

# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PEACE CORPS

**O**n March 1, 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship and appointed Sargent Shriver as its first director.

Five decades later, hundreds of former Peace Corps Volunteers are living, working, studying and raising families in Lane County. They have served in every decade since Roger Hamilton and other members of the first Peace Corps group shook President Kennedy's hand before boarding a prop plane for Ghana.

Read more about Roger and others in our community who are among the 200,000+ Peace Corps Volunteers who have served in 139 countries over the last 50 years.

## KEITH SHELDON & KEVIN YOUNG

*Burkina Faso, 1984 - 1986*

I met my husband Kevin in Burkina Faso. We were posted in the same village, had a large garden, and raised chickens and rabbits together. My house was mud brick with no running water in a town without electricity. I was trained in appropriate technology and worked in the Young Farmer's Education Program. Kevin taught advanced level English at the Charles Lwanga School. We both learned to speak French and Djula.

Women in our village walked many kilometers to find fuel wood. I taught them to build fuel efficient cookstoves out of fermented mud, clay and manure. Each cook pot rested on three rocks and had its own snug hearth enclosing the fire, with a tiny door for "three sticks." In turn, the village women taught me how to dance to the balafon music that drew folks out of their homes on full moon nights.

Our shared Peace Corps experience has kept our marriage strong. We continue to speak the languages we learned and the values we formed are firm. We have a deep appreciation of cultural diversity and a commitment to challenge oppression.

*On returning to the U.S., Keith and Kevin purchased 14 acres in Fall Creek and established a certified organic farm. They home schooled their children for many years, then relocated to Eugene. Keith is a Juvenile Counselor in Probation Supervision at Lane County Youth Services. Kevin teaches GED at Lane Community College, with years of experience mentoring youth on probation.*



## ROGER HAMILTON *Ghana, 1961 - 1962*

I was a member of the very first Peace Corps group. We shook President Kennedy's hand at the White House before boarding a prop plane headed for Ghana. It re-fueled in the Azores and Dakar, Senegal, before landing in Accra. We taught secondary school students in a remote part of the country, traveling over 100 miles on a dirt road through a rainforest.

I married a fellow volunteer, Carol, at a service performed by the Anglican Bishop with a reception at the residence of the U.S. Ambassador. There was a young boy who had nowhere to live, who helped around the house. I helped him attend university in the U.S. and have kept in touch with him for nearly 50 years. He is now a successful businessman.



In our first year in Ghana, Carol became pregnant. We flew back to D.C. and welcomed our son Stephen. No one else in our group was pregnant, so I believe that makes Stephen – a U.S. forest service archaeologist living in Eugene – the first Peace Corps baby. When Stephen was born we settled in D.C. and I worked for Bill Moyers, who was Associate Director of Public Affairs then Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. Bill at that time was a hard charging and highly idealistic proponent of the Peace Corps program. I helped with his recruiting effort by lecturing at universities across the country.

*Roger is a senior energy and public policy analyst with the Climate Leadership Initiative of the Resource Innovations Group in Eugene. He served as Klamath County Commissioner, advisor on energy and watersheds to*

*Governor Kitzhaber, and Oregon Public Utility Commissioner. Roger and Carol Armstrong were divorced in 1969 but remained close as parents of their two children. Carol taught school in California, and in recent years moved to Eugene to be close to her children and grandchildren. Carol passed away in September 2010.*

## OREGON PEACE CORPS FACTS

The first baby born to Peace Corps Volunteers lives in Eugene, Oregon (Stephen Hamilton).

The youngest person to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer lives in Eugene, Oregon (Chuck Kalnbach).

Oregon ranks no. 4 in the nation in 2010 for producing Peace Corps Volunteers (per capita).

Five Oregon schools rank in the top 12 nationwide in 2010 for number of undergraduate alumni volunteers.

Roseburg, Oregon, ranks no. 6 in the nation for producing Peace Corps volunteers (per capita).

Portland, Oregon, ranks no. 10 nationwide in 2010 for total volunteers from a metropolitan area.

There are over 50 current or retired teachers in Eugene area schools who served in Peace Corps.

There are approximately 150 members of the West Cascade Peace Corps Association, founded in Eugene in 1980.