

The Swazi Sojourn



Issue 8, Volume 3

August 2006

Bug Chasers: The Men Who Long To Be HIV+

Shortened version of an article from 2003 published in Rolling Stone magazine. The full article has been posted on the volunteer lounge's message board.

Carlos nonchalantly asks whether his drink was made with whole or skim milk. He takes a moment to slurp on his grande Caffè Mocha in a crowded Starbucks, and then he gets back to explaining how much he wants HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. His eyes light up as he says that the actual moment of transmission, the instant he gets HIV, will be "the most erotic thing I can imagine." He seems like a typical thirty-two-year-old man, but, in fact, he has a secret life. Carlos is chasing the

bug. "I know what the risks are, and I know that putting myself in this situation is like putting a gun to my head," he says. "But I think it turns the other guy on to know that I'm negative and that they're bringing me into the brotherhood. That gets me off, too."

I met Carlos in New York's Greenwich Village, the neighborhood where he usually hangs out. He is tall, with a large build, and plenty of gay men find him attractive. The conversation veers from the banal — his fascination with the reality show *The Amazing Race* — to his desire for HIV. Carlos' tone never

changes when switching from one topic to the other.

When asked whether he is prepared to live with HIV after that "erotic" moment, Carlos dismisses living with HIV as a minor annoyance. Like most bug chasers, he has the impression that the virus just isn't such a big deal anymore: "It's like living with diabetes. You take a few pills and get on with your life." Carlos spends the afternoon continually calling a man named Richard, someone he met on the Internet. They met on *barebackcity.com* about a year ago, while Carlos was still with his boyfriend. That boyfriend left because Carlos was having sex with other men and because he was interested in barebacking — the practice of having sex without a condom. Carlos and Richard are arranging a "date" for later that day.

Carlos is part of an intricate underground world that has sprouted, driven almost completely by the Internet, in which men who want to be infected with HIV get together with those who are willing to infect them. The men who want the virus are called "bug chasers," and the men who freely give the virus to them are called "gift givers." While

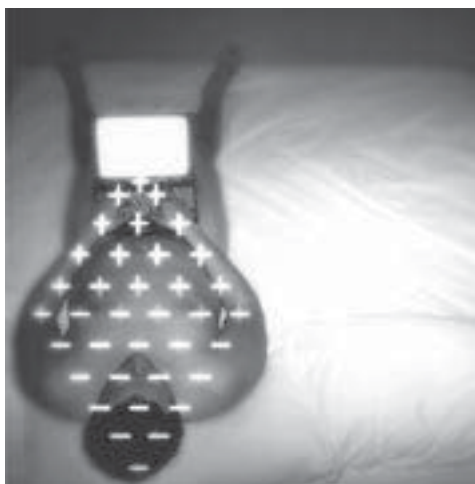
the rest of the world fights the AIDS epidemic and most people fear HIV infection, this subculture celebrates the virus and eroticizes it. HIV-infected semen is treated like liquid gold. Carlos has been chasing the bug for more than a year in a topsy-turvy

world in which every convention about HIV is turned upside down. The virus isn't horrible and fearsome, it's beautiful and sexy — and delivered in the way that is most likely to result in infection. In this world, the men with HIV are the most desired, and the bug chasers will do anything to get the vi-

rus — to "get knocked up," to be "bred" or "initiated into the brotherhood."

Within this online community, bug chasers revel in their desires, using their own lingo about "poz" and "neg" men, "bug juice" and "conversion" from negative to positive. The posters are upfront about seeking HIV, even extremely enthusiastic, possibly because the Web sites are about the only place a bug seeker can really express his desires openly. A Yahoo! spokeswoman confirms that the company shuts down such sites when it receives notice that the subscribers are promoting HIV infection or any other kind of harm to one another, but the company doesn't go looking for bug chasers in its thousands of discussion groups, most established by subscribers themselves. Recently, it was easy to find two discussion groups on Yahoo! that promoted bug chasing, one called *barebackover50* and one called *gayextremebareback*. The first discussion group was established in 1998 and had 1,439 members at the end of 2002. Yahoo! closed the group after Rolling Stone inquired about it.

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LEECHES AND LEMURS

Director's Chat w/Pattie Austin, CD



Greetings to all PCVs and PCTs! It has been a very busy Swazi winter so far with PST and other activities. Let me update you on current PC events:

Group 2 has chosen Forresters Arms for their COS Conference September 7,8 and 9. Nwando and I went out there to make the reservations and we were both impressed. It's a lovely setting and the dinner menu we saw was impressive. The management has promised to prepare a "mini Sunday brunch menu", for which they are famous, for our final lunch. Group 2's official COS date is December 8 but I have already begun to receive requests for early COS dates. I have the authority to grant a 30 day early date, so November 8 and forward I can approve. Please do not all request November 8 since the office cannot process large numbers of people on any one day; stagger your departures!! Group 2 will be receiving their COS manuals the first week of August that will answer many of the questions you have.

Swearing In for Group 4 is Thursday, August 10 at the Royal Swazi Sun Hotel. A few PCVs who made substantial contributions to PST have been invited and transport logistics will be communicated to you, most probably with departures from the PCO. Please wear your best attire.

The staff and I have been interviewing for the Program Manager position, which has been reclassified as an APCD. It has been a 3-phase process with 28 applicants, nine screening interviews and a "final four". We will be introducing you to the new APCD in the very near future.

There have been several recent instances of PCVs speaking with local and international press as well as articles by PCVs in the local media. It is worldwide Peace Corps policy that the Country Director must approve all such interviews and/or articles in advance. I know that this has been discussed with PCVs on numerous occasions so I do not expect to hear of any more unauthorized media communications.

