

Group 4 Swears In at Royal Swazi Sun

It was Socrates and sneaky ninjas at the Royal Swazi Sun Convention Center. On August 10th as group 4 swapped their trainee ‘T’ for a volunteer ‘V’ and became the next group of HIV/AIDS educators to embark on the roller coaster journey that is Peace Corps Swaziland.

Representatives from organizations around Swaziland attended the event, mc’d by Training Director, Simanga Ntando, decked in traditional dress. Country Director Patricia Austin made remarks along with the acting US ambassador and Charge d’Affaires Lynn Allison. The Queen mother, Inkhosikati LaMatsebula, was unable to attend due to a death in the Royal family, but was represented by Hon. Thandi Shongwe, Minister for Tour-

ism & Environmental affairs.

The swearing in ceremony was/is an unveiling or an introduction. It’s the point where, after 8 weeks of hard core training, Peace Corps nudges you out into the spotlight. Here Swaziland, meet Group 4! And shine they did, with personality and confidence.

The conference room bubbled up with a wave of “inkhosi yami’s” (English translation: ‘my god’) as Marian Gamboa opened her remarks in siSwati, after which she was bestowed a round of joyful applause from the Swazi contingent in the room.

“One thing I know is that I know nothing,” Mara continued in a poignant speech quoting Socrates, capturing the sense of beginning and humbleness that fills



Newly sworn in PCV Polly Chen shakes hands with NGO representatives at the swearing in ceremony at the Royal Swazi Sun.

PCV’s fresh at the beginning of service. However, most of her speech addressed the dilemmas of risk in everything we do from loving to simply living, but she concluded on a note of idealism and hope.

“The greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing,” she said.

Fellow volunteer, Mark Weng also made remarks in which he included a rather entertaining allegory that compared the fight against HIV to the characters in a Ninja movie.

Lynn Allison cautioned the new group not to expect to accomplish very much (i.e. cure HIV) or to get everything right on the first try, but tempered the warning with encouragement to work toward small successes and building the relationships that are so valuable in the Peace Corps.

“I’m still learning and I’ve been here hmm.... a little longer than you,” she joked.

The 21 newly sworn in volunteers moved into their permanent posts the next day to embark on 24 months of service.

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THE OLD BALL AND CHAIN



Simanga kicks off the swearing in for group 4 in traditional Swazi dress.

Mkhondvo Boys and Girls Camp a Success

PCV Bliya Yang and counterpart Andile Dlamini organized an HIV/AIDS camp in her village of Nyanyali. More than 200 youth showed up for the event and afterwards the youth that attended gathered on the following Saturday because they were inspired to start an HIV/AIDS club.



Director's Chat w/Pattie Austin, CD

Greetings to all PCVs. PST has ended and Swearing In took place this past month so CONGRATULATIONS to all new Group 4 Volunteers currently in integration.

September promises to be equally busy as new PEPFAR programming begins. The first annual Girls Conference is scheduled for Sept 1 with Nonhlanhla Dlamini, SWAGAA Director, as the keynote speaker. In mid-Sept we will be meeting with the Anglican Bishop and his National HIV/AIDS coordinator to begin planning for the training of Anglican pastors. PCVs Alex Edwards, Kristen Wexler, Jenny Jones and Jana Barnes are on the planning committee.

Another PEPFAR program is making its debut as a small scale pilot program. The third component of the Girls Mentoring Program, OVC scholarship assistance, is starting this month at Cana High School. Our NGO partner SWAGAA will be receiving funding from USAID to assist some of our OVCs in the mentoring program with school fees, uniforms and books. PCVs Kristen Wexler and Lindsey Hayek have been instrumental in facilitating the implementation of this initiative.

Also in September we will be hosting the Regional Security Officer John Allan and his guest, Mr. Daryl Sink, from Washington. Daryl Sink is the Director of Peace Corps Volunteer Safety and he is making a regional tour with John. They will be visiting Swaziland from Sept 17 to the 20th. Mfanafuthi and I are coordinating their visit. I know that they will be interested in meeting with some Volunteers so Mfanfuthi may be getting in touch with you.

