

Peace Corps offers hard work, new culture

By Jeff Winters
Emerald Contributor

In the face of a tough job market, some students are excited about a job that promises hard work, low pay and two years in a developing nation.

The Peace Corps may not appeal to every graduating senior, but for those that it does, it offers an opportunity to step outside the mainstream, help people from a different culture and experience a life few Americans ever see.

"It is definitely not in the general path that a person takes," said applicant Kim Webb. "Usually a person goes to college, gets a degree, and then gets a job somewhere. I think doing the Peace Corps is a healthy diversion for a person — especially single people — at the stage in your life when you're wondering who you are."

By applying her University education to health education in a developing nation, senior Danielle Georgeson said she can help others as she gains a better understanding of herself.

"I want to turn what I have inside of me into more practical knowledge," Georgeson said.

Georgeson isn't alone. The University is seventh in the nation in supplying Peace Corps volunteers, and campus recruiter Rhea Connors said it has been in the top 10 for many years.

Connors receives between 60 and 70 applications each term. Nationally, more than 14,000 people apply every year for only 3,200 training slots.

Though the competition is steep, many applicants, including senior Chris Hammond, said they are buoyed by their enthusiasm for service.

"I'm greatly interested in helping people," Hammond said. "I get a lot of satisfaction from that."

For senior Webb, service was also one of the major reasons for her interest in the Peace Corps.

"I'm the kind of person that likes to help other people," Webb said. "I enjoy tutoring, which is the epitome of helping others."

Webb also counted cultural exchanges as an equally important consideration.

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— Danielle Georgeson,
Peace Corps applicant

"I've been living in the same area all my life, so I want to get out and see the world, so to speak."

Webb said. "If it's a third-world country, maybe that's even better. It would be something different from what I know, something to test my own personal values and find out what I really have learned in my culture."

Even with this enthusiasm, expectations are for hard work. After all, the Peace Corps' motto has been "The toughest job you'll ever love."

"I see myself working hard," Webb said. "I don't see this as a vacation."

Hammond agreed, saying, "It

would be a new situation with little or no support. That's kind of stressful."

Also, living conditions for volunteers vary according to each country, which range from Burkina Faso to the Czech Republic. Some volunteers will live quite comfortably in modern cities, while others will be stationed in remote villages without electricity or running water.

Every volunteer must also deal with a separation from family and friends.

Georgeson considered this when deciding to apply, but she saw her close friendships continuing across the distance.

"I think the same friendships that would carry over if I were here would definitely carry over if I were gone for two years," she said.

Smiling, Georgeson added that one of her friends will probably get married in the next two years.

"I told her she is going to have to go to Africa and get married in my town," Georgeson said. "It's the only way."

Georgeson summed up her feelings with a question.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Reps introduce bill

In an effort to slow the work of the Oregon Citizens Alliance, state representatives Cynthia Wooten, D-Eugene, Jim Edmunds, D-Eugene, and Gail Shibley, D-Portland, introduced a bill Friday that would ban anti-gay legislation.

The bill would prohibit cities and counties from enacting or enforcing legislation that would describe homosexuality as unnatural, deviant or perverse unless that behavior is specifically described as unlawful.

The OCA announced Thursday it would introduce anti-gay initiatives in 32 Oregon counties and cities for a June special election. All of the targeted areas passed Ballot Measure 9 in the November election, though it was defeated statewide.

GOP names leader

The Oregon GOP elected former state Rep. Randy Miller of Lake Oswego chairman during a Friday meeting of the 107-member Republican Central Committee.

Miller announced his candidacy only a day before the meeting. Businessman Bill Witt was previously the only candidate.

The Oregon Citizens Alliance, a conservative Wilsonville-based group that sponsored 1992's Ballot Measure 9, had supported Witt's candidacy although Witt said he never approached the OCA for support.

The former chairman, Craig Berkman, announced recently he wouldn't seek another two-year term so he could pursue a leadership post in the National Republican Party.

Miller said that as chairman he would focus on limited taxation and the need to save

timber jobs rather than endangered species.

Miller, 46, served in the Oregon House for five terms. He lost a bid for Secretary of State, the second-highest office in state government, when incumbent Democrat Phil Keisling defeated him in November.

Miller is vice president of Moore Mill and Lumber Co. He holds a law degree from Lewis and Clark Law School and a master's degree in education from the University.

Senate elects president

Ending a week of deadlock, the Oregon Senate elected Bill Bradbury of Bandon Senate president Friday.

The deadlock was ended when Sen. Mae Yih, D-Albany, joined the other 15 Senate Democrats united behind Bradbury. Yih had voted for herself on the 11 previous ballots.

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SPRINGFIELD

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No precedent exists at the state Supreme Court level, however, Schumann said the only real chance for a different precedent in Oregon is if the state Supreme Court hears a case regarding gay and lesbian rights and makes a ruling contrary to the November Court of Appeals ruling.

"But my prediction is that the Oregon Supreme Court would also strike it down, if not on the grounds of free speech, then on the grounds of the guarantee of equity," Schumann said.

Springfield's amendment, approved by a majority of voters in that city in May as Ballot Measure 20-08, forbids the city and its officials from recognizing or facilitating homosexuality, although a clause prohibits employment discrimination against gays and lesbians.

Fidanque said it has taken eight months to put the challenge together because of the research involved in the lawsuit's arguments and because the ACLU spent a good deal of time during the summer and fall helping defeat statewide Ballot Measure 9, which would have enacted similar provisions for the entire state.

The lawsuit raises a number of constitutional claims, Fidanque said, and the seven plaintiffs each have a specific grievance.

The challenge includes the ACLU's argument that the charter amendment stifles freedom of expression "because it is designed to prevent discussion of legislative alternatives to end sexual orientation discrimination and because it is intended to chill free speech activity by city employees regarding sexual orientation," Fidanque said.

The amendment also violates the right to freedom of assembly because it requires the city to develop a "litmus test" for the use of its facilities, Fidanque said. And it goes against the right to petition the government for redress of grievances be-

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ACLU Oregon executive director

cause it prohibits the city from even considering measures that would prevent sexual orientation discrimination, he said.

"This ballot measure was an attempt to take away the rights of a minority of Springfield citizens," Fidanque said. "The Oregon and U.S. constitutions stand for the principle that there are certain fundamental rights — like freedom of speech and equal protection under the law — that cannot be taken away by majority vote."

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit are Jean Marchant, former chairwoman of the Springfield Human Rights Commission; Sandy Shirley, a gay and lesbian rights activist; Sally Meng, secretary of Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays Eugene-Springfield; Ron Spicer, a gay and lesbian rights activist; David and Fibes Gibson, owners of Springfield's McKenzie Theater; and the Oregon Public Employees Union, which was elected by Springfield city employees as their bargaining agent.

Despite its setback in court last year, the Oregon Citizens Alliance, which sponsored the Springfield and statewide anti-gay rights initiatives, announced last week that it plans to put similar ballot measures before the voters in 24 cities and eight counties in Oregon in 1994.

An OCA spokeswoman in Wilsonville declined comment Tuesday on the new lawsuit.

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