Below you will find a memo discussing absentee ballots for the US Nov 8 mid-term election. We will put in your mailboxes the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) that will allow you to receive an absentee ballot. Two Voter guides are also in the PCV lounge for your use.

Lastly, for any Group 2 PCV who is considering a third year extension of service, I have received a letter from NATICC requesting a PCV to work with them doing NGO Development. I would be happy to discuss this with anyone who is interested in this opportunity.

To: All Volunteers and Trainees
From: Al Miller, Chief, Administrative Services, Peace Corps Headquarters
Subject: Peace Corps Voter Assistance Program

The Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955 requires Federal Agencies to assist eligible employees, their spouses, and dependents serving outside the United States to vote by absentee ballot. The Peace Corps has a Voting Assistance Program, which is designed to assist Volunteers and Trainees in voting.

You are being sent a Federal Postcard Application (FPCA). If you wish to register to vote and/or apply for an absentee ballot, please fill out the FPCA and mail to your state/county elections board as soon as possible. In your country's Peace Corps office there is a Voting Assistance Guide which contains detailed instructions on completing this form. It also has all the state and county addresses for mailing the postcards. There are different instructions for each state. Please note that postage is required on the FPCA when mailed from outside the United States.

For those of you who have internet access, the Voting Assistance Guide and the FPCA are on the web: www.fvap.gov

State Elections Boards usually mail out the absentee ballots 30 - 45 days before the election. The ballot will be mailed to the address that you put on the PCA. If you have sent in the FPCA and do not receive your ballot, you may fill out a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot. There is a limited supply of these at the Peace Corp Office. You may use the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot **only** if you have already the FPCA and did not receive your absentee ballot from your state or county.

By mid October, you should be filling out the absentee ballot (either the ballot sent to you by your state, or the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot). Please send your ballot to the Peace Corps office in-country. They will collect all the Volunteer ballots and send to the Peace Corps Headquarters by express delivery. When the ballots are received at Peace Corps Headquarters, they will be put in the regular mail.

In Brief

GNC delayed

The Girls National Conference has been postponed to Friday, September 1, 2006. Submit two girls essays to Mahlubi before July 28th.

Group 2, Start Thinking "COS"

COS is fast approaching. You need to start thinking seriously about plans post Peace Corps. If you are decide to take cash-in-lieu of a one-way economy ticket back home, we need to start the paperwork in the next month (i.e. filling out banking information, etc.) because processing all the information via headquarters can be time-consuming. If you already know your plans, think them over one more time! Once we submit your paperwork to headquarters, you can't change your mind.

Travel Reimbursements

There seems to be some confusion on when you can request for travel reimbursement. Your monthly living allowance includes 270 emalangeni for transportation (i.e. official travel). Official travel is travel for program, training, medical or committee meetings. The **ONLY** time you will get reimbursed for travel is if in a given month, you spend more than the allocated 270 emalangeni on official travel, in which case, the office would reimburse you the difference (i.e. any excess over 270 emalangeni). When submitting for reimbursement, list all the official travel you conducted, who approved it, how much each trip costs and the amount you want reimbursed.

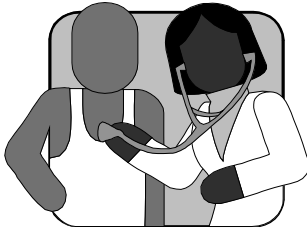
If you choose to use the monthly travel allowance for personal travel or non-approved travel, you will not be reimbursed for other travel costs. Call Sandla or Nwando if you need further clarification.

Mkhondvo Lifeskills Camp

Mkhondvo Boys&Girls Lifeskills and HIV Awareness Camp will take place from 8/21-25. Please contact Blia at 624-3758 if you would like to help.

Sojo Profiles

Next month's profiles will be Mel and Vincent. Please see Page 5 article.



Keeping you Updated and Healthy w/Daynese Santos, PCMO

COUNSELING SERVICES

Perhaps I should clarify our policies as several issues have been brought to my attention regarding access to counseling services. Any volunteer in need of counseling should contact me either by phone or at the medical unit. As your medical officer it is my responsibility to determine the nature of the situation so that together we can decide which option would be most appropriate. Many volunteers are able to gain insight into their problems if not resolve them after one or two sessions with me at the medical unit. When that's not successful, volunteers may opt for a phone counseling session with one of the counselors at the Office of Special Services, (OSS), in Washington. That option is very convenient in that the calls may be placed directly to volunteers on their cell phones. OSS staff is skillful in determining whether mental health problems are Peace Corps related or stem from other issues prior to Peace Corps service. For Peace Corps related problems, volunteers may be advised to continue phone sessions with OSS or may be given a referral to a local mental health practitioner. Should OSS determine that a volunteer needs to be evaluated in Washington, the Office of Medical Services and I will be notified. Bear in mind that our objective is for volunteers to get the help that they need in a timely manner. To those volunteers who prefer not to receive counseling from the PCMO, you will still be required to contact me so that the appropriate action may be taken.

WHERE ARE THOSE RESULTS??

There are lots of excuses for why it takes so long to get some lab results. Let's face it, excuses just aren't acceptable. Even if we don't receive a hard copy lab report, a verbal report is usually available. So, from now on, we'll maintain a log of all outgoing lab specimens. That way your results won't fall through the cracks. If you're visiting the Peace Corps office, pop into the med unit to check on results. It's never a bother. Remember that some specimens are sent to the U.S., those results usually take 2-4 weeks.

