



History of Peace Corps Panama Friends

- Beginnings:

Peace Corps Panama Friends was started in a bar (where else) in Washington, DC, in 1986, during the celebration of the Peace Corps' 25th anniversary. Mike Nagle and Steve Spangler passed around bar napkins and asked everyone to write their addresses and phone numbers. (There were no email addresses then.)

The idea for a Peace Corps Panama alumni group began earlier, during planning for the Peace Corps' 25th Anniversary in 1986. Steve Spangler called the National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, the precursor of the National Peace Corps Association, and asked, "Who is planning activities for Panama?" They responded, "You are. What's your name and address?"

- Our Members:

Our goals then as now are to help our members stay in touch with each other and with Panamá.

We now have a database of more than 1,200 volunteers and staff who served in Panama, from 1963 to 1971 and then from 1991 to date.

Our members are family, friends, including many Panamanians, and others interested in Peace Corps Panama. We even have future volunteers and staff who join when they receive an invitation to go to Panamá.

- PCPF Reunions:

During the first fifteen years or so, PCPF activities were largely concerned with annual or semiannual reunions and fund-raising for worthwhile projects in Panama.

PCPF Reunions were held in Boulder, Co, 1988; Kent State University, 1989; Eugene, Oregon, 1990; Washington, DC in 1991 and 1996; San Diego, 1997, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1999; Washington, DC in 2002; Chicago in 2004; and Washington, DC in 2006; and our first reunion in Panama in June 2008.

- Support for Panama and Volunteers:

We also support volunteer and other projects in Panamá. Our fund-raising activities during those years brought in more than \$25,000 to benefit environmental protection in Panama.

In 1991, Peace Corps returned to Panama and our membership and leadership focused shifted to supporting volunteers in service in Panama. Since 2004, PCPF has sold the very popular Peace Corps Panama Calendars which are designed and printed in Panama by current volunteers with photos submitted by fellow volunteers.

- PCPF Directiva:

For nearly two decades our leadership was a group of seven or eight folks located mostly in the D.C. area, although we frequently invited folks from around the country to assume leadership roles. The core leadership included Steve Spangler, Jerry Lutes, Bonnie Birker, Bob Brown, Mike Nagel, Tony Masso and Bud Keith. Alan Ells, an attorney in Michigan secured our incorporation there and obtained our 501C3 status. Ron Miller in California helped establish our database of names and addresses.

In recent years, PCPF Directiva members have included: Bud Keith, Jamie Thornberry, Valerie Whiting, Sarah Berghorst, Sarah Schmidt, Steve Spangler, Jerry Lutes, Jaime Holland, Scott Overdyke, Justin Mortensen, Hugh Smith, and Dottie Knoedler.

- PCPF Directories:

We published two hardcopy PCPF Directories of our members.

The first on October 23, 1987 listed the name of 606 Peace Corps volunteers and staff who served in Panama during the years 1963 to 1971. It was prepared by 315 former volunteers and staff who provide information for themselves and others.

The second was in July 1991 and included biographical information provided by 236 PCPF members. An updated version of this directory is on the PCPF website: [1991 Directory of PCPF Members](#). It lists 808 PCPF members and for many their site and years of service in Panama, and email address.

A current [PCPF Directory](#) is on the PCPF website. It lists volunteers and staff who served in Panama, their training group, years of service, volunteer sites, and, if we have permission, their email addresses.

- Communications – El Bochinche and PCPF Website:

In 1994 PCPF member Dave Hines in Woodstock, Illinois, began publishing “El Bochinche, the PCPF newsletter”. In 2005, El Bochinche was converted to a quarterly online newsletter distributed via email.

In the late 1990s, PCPF moved into the Internet age with its website: www.panamapcv.net.

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