Lastly, in early September we will conduct our Group 2 Close of Service Conference. This Conference is designed to help prepare Volunteers who are completing their 2 years of service to begin the adjustment and planning necessary to return to the United States. The official COS date for group 2 is December 8.

It gives me great pleasure in announcing that our new APCD/HEALTH Stella Nkosi has begun her duties at the office. Stella is well known to some of the veteran Volunteers as she was formerly the Director of FAWA (Forum of African Women Educationalists) and has attended PCV camps in the past. Stella will bring a new depth and breadth to Programming and I am so delighted she has joined the staff.

One last note for your planning purposes: there will be an all Volunteer conference following the end of the PST. The group 4 IST will begin Nov 13 and conclude approximately a week later. Around Nov 17-18 we will have a meeting for an All Volunteer meeting which will last approximately a week. This meeting will include a Thanksgiving dinner. Dates are still a little soft but I wanted you all to know about the meeting and the Thanksgiving dinner.

*News from the training desk
w/ Simanga Ntando*

The storm is over now! The eight intensive weeks of training are over. Being home, playing with my dog, sleeping on my bed and enjoying a weekend that begins on Friday makes me feel "normal" once again. Musa, Mahlubi and I would like to thank all those volunteers and staff, who contributed to this year's PST by coming to the center to do sessions, share their experiences with the trainees and answer the myriad questions that trainees had about their job and integration.

I really would like to praise the volunteers for setting a positive image of Peace Corps in the way they dressed, presented sessions and behaved whilst at the training center. As the training staff we feel that the 21 new volunteers got the best coaching from all of you and very ready to serve.

As for Group 2, we all are looking forward to meeting you all at the Foresters Arms Hotel for your last workshop as Peace Corps Swaziland volunteers. Here are important

things you guys need to remember as you organize yourselves for the workshop.

- The dates for the conference are September 7, 8 and 9.

- The venue is the Foresters Arms Hotel (Mhlambanyatsi)

- Please bring your COS manuals
- Transport leaves the Peace Corps office at 11:00 AM

- Look presentable (this is an official meeting with guest speakers representing reputable organizations)

- All meals will be paid for by Peace Corps...except for any alcoholic beverages you might want to take whilst there.

If you have any other questions you would like answered regarding the conference, please don't hesitate to call Simanga (602 8527), Pattie (602 8516) and Nwando (602 8515).

In Brief**Grifters Request**

As you hopefully know, you are all welcome to leave things at Grifters, either in our safe or storeroom. We have been having some problems with belongings stored in plastic bags, which split and scatter your stuff everywhere. To help you all find your things more quickly and to keep them together we kindly as that you use the following: A zip-up or drawstring bag, box, or knotted Spar "eco-bag" preferably with your name on it. Or else, ask your fellow volunteers to be a bit more 'delicate' when searching for their shower gel!

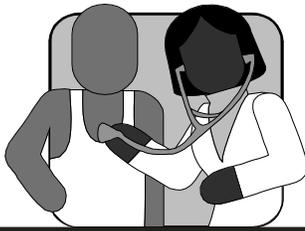
Thank You,
Grifters owners

Share Your Ideas!

There will be a life skills sharing for those volunteers already teaching life skills on September 11th at the office. Come with ideas and ready to share about what has worked for you. Questions? SMS Brigid 624-3755 or Blia 624-3758 Thanks!

Hey Group 2!

Email, text, or put in Julie G.'s box 2-3 "images" or memories they will constantly recall, or picture when they speak or think of life in Swaziland back in the states. Julie is asking to get memory descriptions to her by COS conference so time is running out!



Keeping you Updated and Healthy w/Daynese Santos, PCMO

OVER THE COUNTER MEDS

Once existing supplies are exhausted the medical unit will no longer supply over the counter medications, vitamins or feminine hygiene products. It just came down to having to make a few tough choices in order to continue to provide essential medical care and prescription medications for volunteers while at the same time remaining within budgetary limits. The med unit will continue to provide oral contraceptives, antimalarials, asthma and allergy drugs and acne preparations. Most of you are born shoppers however I advise you to read medication labels carefully. Look for products manufactured in South Africa, by FDA Approved labs such as Bayer, Smith-Kline, Roche, Abbott, Aventis. Generic drugs usually provide great cost savings and are equally as effective as name brand products. While conducting an informal survey at local supermarkets I noted that many of the products in you med kits are readily available. If you find that you're having difficulty in locating specific products, contact me.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Peace Corps policy clearly states that volunteers may not utilize medical facilities outside of the medical unit unless specifically authorized by the PCMO. This means that even though you may be great friends with the medical staff at your local clinic or pharmacy, it's not okay to seek medical consultation or prescriptions for medications from them. Prescribing practices vary widely however Peace Corps guidelines are quite specific in restricting the use of controlled substances by volunteers. Don't be misguided, the consequences may be harsh.