HIV TESTING FOR Peace Corps VOLUNTEERS

If you think that you've been exposed to HIV, by all means contact the PCMO within 72 hours so that you may start Post Exposure Prophylaxis, (PEP), if appropriate. Our goal is not to miss one opportunity for PEP. The Office of Medical Services does not encourage indiscriminate random testing for HIV as it may foster unsafe sexual practices. On the other hand if you're really overly concerned and anxious you 'may' be tested. I can not offer you an inhouse rapid screening method however, I will collect your blood sample and send it to a reputable local lab. Recap, who should be tested? Anyone who has had unprotected intercourse, (vaginal, oral or anal), or exposure to blood or body fluids.

PCMO SITE VISITS

Group 2 PCV's: I'll be hitting the trail to visit each of you at your sites during the last week of August through first week of September. If you have a compelling reason why you won't be available during that time, contact Thembe or drop a note in my box at the PC office. Thembe will confirm all dates and approximate times. So, get your welcome mat out!! See ya!

CONGRATULATIONS TRAINEES!!

You've made it through the easy part! Now, let's get down and do some serious Peace Corps! I had a great time with you during training, loved your energy, passion and commitment. Hold on to those qualities, and never forget why you came to Swaziland. That may be what keeps you here. To each of you have a wonderful, fulfilling Peace Corps experience.

Calling Group 3!

Get Creative!

Peace Corps Swaziland PSN Guide

Submit whatever you've got!

Stories... funny, thoughtful, sage..

Quotes (and we know you've been reading enough out there!)

Journal entries, survival tips, trivia..

sudoku!

Anything!

One Year T-shirt

Submit T-shirt ideas to appear in next month's issue. We will publish the potential ideas and have an SMS vote.

(Seriously guys, this time it was between Will and a very clever goat.) It can be a slogan, an icon, you name it. Drop them in either Kim or Justine's mailbox.



Put submissions in PSN Box in Vol lounge or save it in the "PSN Book Submissions" folder under 'PSN & Diversity Committee.'

Programming w/Susan Olson, APCD

Greetings from the Programming Section of the Office! The end of PST is close at hand and we are looking forward to swearing-in Group 4 on August 10th. The Program Manager position has been revised and upgraded and renamed Associate Director or APCD. I am very much looking forward to having a Swazi APCD counterpart on board so that we can more fully support the work of the Volunteers. Once this person starts work in mid to late August we will be following up with PCVs to let you know how the various APCD responsibilities will be apportioned so that Volunteers have a better idea of who to contact for what.

We had hoped to provide an update on how to apply for PEPFAR VAST funds in this edition of the Sojo. Regrettably, we've not yet been able to finalize our application and review procedures as yet but PC/HQ assures us that the receipt of our funding is imminent. Sadly, this delay effectively takes Group 2 PCVs (who will COS in Nov/Dec) out of consideration for VAST funding since the proposal requests will take 4-6 weeks to process. VAST grants will not be given to PCVs in cash but will need to be electronically transferred into Volunteer PC bank accounts and setting up this process will take additional time. However this will still be much quicker than requesting funding from other sources such as the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

We are very pleased to see so many PCVs participating in the PEPFAR-funded Girls' Mentoring program over the past few months. To avoid unnecessary trips to Mbabane, please remember that it is possible to request up to three months worth of Girls Mentoring funds (E 750) if you have a detailed, written plan as to how you and your co-mentor will spend the money. In completing the request

from the PEPFAR Coordinator Mahlubi Hadebe would normally sign off on your proposal before giving it to the AO for approval. However, if he is not in the office, the APCD or Exec/Program Asst Khabo can sign for Mahlubi. If someone other than Mahlubi signs, please remember to make a photocopy of the signed form and place it in his mailbox so that he is up to date on all of the approved requests.

Other PEPFAR updates of note are the kick-off of the Girls Scholarship Program. USAID has transferred PEPFAR funds to SWAGAA, the agency that has been tasked with administering the scholarship program in Swaziland. Two PCVs and their counterparts will begin a pilot program in August/September before the program is fully launched later this year. The Girl's National Conference will also take place later on September 1st. Finally, in partnership with the Anglican Church, PCVs will be involved in the training of Anglican priests on HIV/AIDS prevention in September. PEPFAR Coordinator Mahlubi Hadebe will provide an update and definite dates on these activities as soon as he completes his Technical Trainer responsibilities at PST in early August.

The third week of August (21-25) will see the entire Program and Training staff heading off to Pretoria for a Program and Training Workshop for the six PC posts that comprise Southern Africa Region. The last week of August, I will be on leave with my family in Zambia. The new APCD should be on board at this time so please see him/her for any programming concerns or contact the CD if you have an urgent matter that cannot await my return.

In closing, I'd like to thank all of the PCVs who provided so much support and assistance in helping us organize a very successful Counterparts Workshop. We couldn't have done it without you!



Safety and Security w/Mfanafuthi Vilakati, S&S

A big "Sanibonani" from me goes out to all the Volunteers and Trainees out there. Spring is just around the corner and I guess we are looking forward to the longer African summer days.

I am almost through with updating the PC Swaziland EAP document and there are some **VERY IMPORTANT CHANGES** that I would like Volunteers to **PAY ATTENTION** to. Firstly some Consolidation Points have changed as indicated below:

i) All PCVs who had Ekuphakameni High School as their consolidation point will now go to Phumula Guest House in Nhlngano.

ii) PCVs who had Mankayane High School and Malandelas lodge as their consolidation point will now go to Matsapha Inn in Matsapha. Matsapha Inn is situated on the old Mbabane-Manzini road, about 1 kilometer from the Matsapha Shopping Complex and is almost opposite to the Salt and Pepper restaurant.

