

Volunteers praise Peace Corp experience

By LISA PETERSEN
Of the Emerald

The Peace Corps can be a rewarding experience for adventurous seniors — but it's not for everyone, says Julie Granger, campus Peace Corps and Vista coordinator.

"I think you can come away feeling that you got a lot more out of the experience than you gave," says Granger.

William Kogut, a 26-year-old journalism graduate student, was a corps volunteer for two years. Kogut says he returned from Liberia with much more than he gave the people — he contracted malaria and possibly was exposed to 22 other diseases including leprosy, hookworms, hepatitis and yellow fever.

Granger doesn't recommend the adventure to all students. "There has to be a desire to do something like this and a commitment as well, that you're going to do it and spend the two years," says Granger.

A volunteer signing up for the two-year Peace Corps program can choose one of 60 countries in which to work, in areas such as health, agriculture and farming, engineering and teaching.

"Peace Corps is interested in helping people and developing countries in basic needs: shelter, food, water and health," Granger says.

"Basically, you're trying to use the resources available to you — what is available to the local people — so that you are really working yourself out of a job when you leave."

Granger volunteered in 1969 and went to Sierra Leone in western Africa, a town with 100 houses and a two-room schoolhouse. She taught, using traditional methods the first year, but says she didn't feel like she was using her abilities effectively.

The second year, she and other teachers rewrote and improved the program and ran training workshops, helping the Sierra Leone teachers to upgrade their methods of teaching.

"I had a desire to work with people who didn't have it as good as I did," Granger says, adding that she came home with the "satisfaction of knowing that I had volunteered for a couple of years to help somebody else. And the self-satisfaction of knowing I made it through. It certainly wasn't easy."

Kogut went to Liberia, West Africa, in 1975 as a secondary school teacher.

He says his reasons for volunteering were somewhat idealistic. "I felt obligated to reach out to people and try to help them on a one-to-one basis."

Kogut says he felt frustrated because of the school system. "I was teaching a 20th-century job in a really primitive type of environment. The educational system of the country is modeled on the American system. It's really irrelevant to the daily lives of the ordinary people."

Kogut did, however, help the school organize to build its library. He worked individually with his best students, preparing them for college.

Some those students have already graduated and are now teaching in



Julie Granger

Photo by Doug Williams

Liberia, says Kogut.

"I think people should join the Peace Corps, and I think that it is a really good thing. Otherwise we won't have America understanding firsthand the problems of the Third World area," says Kogut.

The basic requirements for joining the Peace Corps are: volunteers must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old, and without any dependents. The volunteer must have either a B.A. or B.S. degree, or at least 3 years of work experience in a field such as farming, carpentry or masonry.

Before starting the two-year program, volunteers must go through three months of intensive training in the appointed country while living with a local family.

They become familiar with the

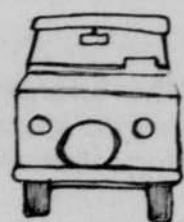
country's customs and food, and learn the language and the specific skills needed for their assigned job.

The volunteers' medical and dental care is free. After completing their term, they are paid \$125 for each month abroad. While in the foreign country, they are given a living allowance, 48 days paid vacation and transportation fare.

Interested students who will graduate in June should contact Julie Granger in the Career Planning Office, Susan Campbell Hall, Room 246.

Granger encourages seniors to apply by the end of December to be considered for openings in April, May and June training sessions. For programs starting in July, August, and September, seniors must apply by February.

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"In the future there will be a screaming need for people who can speak Chinese. It isn't off the wall anymore to study Chinese — you might actually be able to do something with it," says Michael Fish, head of the department of East Asian Languages.

In its six-year history, the East Asian languages department has reflected the growing interest in China, growing from a few courses offered by the now-defunct Asian Classics Department to a department including a full-time staff of six instructors and 10 graduate teaching assistants.

Twelve students currently major in East Asian languages, six each in Chinese and Japanese. But Fish says those numbers are deceptive, because all Asian Studies students are required to study either Chinese or Japanese for two years. This results in a lot of "ghost" majors — students who eventually claim one of the languages as a second major, Fish says.

The most important function of the department is to provide "an environment for people doing East Asian things to have a community of interest," Fish says.

The department does not offer any exchange programs, but its students are encouraged to study and live in Asia. Nine former students are now studying at the Mandarin Center in Taiwan, Fish says.

Despite the department's growth, Fish says he is concerned about its future, particularly the impact of possible budget cuts in the Asian Studies program. No formal connection exists between the language department and the interdisciplinary Asian Studies program, but the two departments are closely related academically and intellectually, Fish says.

He says funding at a time when even larger, longer established departments are forced to make cutbacks, is "iffy." But Fish says he is guardedly optimistic. He expects continued growth and interest in the East Asian languages and is investigating alternative avenues of support, such as funds from the recently organized President's Commission on Foreign Languages.

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