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The Peace Corps Introduces UGA’s New Campus Recruiter

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The Peace Corps is excited to introduce UGA’s new campus recruiter, April Conway. April served in Niger, West Africa from 2005 to 2007 as a Natural Resource Management and Environmental Education Volunteer. Her primary project was to organize and implement tree nurseries, cold-season vegetable gardens, and improve mud cook stove trainings.

What were your biggest personal and professional challenges during Peace Corps service? How did you cope with these challenges?

“My biggest challenge professionally was the pace of work. It was hard to let go of my American forms of time for projects to be completed. I kept trying to make organizational meetings that nobody showed up to because they were too busy doing their own work. Sometimes it felt like I wasn’t making any progress at all, and then suddenly, for a week, I’d be so busy that I couldn’t catch my breath. My personal challenges were mostly the physical hardships of being in one of the harshest countries in the world. The heat, poor selection of fruits and vegetables, and various illnesses were sometimes difficult to put up with. But I did grow to love bucket baths under the stars and the sound of rain on my thatch roof. But it definitely took some getting used to!”

Looking back on your Peace Corps experience, what stands out as the most meaningful and important lessons that you gained?

“The most important lesson I learned was to look past the poverty, the exoticness of the place, and to see the actual people. When I returned to the United States after my service, people often ask me “What were the people like?” I start off by saying that they are a lot like you and me – there are friendly people and unfriendly people. They may act a little bit different, eat different food and dress differently, but they have many of the same concerns, hopes and dreams in life. Once I got over the “me” versus “them,” the connections I made with people will stay with me forever.”

Why do you want to recruit UGA students for Peace Corps service?

“I can’t recommend Peace Corps enough, which is probably why I am in the position I am today. I’m looking forward to helping other
people start their journey to an amazing life-changing experience. Peace Corps is not easy and I definitely had my rough spots, but I’ve never regretted my life in a mud hut in Africa. I’d do it again in a heartbeat (and I might someday do just that!).”

Currently there are approximately 63 UGA alumni serving in the Peace Corps. Historically, more than 522 UGA alumni have served since 1961. Contact April if you are interested in becoming the next UGA alumnus to serve in the Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps’ campus office is located at 1324 South Lumpkin Street, RM 113B. April’s office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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About the Peace Corps: Since President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps by executive order on March 1, 1961, more than 210,000 Americans have served in 139 host countries. Today, 9,095 volunteers are working with local communities in 75 host countries. Peace Corps volunteers must be U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age. Peace Corps service is a 27-month commitment and the agency’s mission is to promote world peace and friendship and a better understanding between Americans and people of other countries. Visit www.peacecorps.gov for more information.