The basic reason that necessitated these changes is that ideally Consolidation Points should have accommodation facilities, so the post has made efforts that each PCV does have a Consolidation Point with accommodation facilities and nothing is left to chance. I really do acknowledge the fact that this new arrangement will pose some challenges transport wise but it definitely is in everyone's best interest. The changes with the consolidation points have also necessitated some changes with the Consolidation points Wardens and Alternates, which will be communicated in due course.

Posts in the Southern Africa region are discouraging their PCVs from going to Zimbabwe because of significant rise in serious crimes and reports of increased firearms in wrong hands. The political climate in that country is not conducive for tourists in general. I would also like to discourage PC Swaziland PCVs who may have plans to visit this destination due to the reasons I have stated.

On another note, if you are on vacation and you happen to lose your passport, please make time to go to the police in the area you're in and get a stamped police report. Please do not try to negotiate your way back to Swaziland without the police report because you can easily be thrown in jail and no one would know about it. Secondly the local Embassy in Swaziland requires that you produce a police report before they can issue a replacement passport.

Until next month,

-Keep your wallets safe and well tucked away.

-Always lock your house when leaving and lock the burglar door.

-Do not entertain visitors in your room after dark.

-Inform your family of your destination when you're leaving.

-Carry your backpack in front when in Manzini.

-Do not accept help you can do without from strangers.

-Close your windows when you go to sleep.

-Report all incidents AND DO NOT be shy to shout for help!

Group 3's Midservice Medical Exam Schedule

Monday, August 21

PCMO	PCV	Dental
9:00-9:30	Brenda Grabau	10:30am
10:00-10:30	Jana Barnes	11:30am
11:00-11:30	Alix Edwards	12:30pm
12:00-12:30	Lauren Winterhole	2:00pm
1:00-1:30	Kristin Wetzler	2:30pm
2:00-2:30	Megan Guetzko	3:30pm
3:00-3:30	Adam Harrell	10:00am
4:00-4:30	Lindsay Hayek	1:00am

Tuesday, August 22

PCMO	PCV
9:00-9:30	Brenda Grabau
10:00-10:30	Jana Barnes
11:00-11:30	Alix Edwards
12:00-12:30	Lauren Winterholer
1:00-1:30	Kristin Wetzler
2:00-2:30	Megan Guetzko
3:00-3:30	Adam Harrell
4:00-4:430	Lindsay Hayek

Wednesday, August 23

PCMO	PCV
9:00-9:30	Brenda Grabau
9:30-10:00	Lindsay Hayek
10:00-10:30	Jana Barnes
10:30-11:00	Kelly Russell
11:00-11:30	Alix Edwards
11:30-12:00	Jenny Jones
12:00-12:30	Lauren Winterholer
12:30-1:00	Kim Kanney
1:00-1:30	Kristin Wetzler
1:30-2:00	Krupa Mehta
2:00-2:30	Megan Guetzko
2:30-3:00	Jessica Oya
3:00-3:30	Adam Harrell
3:30-4:00	Molly Pacenta

Thursday, August 24

PCMO	PCV	Dental
9:30-10:00	Molly Pacenta	11:00am
10:30-11:00	Kelly Russell	11:30am
11:30-12:00	Jenny Jones	12:00pm
12:30-1:00	Kim Kanney	2:00pm
1:30-2:00	Krupa Mehta	2:30pm
2:30-3:00	Jessica Oya	3:00pm

Friday, August 25

PCMO	PCV
9:30-10:00	Molly Pacenta
10:30-11:00	Kelly Russell
11:30-12:00	Jenny Jones
12:30-1:00	Kim Kanney
1:30-2:00	Krupa Mehta
2:30-3:00	Jessica Oya

Monday, August 28

PCMO	PCV	Dental
9:00-9:30	Justine Spisak	11:00am
10:00-10:30	Craig Stephan	11:30am
11:00-11:30	Will Treese	12:30pm
12:00-12:30	Derek Vohs	2:00pm
1:00-1:30	Candace Watson	2:30pm
2:00-2:30	Amy Baker	3:00pm
3:00-3:30	Angela Galletta	10:30am

Tuesday, August 29

PCMO	PCV
9:00-9:30	Justine Spisak
10:00-10:30	Craig Stephan
11:00-11:30	Will Treese
12:00-12:30	Derek Vohs
1:00-1:30	Candace Watson
2:00-2:30	Amy Baker
3:00-3:30	Angela Galletta

Wednesday, August 30

PCMO	PCV
9:00-9:30	Justine Spisak
10:00-10:30	Craig Stephan
11:00-11:30	Will Treese
12:00-12:30	Derek Vohs
1:00-1:30	Candace Waston
2:00-2:30	Amy Baker
3:00-3:30	Angela Galletta

Hallelujah... It's Raining Profiles!

So, we're sitting in the PC lounge once again at month end, plugging in the password to the Sojo e-mail account, waiting with eager anticipation through the typical PCO Internet delay for the treasure chest of articles to pour from the monitor, when as usual... *big deflating noise*

In order to make things run more smoothly and make group 2 profile acquisitions much less of a gamble, we are proud to introduce this new stream-lined system!

Starting this month, we will select the next group 2 PCV's to be profiled. Once you see your name appear in the Sojo (under 'In Brief') it is up to you to select who you would like to profile you. We will also SMS you to make you aware that it is your special month :) Then we ask that you please reply and let us know that you will arrange to have the profile submitted to the office or via e-mail before Sojo Production dates.

The world is curious about you, PCV's! Not to mention, it's HQ regulations that each group is profiled before we can move on to the others. Thanks! Justine & Kim.