CRYPTOSPORIDIUM

Is definitely in the house, in fact 60% of you are housing Cryptosporidium in your intestines. So what is it, how did it get there, and is it harmful? Cryptosporidium is a microscopic parasite found in drinking water and recreational water in every region of the U.S. and throughout the world. Because 'Crypto' has an outer shell it can survive outside of the body for long periods and is resistant to chlorine disinfectants. 'Crypto' may cause watery diarrhea that lasts from 1-2 weeks, however most people with healthy immune systems have no symptoms at all. Boiling and filtering water removes Cryptosporidium. Avoid fecal oral contamination by hand washing, properly treat raw produce before eating and keep surfaces clean to prevent the spread of 'Crypto'. Encourage AIDS victims in your communities to seek medical attention for evaluation of diarrhea as 'Crypto' may be deadly to individuals with compromised immune systems.

MID-SERVICE PHYSICALS GROUP 3

Congratulations Group 3, most of you sailed through your mid-service physical exams without a hitch. Nellie and I appreciate the manner in which you arrived on time for appointments and, 'produced' specimens on demand! You will be contacted by the PCMO if you had abnormal lab results or if you require follow-up. Otherwise, relax, stay healthy and we'll see you in a year for your COS physical.

STAY FOCUSED

It's easy to get distracted when friends that you've become attached to decide to return home. There are so many reasons why volunteers pack it in early: personal, professional, family obligations, medical issues, or just plain homesick. But, you're still here, remember why you came, you're going to be the one to make a difference. We're here to support you, stay focused, dig in!

'BURP'!!

Thanks newbies, you really cranked out some mouth watering delights at the cooking session at Ngwane last month. All of you take a bow for a stellar performance! It was great fun even if I did gain a pound. I'm already imagining site visits, ummmmmmm!!!

SITE VISITS GROUP 4

The PCMO road show will get under way the week of September 18th. I'll visit each of you at your site to give you an opportunity to discuss your health issues, mental health concerns, environmentally related problems, latrine atrocities, or whatever you like. If you need medical supplies, contact Nellie before your scheduled visit so that I can bring them to you. Remember what we talked about during PST, it's up to you to turn that house into a home. So get out that paint brush, hang up your favorite pics and pop a batch of cookies into your dutch oven! Even the most austere minimalists agree that furniture is a functional necessity. So give yourself permission to add a little comfort to your space. Remember, foodstuffs, cooking utensils and clothing should not be stored on the floor as that provides easy access to insects and rodents.

TAMIFLU

The Office of Medical Services has determined that each volunteer should be provided one package of Tamiflu to be used as prophylaxis or treatment of Avian Flu. A package of Tamiflu has been placed in each volunteer's mailbox along with instructions and a form to be signed and turned in to the PCMO verifying receipt. If you have not yet retrieved your Tamiflu, please do so on your next visit to the PCO. Also because of the expense, all volunteers will be required to return the unopened package of Tamiflu at close of service. Otherwise the price of the Tamiflu will be deducted from the readjustment allowance. So . . . safeguard your Tamiflu!

SUBMIT!

We'll take anything you 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 etceteras your minds can produce. Love, j,k&v.



Safety and Security w/Mfanafuthi Vilakati, S&S

NEWS
& Notes

A very warm welcome and congratulations to the newly sworn-in Group 4 PCVs. I also hope everyone else is fine in their respective sites.

NEW EAP Booklets are out! Group 4 and most of Group 3 PCVs now have copies. I would like to urge Group 2 PCVs to get their copies from me or Nelisiwe, the post's medical assistant whenever they are up in Mbabane. It is MANDATORY that all PCVs get this booklet, even if they will be leaving in two weeks time, primarily because one never knows when an emergency can unfold. Abbreviated EAP pamphlets have also been placed in all PCVs mailboxes at the PCO.

