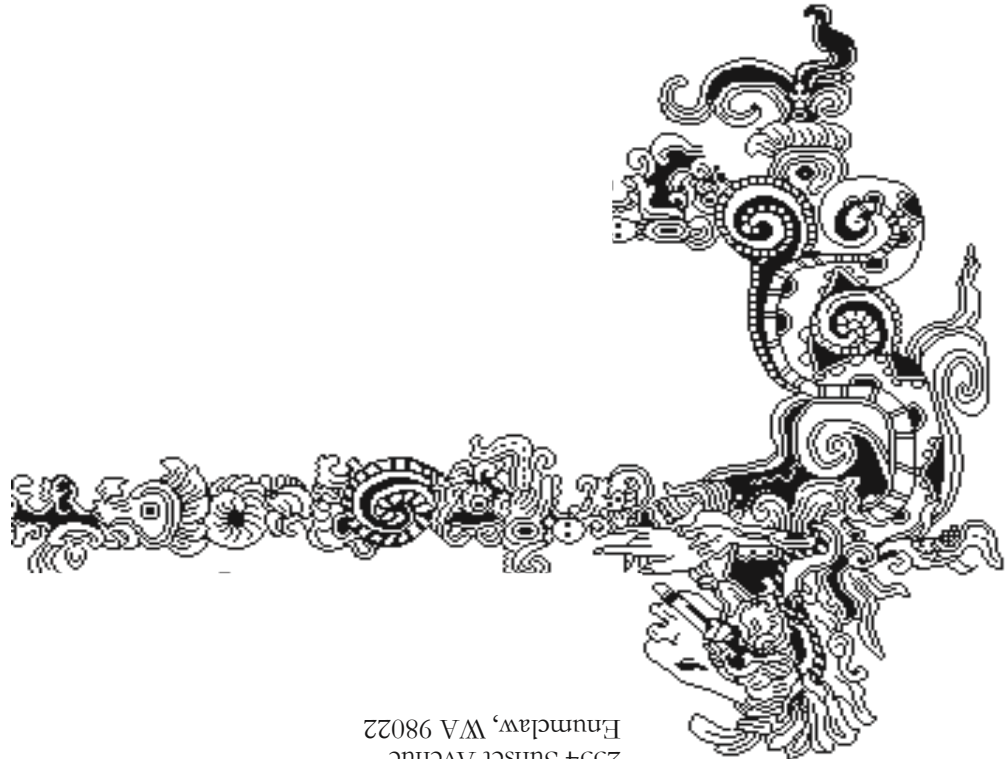
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