NEWS & NOTES

From the Peace Corps Website

RPCV Wins Pulitzer

The insight gained by his Peace Corps experience has helped Joshua Norman win the Pulitzer Prize for public service this year as part of a team of reporters that covered Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath in the Gulf Coast.

Along with a team of colleagues from the *Sun Herald* in Biloxi, Miss., Norman provided comprehensive reporting of Katrina that consistently kept readers aware of the unfolding situation.

Peace Corps and German Volunteer Organization Celebrate New Partnership

The Peace Corps and the German Development Service (Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst or DED) announced a historic partnership today that will lead to increased collaboration between the two agencies' volunteers abroad.

The agreement will enable American and German volunteers — who have a long history of working together in informal ways at posts ranging from the Philippines to Peru — to officially join forces on a wide variety of projects, working with local communities to achieve sustainable development.

Ronald Tschetter Nominated to be New Director of Peace Corps

On July 25th, President Bush nominated Ronald Tschetter as the next Director of Peace Corps. Tschetter is a former Peace Corps volunteer in India and a former president of Dain Rauscher Inc. He is now president of D.A. Davidson & Co. His nomination must be confirmed by the Senate.

Tschetter would serve as the 17th PC Director overseeing programs in 75 countries with 7,810 current volunteers. He is a former Chairman of the National Peace Corps Association and served with his wife as a PCV in India. Tschetter replaces Gaddi Gasquez, who has been named U.S. representative to UN's FAO program.

classifieds

Looking for Love

23F Dirty feet, LOTS of free time. Looking for 22-30M who enjoys hot bucket baths and long rides in the kombi.

23F 140lbs and gaining fast! Looking for 45-65M with at least 2 wives who enjoys sitting at home all day drinking marula while I sweat and toil over his laundry, dinner, and children.

23SWM. VERY LEAN, rugged, 1/3 tan. Looking for 19-25 F with less than 4 children. Likes his lippalishi soft and his emahewu smooth.

28M What lacks in weight is made up for in hair. I'm a go getter unless it is raining, hot, or a weekend. Seeking young female who enjoys looping gospel tapes sunrise to sunset and is not too shy to share her pee bucket.

68Mkhulu seeking female umlungu. No further requirements needed.

Service Wanted

Full time chef and laundry doer. Will pay in used AA batteries, skittles, and travel size instant hand sanitizer.

New counterpart, language tutor and/or motivated community member.

BODY GUARD to entrance of personal home in order to ward off unwanted children, pestering chickens and nosey bogogo.

Events

5-hour community meeting! Come, join us as we sit on horribly uncomfortable benches and rocky soil while we sweat buckets and listen to speeches in a language we don't understand!

Missing

5 wallets, 4 cell phones, 2 umbrellas. Disappeared at Manzini bus rank. Kindly return to PC office.

For Sale

Dirty tennis shoes, size 8. R50

Blue Trek mountain bike. NEVER BEEN USED! Helmet & water bottle included. Also suffices as a drying rack for laundry. R3,000 (I swear the bike is not Peace Corps property!)

Driving School

Public transport drivers and conductors needed. Must be able to repeat transport destinations at least 200 x per min. Bird calls are a plus.

Pets

Puppies available to a good home. 800 available. Contact Vincent.

FREE consultation to build your own cockroach, ant, or fly farm in your VERY OWN HOME! Its so easy, its practically effortless! No prior experience required.

Please, for the love of God, take my family's goats!

SUBMIT! SUBMIT! SUBMIT!

(This is not a quest for world domination)

We'll take anything you've got, folks: articles on events and happenings at your site, journal entries, comics, editorials, recipes, craft ideas and projects, hard corps/ soft corps, diy, gossip, photos, poetry, and any kind of poetically prosaic et-ceteras your minds can produce.

Love, j,k & v

Angela's S.O.S. 'Not a Camp' Camp

Dear PCVs,

Since last February, I have been working at S.O.S. Orphan Village in Nhlanguano. I have an after-school homework help class every Monday, and I also work at their clinic sorting pills and pouring cough syrup. I thought maybe I should take my work a little further, since writing home to say that I've been separating the panado from the vicadin for two years doesn't sound very noble. On August 21-23, 2006, there will be a three-day youth event (not a camp!). There will be various activities for the children, both educational and recreational, including:

Guest speakers presenting on various topics, including HIV practical information, self-esteem and goal setting, and child abuse. So far, I've got Stella Nkhosi from FAWESWA to speak about child abuse, DeLouis will talk about different aspects of pediatric HIV, Make Simelane from NATICC doing the string game, the NATICC peer educators doing a little drama, and last but not least, your favorite and mine, Make Shongwe! I don't know what she intends to talk about. She kind of took over and I just got out of the way.

·HIV information presentations, and maybe some jeopardy (still in the works)

·Arts and Crafts activities

·Lunch

·Sports activities, including soccer, volleyball, and relay races

In addition to the components listed above, there will also be various competitions and prizes (which Amy promises to help me find).

Ok, so what I'm asking for help with is primarily the sports stuff and the arts and crafts. I just need people to supervise and lead, make sure

no one kills anyone, that kind of thing. For the arts and crafts, here are some ideas I came up with: journal making, memory box making, "A is for..." name cards, sun catchers, some balsa wood airplanes (from a care package), etc. If you think of something else, please let me know. If you want to help out with one of the above, feel free. For the sporting events, we'll have soccer and volleyball (S.O.S. has the nets, balls, etc), so I just need people to play referee. Preferably people who understand the rules (I do not). For the relay races and smaller stuff, so far I've got: potato sacks (maize sacks) race, the old egg on the spoon race, water balloon toss, and the three-legged race (tied with spar bags). Again, if you think of something that works better, be my guest. Arts and crafts will be held at 11:00am-12:00pm each day while the sports is from 1:00-3:00pm.