CHANGES with consolidations points have also been inevitably made. Please try to find out where your Consolidation Points are. This goes for Group 3 PCVs who have had their CPs changed and of course the Group 4 PCVs.

Some Consolidation Points are undergoing major renovations. These are the Siteki Hotel and the Lavumisa Hotel. In case there is a need to consolidate, the affected PCVs will be duly advised of alternatives.

Lastly please make time to go through your EAP booklet and memorize the new codes and expected reactions that go with them.

Below is a list of PC Swaziland's Consolidation Point wardens and their assistants. I will be making means of educating our new wardens of their functions.

We're now in Spring, whenever you leave your house please expect that the rains may fall at any moment, so close the windows to avoid damage of property. Also, please do not let anyone handle your keys or come into your room without your permission.

To the Group 2 PCVs, you have held out thus far, please ensure a safe last three months of your service and do let PC aware of safety & security challenges you face. Until next month, take care and make use of your safety & security manuals!

**Peace Corps Swaziland Consolidation Points
Wardens and Alternate Wardens**

Consolidation Point	Warden	Alternate Warden
Matsapha Inn	Megan Guetzo	Kristin Wetzler
Riverside Hotel	Gavin Dia	Christopher Young
Siteki Hotel	Vincent D'Agostino	Jerome Mayer
Simunye Country Club	Kelly Russel	n/a
Assegai Inn	Marisa Harrison	Julie Zollman
Phumula Guest House	Andrea Pietruszka	Jana Barnes
Nhlangano Sun	Meredith Aggers	Arlene Shaffer
Lavumisa Hotel	Michael Marrone	Joseph DelGiorno

Group 4 PCMO Site Visits

Name	Site	Date	Time
Rebecca Pedrotty	Mpolonjeni	18/9/06	10:30
Amy & Jerome Mayer	Ngcina	18/9/06	1:30
Polly & Chria Chen	Gamula	26/9/06	10:30
Joseph DelGiorno	Lavumisa	26/9/06	12:00
Michael Marrone	Phumelela	26/9/06	2:00
Mark Weng	Mabovini	26/9/06	9:30
Virginia Gervin	Magubheleni	20/9/06	11:30
Roselane Miller	Masibini	20/9/06	1:00
Karen Peebles	Matimatima	20/9/06	3:00
Caroline McPartland	Engoleni	20/9/06	5:00
Adam Kohlrus	Emphini	21/9/06	9:30
Kate Anderson	Khalangilile	21/9/06	11:30
Hanna Lee	Mahlalini	21/9/06	2:00
Karen Lee	Edulini	21/9/06	3:30
Thomas Rimbach	Mlindazwe	22/9/06	10:00
Kendra Oliver	Tikhuba	22/9/06	1:00
Caroline Wheatley	Mambane	22/9/06	3:30
Amy Huber	Phonjwane	29/9/06	11:00
Marian Gamboa	Nceka	29/9/06	3:00

Research presented and news from the 16th International Conference on AIDS in Toronto, Canada.

South Africa Bashed at AIDS Conference

Top speakers at the 16th International Conference on AIDS in Toronto reserved their closing remarks for a long and detailed critique of South Africa and President Thabo Mbeki's government, which at first denied that the human immunodeficiency virus causes AIDS and then resisted offering HIV drugs to its people.

"It is the only country in Africa, amongst all the countries I have traversed in the last five years, whose government is still obtuse, dilatory and negligent about rolling out treatment," Stephen Lewis, the U.N. special envoy on AIDS, told the closing session.

"It is the only country in Africa whose government continues to propound theories more worthy of a lunatic fringe than of a concerned and compassionate state."

Study Examines Musical Taste And HIV Risk

Musical tastes may offer clues to rates of HIV infection, said researchers who tried to decipher the complex behaviors and attitudes of young men in the United States.

US boys hooked on gospel, techno and pop are more at risk of HIV infection than devotees of other musical styles, including "bling, bling" hip hop, according to a new study by researchers at Columbia University. They found boys who listened to hip hop music were more likely to have vaginal intercourse and had more partners, but boys from church or New York club scenes (techno, pop, electronic) took the most sexual risks. *(Full news article will be posted in volunteer lounge.)

Promising Vaccine from UPitt

A trial HIV vaccine developed by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh uses a powered-up version of patients' cells to fight back against the virus.

The group presented details of key steps in the treatment Saturday during the XVI International AIDS conference in Toronto. A clinical trial is expected later this year.

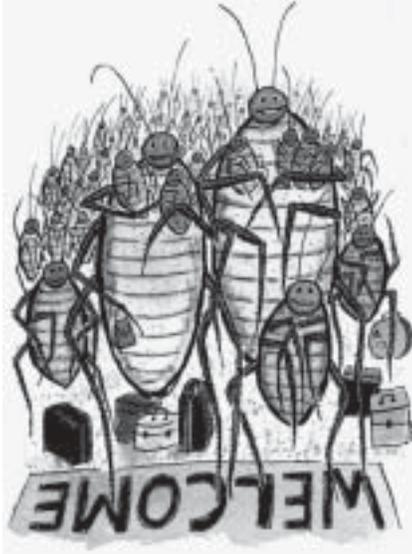
The vaccine uses a patient's dendritic cells, which are immune cells to which HIV binds. The vaccine - designed to activate killer T cells, a type of white blood cell that can help kill cells infected with a virus -- can be custom made for each patient, researchers said.

During a trial, researchers combined a small amount of a patient's HIV with helper cells from the immune system to "super infect" the cells. As a result, the virus was inactivated and cells containing HIV fragments were able to stimulate the killer T cells.

Researchers have completed a trial in 18 patients that proved the approach is safe. A larger trial is expected to begin later this year.

The Regression of My Relationship With Insects Since Joining the Peace Corps

by Justine Spisak, Nsangwini



I remember the first time we came to Mbabane. Driving near the bus rank there was this huge billboard that read, quite simply and concise: "Fast. Deadly. Doom." Personally, that just says it all.

It wasn't social commentary on the HIV crisis. It was an advert for the chemical cocktail that has become several of we PCV's best friends, a weapon in the war on infestation. It's Doom! :) And yes, it really does worry me that I can exclaim with such

posed in Swaziland. Indeed there is Doom, but there is also Doom's little sister, Blue Death, that I've yet to mention. This is a chalky blue power one can sprinkle around to repel and kill bugs. I'm sure I need not explain to any PCV what it is like to sweep up a small pile of blue death and insect carcasses only to brush it out the door when, suddenly, a gust of wind billows and blows it right back into your house. But if Blue Death is the little sister, Doom Fogger has to be the psychotic brother. And it was this noxious and lethal force, which I unleashed on the roaches.



Doom Fogger looks like a can of Doom, but in fact it is much more potent. There are warnings all over the can about removing your food, dishes, and drinking water from the premises, and not allowing the 'fog' to touch your skin. And so it was, that several weeks ago, I took all of my dishes, cups, pans, food, filter, etc. out of the house, pushed the button on the fogger, watched as an eerie green gas sprayed out like a geyser, and, of course, ran like the dickens.

When I returned many hours later, there was a liberal dusting of earwigs, roaches, spiders, and those big huge centipede worm things that once in awhile fall with a 'smack!'; a true decimation that has since reinstated much of the comfort to my life.

One time, early in my service, I was discussing over the phone with my best friend the unknown ways which I would change after two years in the Peace Corps. She, knowing of my fear, joked that I was going to come home having gained the ability to kill bugs with my bare hands. While I'm not quite there... yet, I definitely am less fearful of going after them. When I was in college, ONE roach in my apartment seemed like the end of the world. Now I'm a force to be reckoned with. Hopefully I'll never again have to break out these involuntarily acquired smack-down skills, but if I had to, at least now I know I could. Weapon of choice? A flip flop.



joy, a word of such penetrating horror.

So let's see... Where to begin? I was conceived. I was born. And I hated bugs. Food chain, schmoed chain. They're ugly. And the way they move around is really creepy. Not to mention some of them contain painful or deadly poisons. Also, their tiny stature equips them with unfairly dexterous hiding capabilities... creepy!