So, to entice you to help out, I'm offering a very tempting free lunch on each of the dates. This will include any of the following: liphalishi, rice, chicken, beef, and 'salads.' I can tell I have you hooked already. If that's not enough to sway you, I can promise better food (and better drinks) if you have to spend the night at my house. Don't everybody line up at once.

If you're interested in helping any way possible, send me a text message at 631-6030 or email me at angela.galletta@gmail.com.

Hope to see you there!

Angela G.

My Personal Savior

by Derek Vohs, Mahhashini

This morning I went to one of my two high schools to pick up the essays to be written by girls for the Swaziland National Girls conference that will take place next month. Two girls will be chosen, based on the essays they've written, to go to the conference.

When I arrived at school early this cold, damp morning, I spoke with a teacher who told me that none of her girls wrote an essay and another teacher had just one to report. I was really frustrated by this (but not necessarily surprised) because it's such a great opportunity for the girls, not only to represent their school but also their entire community.

Instead of eliminating them, I decided it best to give them a short extension, based on the guarantee from a teacher (who happens to be Molly's older Bhuti, Sicelo) that I would receive at least 20 essays after the weekend. I left feeling ok, knowing that I was en route to my other high school and surely they wouldn't disappoint.

However, this story isn't actually about essays. It's about my ride from the school. You see, on this particular morning, I put my bike on top of the bus and rode with the kids because it's one of the few times that I actually get to interact with them. It's only 7 miles to the school, but from that school to the other school is 11 miles (back past my house in other direction) and then I still have to ride back home 4 more miles.

Now, I think it worth noting here that the road to this school is the worst I personally have seen anywhere in Swaziland; in fact, it would make the road from Nhlanguano to Makhosini feel like riding in a Lexus on a newly tarred road. It's ridiculously eroded, rock laden, and frankly, a little dangerous.

However, on this day I didn't have a care about any of that. Today I was free of anything else happening around me. I put my headphones on, pushed play on my Dell DJ, and raced away from the school to the sound of Faith No More's "Epic" with nothing but speed and hills on my mind.

As painful as this ride can be at times (hilly, hard on the joints, bike hard to control at times of high speed, etc.), seeing rural Swaziland in this way is so amazingly beautiful to me. Within minutes of leaving the school, the mountains on the horizon, I rode through a section of the road that has conifers on both sides and reminds me so much in both the look and smell of Wisconsin; Blink 182's "Dammit" plays. Hard climb ahead, Pearl Jam's "Go" pulled me up. I sailed down the descent to Foo Fighter's "Everlong." The final stretch, almost there, N.E.R.D.'s "Rock Star" takes me home.

Now I know that not everyone has the ability to ride with music (I never do in the states because it's the easiest way to get killed on a bike). However, for me, it's not really about the music as it is feeling of "oneness" with the bike when I'm riding. Riding my bike gives me the ability to detach from the thoughts that torment me or contrarily, the time to think and deal with the things on my mind that I can no longer escape from, all while getting some exercise, which generally helps with problems anyway.

Some of you find refuge in running; I would if my knees were still capable of the impact. I've heard that many people don't ride their bike much for one reason or another. The times during the week on my bike are the few moments in Swaziland when I feel invincible; created unconsciousness that's similar to that of a basketball player who in a single game is able to drain one 3-pointer after another seemingly effortless. It's during this short time, when the things that aren't going well for me don't matter. I'm not quite sure what I'd do without my bike (likely go insane). Those who don't ride may want to give it a shot; you might be surprised.



Angela's Lit Box

by Angela Galletta, PCV, Nhlanguano

This month, I was really hoping to find a book I detested. I realized recently that the last couple of entries have been surprisingly upbeat. Lest I spoil my reputation, I knew I needed to find something I could be really cynical about. Nobody values a critic who is always approving. Anyway, I am unfortunately disappointed. Despite my best efforts, I have liked every book I read this month. As a sort of consolation, I decided that if I couldn't write about a book I hated, I could write about a different sort of book than I'm used to. This month, one of the best was an unlikely memoir by Wade Davis, a Harvard professor. It is called The Serpent and the Rainbow: a Harvard Scientist Uncovers the Startling Truth about the Secret World of Haitian Voodoo and Zombies. Wade Davis, a young scientist assisting professors at Harvard, is approached by a couple of wealthy white men with a mission. They sincerely believe that reports of zombies from Haiti have some sort of medical truth to them. They believe the zombie state is induced by a potion of a combination of plants indigenous to Africa, and brought to Haiti during the slave trade. Think of the money they could make if they could find it! The value to modern medicine alone would make them all millionaires. Of course to Wade, they stress that the real purpose of his lone expedition will be in the pursuit of science. As Wade is an ethnobotanist and is fascinated by plants and their connections to culture, he immediately accepts the mission. This memoir takes the reader along throughout Wade's journey into Haiti, and many of his anecdotes remind me of something someone from Peace Corps Swaziland might write. What makes this read most satisfying is that Mr. Davis is not willing to settle for the surface truth that a white foreigner would see at first glance. He spends months and months on repeated trips making relationships, gaining trust, and trying his best to immerse himself in the Haitian religion of Voodoo (although in his book he refers to it as Vodoun, a French derivative, because we outside readers cannot be trusted to read the word Voodoo and not bring Hollywood with us). Although his original mission is to find the medical background behind the making of a zombie, he soon finds that learning the Why? is just as important as the How?