So as a volunteer with some of the most severe disdain for insects, chance naturally bestowed upon me a rondavel, complete with grass thatch roof from which the little pests regularly rain. They live up there, living in insect paradise, breeding generation after generation of new pests. Recently returning from a vacation to France I discovered that the manageably sized cockroaches, in their reproductive zeal, had nearly overtaken the place with their spawn, Joe's Apartment style, inviting their severely overweight cousins to stay. At this point, they were everywhere. You couldn't lift so much as a paperclip without something scuttling out from beneath it. I knew I had to do something drastic. And thus... the holocaust ensued.

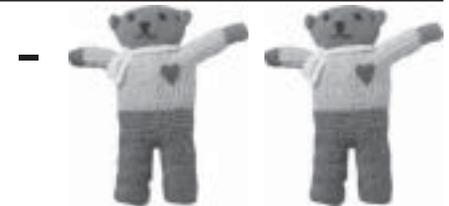
I suppose I should acknowledge here, the solid certainty I have that I will someday develop a mysterious cancer, if not from burning trash, from all of the insecticides to which I've been ex-

- - Mother Bear Project - - - - -

The Mother Bear Project is a grass-roots, non-profit group dedicated to providing comfort and hope to children, primarily those affected by HIV/AIDS in emerging nations, by giving them a gift of love in the form of hand-knit and crocheted bears. To date, 12,035 bears have been sent to South Africa, Zambia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Burundi, Malawi, Botswana, Rwanda, and Uganda.



Contact Nelda Villines if you would like to be a part of this project. PCV Bliya Yang organized to have bears distributed at her site. Nelda will deliver bears to your community or an NCP as long as you organize the children. Email or call her at: villinesng@state.gov/404-2273



Mel Reminds Us What It's All About

By Tegan Callahan and Julie Zollmann

Melissa "Mel" O'Farrel. Some of you may know her as the PCV who unwittingly drowned several of her own kittens, others may know her as The PCV SiSwati Guru, others as the fearless VAC crusader from Lubombo, and others, the lucky ones, as a sincere friend.

To know Mel, is to admire her, for her sincerity, her discipline, and her persistent, honest attempts to understand people and make sense of their lives. For us, she provided those needed reminders of why we are here, why we joined Peace Corps, and what is really important about being here. Over time, she has been there to help us when we've fallen into ruts of self-absorption, reminding us that "it is really not about me anyway."

Similarly, understanding her family and neighbors in Shoba was Mel's primary objective throughout her service. For her, this translated into an insistence on learning siSwati and spending time, just being "out" in the community. She insisted upon "working" outside of her rondaval every day at least from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., if only to just sit with people, listen, and observe. That time and her ever-present siSwati flash cards were her secret weapons, putting us all to shame as she began teaching lessons on pregnancy and menstruation all in siSwati.

Since December 2004, Mel's made her home on the Hlophe homestead, where an average of 35 people were living at any given time. Her homestead was a microcosm of the larger community, where all the issues that make HIV work in Swaziland challenging played themselves out. She witnessed first hand struggles with illness, hygiene, and HIV prevention, watching, for example, her 15 year-old *sisi* start an affair with a married truck driver in exchange for a pair of sneakers.

Most of her work consisted of being a community resource for HIV and health information and providing counseling. Almost every day people would visit Mel's homestead, just coming to talk, confiding their HIV status or asking her to visit a sick person at home. One by one she would counsel them on testing, on PMTCT, on hygiene, and nutrition (yes, all in siSwati). Mel used EVERY possible opportunity to talk about health issues, even plastering her Nalgene® bottles with HIV information in siSwati cut out from

a Lusweti book.

She found her work in the schools to be the most rewarding piece of her job. Mel waited, observed, and absorbed for nine months at the school before beginning to teach classes. In the meantime, she formed meaningful relationships with teachers—making friends, gaining trust and searching out the most productive avenues for life skills and sexual education. As a result, her lessons really made an impression on her students. She remembers being thrilled when mothers of her students came to thank her for her work, telling her that their daughters



Mel clips her bhuti Mathuba's fingernails.

SiSwati Name: Samkelisiwe "Samu" Hlophe
Site: KaShoba, Lubombo
DOB: July 29, 1982
Best Book Read in Service: *Virtualife* by renowned novelist and humanitarian, "Shedooby"
Favorite Food at Site: Oatmeal
Quote that Best Reflects Service: "My job here is not to deliver you, but to hold up a mirror until you see how." Ani DiFranco

came home from school and even taught them, the students' mothers, about conception, pregnancy, menstruation, and HIV. "Even those students I thought weren't really paying attention!" Mel recounts.

And though Mel found her work personally rewarding, she says that even her greatest memories are bittersweet. Mel feels that Shoba was not ready to hear the message about HIV, and though she feels that she may have comforted or even helped a few people one-on-one, she has not changed the face of HIV in Shoba. "The efforts of one individual can't. The community must choose to re-

spond." As she says her goodbyes she notices that, her friends in the community enjoyed being with her, enjoyed having someone to listen, to confide in; they enjoyed that she was willing to pick *ligusha* with them and to exchange buzzes. But, as she departs, her friends say they will be lonely when she's gone. No one is fretting about whether "projects" or "progress" in the fight against HIV will continue.

Mel remembers being frustrated trying to get people to care about themselves and each other. "Teaching about HIV is easy, but it's really hard to teach someone that they are worth something, worth more than a pair of tennis shoes. They haven't learned that yet."

Though Mel has returned to Rose City, Michigan, she fully intends to continue some new routines developed in Swaziland: watching the sunrise over coffee, shaving her head, practicing yoga, and her exploring the culinary arts. She's also excited to try other new things. She is looking forward to going white tail deer hunting with her grandfather, planting fruit trees with her dad, and honing her woodworking skills with her uncle. Her time away from home has shown her the value of really getting to know family.

Mel won't be leaving them again any time soon. She plans on settling down for good in Rose City. Why? Because, Mel says, "for better or worse, it's home." Mel is deeply grateful to her vibrant, close-knit community for supporting her as she tried to reach her goals, and is saddened to see "brain drain" threatening to erode community life. For Mel, it is an honor and a privilege to return home and work to enhance the life of the community. "No matter how much potential a person has, she won't achieve anything in a stagnant environment," Mel explains.

Mel is researching masters degree programs that will prepare her for a career of teaching first generation and non-traditional students at one of her local community colleges.

As the sun set on Mel's final day in KaShoba, we chilled a bottle of champagne with a half dozen ema-ice, and toasted with enamel mugs to Mel's success. Even in Mel's departure, we learned from her; her relationships in the community—fully, as a sister, daughter, neighbor, *make lomncane*, friend—are the most genuine marks of success that a volunteer can have.

PSN News

Group 4: As one PCV said, "Expect to feel embarrassed, foolish, and sometimes inadequate. It's all part of the experience. These trying times are what we eloquently call 'adjustment.' They're difficult, natural, and useful." While it may be difficult to live through, the first three months of service is essential to developing a good working relationship within your community.

It is also important to form friendship with Swazis who will be able to help you or comfort you when other PCV's are not available. If, however, you need to talk to someone who has been through integration and really understands what it is like to be an American in rural Swaziland, remember your PSN representatives. We are here for you as a sounding board for frustrations, a shoulder to lean on, or just another PCV to share experiences with.

Another good resource to use while at your site is the PC Cross-Cultural Workbook, *Culture Matters*. You may find Chapter 6, "Adjusting to a New Culture," especially fitting during this integration period.

Group 4 PSN Representatives:

Kelly: Kendra, Becky, Tommy, Caroline W.

Lauren: Amy H., Mar, Joe & Amy

Jana: Karen L., Roselane, Karen P., Caroline M.

Jenny: Mark, Mike, Virginia

Derek: Hanna, Kate, Adam

Molly: Chris & Polly, Joe D.

Expect a visit from your PSN rep before IST in November and feel free to call or SMS at any time.

Group 3: Because Group 2 is finishing up their service in the next few months, we want to remind you all that PSN is here for you too. Please feel free to contact any of your fellow Group 3 PSN representatives!

All PCV's: No matter where you are in your service, take care of yourselves and remember the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition, to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived – this is to have succeeded."