Honorable Mention should be given to: Boy Still Missing, by John Searles, The Devil in the White City, by Erik Larson, Plainsong, by Kent Haruf, The Perks of Being a Wallflower, by Stephen Chbosky.



by Cliff Okada

‘Bug Chasers’ ...continued from page 1

Condoms and safe sex are openly ridiculed on bug-chasing Web sites, with many bug chasers rebelling against what they see as the dogma of safe-sex education; constantly thinking about a deadly disease takes all the fun out of sex, they say, and condoms suck. Carlos agrees and says getting HIV will make safe sex a moot point. For some, the chase is a pragmatic move. They see HIV infection as inevitable because of their unsafe sex or needle sharing, so they decide to take control of the situation and infect themselves. It's empowering. They're no longer victims waiting to be infected; rather they are in charge of their own fates. For others, deliberately infecting themselves is the ultimate taboo, the most extreme sex act left on the planet, and that has a strong erotic appeal for some men who have tried everything else. Still others feel lost and without any community to embrace them, and they see those living with HIV as a cohesive group that welcomes its new members and receives vast support from the rest of the gay community, and from society as a whole. Bug chasers want to be a part of that club. Some want HIV because they think once they have it they can go on with a wild, uninhibited sex life without constant fears of the virus. Getting the bug opens the door to sexual nirvana, they say. Others can't stand the thought of being so unlike their HIV-positive lover.

Carlos should meet Doug Hitzel, but he probably never will. A year ago they might have been online buddies, both sharing a passion for HIV that few others understood. Now Hitzel understands all too clearly what bug chasing can do to a young man's life, but it's too late for him. After six months of bug chasing, Hitzel succeeded in getting the virus. He's now a twenty-one-year-old freshman at a Midwestern university. Hitzel's experience started when he moved from his home in Nebraska to San Francisco with his boyfriend. When that relationship broke up, Hitzel was at the lowest point in his life, and alone. He sought relief in drugs and sex, as much of each as he could get. At first, he started out just not caring whether he got HIV or not, then he found the bug-chasing underground and embraced it. He was sure he'd get HIV soon anyway. He thought he would always feel exactly like he did then; he was certain that ten, twenty, thirty years later he'd still be partying every night. It lasted only six months — then Hitzel got sick with awful flulike symptoms and lost a lot of weight. A doctor's visit cleared him of hepatitis and

other possible problems, but the clinic sent him home with an HIV test he could do himself. Hitzel waited before doing the test and decided to go home to Nebraska, to give up the bug chasing and the rest of the life that was killing him. Once he got home, he did the test and found out he was positive. He now wakes up each day with a terrible frustration that's just below the surface of his once sunny demeanor. He hates the medication he has to take every day, and he realizes that HIV affects nearly every part of his life. While he was bug chasing, Hitzel couldn't imagine ever wanting to be in a re-

It's empowering. They're no longer victims waiting to be infected; rather they are in charge of their own fates.

lationship again. But now that he's getting his life back in order, he realizes that being HIV-positive can be a roadblock to new relationships. "Whenever I have to deal with things like medication, days when I'm really down," Hitzel says, "I have to look myself in the mirror and say, 'You did this. Are you happy now?'" Looking back on it, Hitzel says he was committing suicide by chasing HIV, killing himself slowly because he didn't have the nerve to do it quickly. Hitzel is ashamed and embarrassed that he actually sought HIV, but he's willing to tell his story because he hopes to dissuade others who are on the same path.

One standout in public-health circles is the Miami-Dade County Health Department in Florida, which is taking steps specifically to address bug chasing. Evelyn Ullah, director of its office of HIV/AIDS, readily admits that bug chasing is "a definite problem" in the Miami area, having become more common and more visible in the past few years. Miami health officials regularly monitor Internet sites for bug chasing in their community, and they keep track of "conversion parties," in which the goal is to have positive men infect negative men. The health department also is launching new outreach efforts that include going online to chat with bug chasers and others pursuing risky sex.

Dr. Robert Janssen, director of the division of HIV/AIDS Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, says he has never seen the Web sites

that promote bug chasing and does not know of any organized efforts to spread the virus. There is virtually no research on people who intentionally seek HIV, he says, but he notes that several studies have shown a growing complacency among gay men and the population in general about the risk of HIV and a misconception that HIV infection is completely manageable. Ongoing outbreaks of syphilis and gonorrhea (which Carlos recently had) in large cities indicate a tendency to forgo condom use, he says. Recent data from the CDC show that syphilis rates among men in the United States rose 15.4 percent between 2000 and 2001, which the researchers attribute to outbreaks among gay and bisexual men in several U.S. cities. Janssen says the CDC has not addressed bug chasing in any way but might if researchers determine that it is a significant method of spreading the virus. "I'm interested that you're saying there's that much out there on the Web and that it's easy to find," Janssen says. "If we can confirm that it's happening to any real degree beyond just an anecdote here and there, we may need to address it." What frustrates health-care professionals the most, Forstein says, is that "gay men who are doing this haven't a clue what they're doing," he says. "They're incredibly selfish and self-absorbed. They don't have any idea what's going on with the epidemic in terms of the world or society or what impact their actions might have. The sense of being my brother's keeper is never discussed in the gay community because we've gone to the extreme of saying gay men with HIV can do no wrong. They're poor victims, and we can't ever criticize them."

Furthering the epidemic doesn't bother Carlos. Bug chasing requires a great deal of self-delusion, and he easily acknowledges the contradictions in what he's doing. He notes that while he seeks HIV, he doesn't eat junk food or smoke, and that he drinks only socially. "I take care of myself," he says proudly. He also notes the hypocrisy in his doing volunteer work at GMHC, in which he tells other men to use condoms and practice safe sex, while he's hunting for partners for his secret hobby. The conflict doesn't bother him in the least.

Forstein says that attitude is disastrous for gay men. "We're killing each other," he says. "It's no longer just the Matthew Shepards that are dying at the hands of others. We're killing each other. We have to take responsibility for this as a community."

"You're a nobody unless you've made the SOJO gossip column!"



Gossip Column

- Justine had a great time in France and won't stop talking about it.
- Derek has mountain man facial hair.
- Marisa had a nasty case of amoebas while taking the GREs.
- Caitlyn has had diarrhea for 4 days...& counting.
- Des and Lewis have ET'd.
- Brigid wants to buy a shotgun to shoot the hen thats on her roof.
- A puppy on Justine's homestead had its face run over by her babe's truck and survived.
- Kendra's counterpart sold 10 chickens to buy a new pair of shoes.
- Blia & Justine's computers are broken or breaking.
- Love is in the air.
- Vincent, Caitlyn, Blia, and Uncle Tommy almost got mauled by lions in Zambia.
- Sean from Group 4 has ET'd.
- Jana and her parents were stuck on a safari with a racist tour guide for 8 days.
- The astigmatism increased by 50% in Samantha's one eye since she's been in Swaziland.
- Justine named her new bhuti 'John' after her grandfather, Dad, Kennedy, and Lennon.

You know you're **HARD CORPS** when...

- ...your training class for the last 2 months has been held in the middle of a poo-covered cock-fight ring.
- ...you are on your way to the school when you stop on the edge of the foot path to urinate.
- ...you can discuss with other volunteers explicit bodily functions while shoveling food into your mouth and never lose your appetite.



You know you're **Soft Corps** when...

- ...you make your seventh graders walk you to your homestead because you're afraid of cows.
- ...it pains you to hear the commercials for Clinique bonus time at Edgars while sitting in your hut listening to Jacaranda.
- ...you rejoice at discovering 10 rand Brie at Spar.
- ...Overjoyed by falling exchange rates, you now own more African Fantasy Jewelry than African Fantasy itself.



Private bathrooms, lemurs, and leeches, oh my!

By Marisa Harrison, Kambhoke

It's a few months since Julie and I visited Madagascar but since our leech story never made it to the gossip column, I thought I'd give you a rundown of our incredible trip (including the leeches).

The key thing to planning any trip to Madagascar is Jeff. He was our driver and guide. We loved him. You'll love him. Unless you are keen to hitchhike the island, hire Jeff. If you are anything like us, you'll appreciate not having to research every move—it was truly relaxing. He answered our constant questions and was still smiling at the end of the trip.

The national parks are amazing. You hire a guide for the morning or day and hike the trails looking for lemurs and chameleons and indigenous herbs. We did Isalo, Ranomafana, and Perinet (Andasibe and Mantadia). Isalo was my favorite for the stillness of its arid rock formations—I am carrying a rock from there with me to take the GREs next week in an attempt to stay calm. The park has a natural pool and a grotto-like waterfall that are great hike destinations, and the ring-tails near the waterfall are not afraid of humans! Ranomafana was great for night hikes, but that's where we encountered the TERRESTRIAL leeches. Leech tips: wear pants and tuck them into your socks, don't put your bag on the ground or they will use it to access the upper parts of your body (Julie had a leech attached to her face), they can get through smart wool socks (they are tiny tiny and get through the weave), don't wear white socks because if they do get through the socks will be stained with blood, and just try to ignore them since they don't really hurt, don't carry disease, and don't itch later. I had 21 leech hickeys on my ankles. Battle scars. Perinet didn't have leeches, or at least a noticeable number, and it has the Indri (black and white large lemurs) whose morning calls to each other sound like whales. I'm not kidding. Don't miss them. I would recommend all the parks we went to because we saw over 10 species of lemur (ring tail, gray bamboo, golden bamboo, indri, diamed sifaka, brown mouse, red-bellied, brown-fronted...) and if you get sucked on by a leech, at least you can brag about it.

All the hotels we stayed at were luxurious compared to my other trips in the region. They don't have backpackers, so we stayed at lodges that were the same price as you'd pay here for a hostel. Awesome! Julie and I always had a double room with private bathroom, and hot water! The list is in the Travel Log in the office, but Jeff will book it all for you. Stay a full day or two in a city (Antsirabe and Ambalavo are nice and small, Tana is the capital). And save your shooms for beautiful silk scarves! The last thing is to spend more than 8 days. We were there for 8 and I think you should do at least 14! When Patrick Stonehouse visited, he flew to some remote beach and raved about it. We couldn't, but you should! If you have any further questions, contact Julie or me and we'd be happy to give more tips or share photos. Go, and don't let the leeches stop you!

August (Ingci) - Rock Down to the Lock Down

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Jenny's Birthday 1 Francie and Julie G. return from Cape Town	2	3	4	5 Lindsay, Kelly & Jabu return from Cape Town
6	7 Angela returns from Cape Town/ Kruger	8	9	10 Group 4 Swearing In Ceremony at Royal Swazi Sun	11 Caitlin's Birthday Group 4 Moves to Site	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 Grp 3 Mid-service Health Exams begin	22	23	24	25	26
		Mkhondvo Boys and Girls Lifeskills Camp Southern Africa Porgramming and Training Workshop				
27	28 Susan on Vacation 'til Sept 1st	29 Adam's Birthday	30 Sandla's Birthday SOJO Production	31 Will's Birthday		

The Swazi SoJournal

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