Angela's Lit Box

by Angela Galletta, Nhlango

Foiled again! I'm sorry to say that once again I have nothing but good news to bring you on the literary front. I am starting to get desperate – if anyone knows of any poorly written books please let me know. This month, among other goodies, was Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. I know some of you have already read this and don't really need a commentary, but for the rest of you...here goes. Nafisi's memoir chronicles a university professor's struggle to teach what she loves while living in a changing Iran. The memoir begins with our narrator, Azar, remembering her girls, her special class of gifted students. These girls are hand selected from Azar's previous university classes to attend a some-what secret women-only class reserved for those who love English literature. Not exactly an easy find at the time, as the most popular sentiments are anti-anything-to-do-with-America-including-anything-written-in-English-for-the-sake-of-all-that-is-holy! Azar then takes the reader back in time to the Iran she loved and grew up in, and talks about her time as a literature professor at the University of Tehran when she met most of her special students. As life becomes more and more unbelievable to her under the Islamic Republic of Iran and Khomeini's leadership, Azar grows more and more attached, almost obsessed, to the English writers she loves. These include Nabokov, Austen, James, and Bellows. These writers and their work become an escape from a life that at times seems less than bearable to her. Although the classes held at Azar's house are meant to be entirely about discussing authors and their work, little by little the sessions become just as much about finding an escape, a chance to just be oneself if only for a little while. By becoming a friend to her students, Azar begins to understand the inner struggle her students experience. The girls are not exactly happy with their status as women but are not sure with whom to be angry about their present circumstance, or how to go about finding change. While to an outsider the answers might appear obvious, Azar discovers along with the reader that the answers are not quite so simple.

Malolotja Environmental Education Centre offers services

by Tegan Callahan, Mahlalini

If you are in need of a destination, whether it is for a training event, a group retreat or workshop, I suggest you look into Malolotja Nature Reserves Environmental Education Centre. I recently took 28 Health Club members from my secondary school to the centre and we had a wonderful experience. Now, I want to make sure all volunteers are aware of this resource.

Located 20 minutes past Mbabane, these facilities include accommodation for 26 or more (they have only 26 beds, but have mattresses to accommodate groups that are bigger), a self-catering kitchen and large meeting facilities. It is perfect for a rewarding group getaway (girls club?) or group retreat (support group?).

Malolotja charges only E5 per student for the entry fee and E10 per night for accommodation (the prices double for accompanying teachers). There are also rangers on hand for no extra fee to give tours of the old mines in the area, or lead guided walks through the park. Longer hikes can also be arranged in advance.



My group only spent one night, but we arrived at 10AM on the first day. We were given a tour of the old Forbes gold mine and then a walk through the park to a viewpoint. We still had time in the afternoon and evening for group-specific sessions. The following day we again began with sessions that were relevant to our group, and then visited the old Ngwenya mine before driving back home.

One other piece of advice is to come with your own private transport (a rented sprinter or other transport depending on the size of the group). We used the vehicle to help see more things at a better pace, as well as carry our food at different points.

Typically the facilities are booked well in advance, planning ahead is necessary, as well as being flexible about the date you want.

If you want to contact or book the center, do so through the Malolotja Nature Reserve on-site office at 442-4241.

Redefining: 'Project'

by Amy Baker, Mashobeni South

Gogo Maseko was grateful to have us there. It wasn't that our high school girl's club had spent the day fetching water and chopping firewood that pleased her most. Mostly, she just seemed touched by the gesture. And at the end of the day, the girls were in high spirits too, though tired and hot and blistered from the work. Our community service project had been a success, and I was proud. But as I sat under the shade of a leafy tree in Gogo's yard and watched the girls gather their things, it was thoughts of Mbali that overshadowed everything else, thoughts of Gogo Maseko's granddaughter lying under a tattered blanket inside the tiny thatched hut, thin and weak and child tender, that crowded out all other feelings. Mbali looks to be about my age but something in her eyes and expressions makes her younger. She's come home to her Gogo's, I assume, to die. Since I've been in Swaziland, I have met a lot of people who have felt the impact of the HIV epidemic and even more battling the virus itself—but I have never seen anyone like Mbali. She can't stand up to get out of bed or go to the toilet on her own. Her cheeks are hollow, eyes sunken into her head, her breathing labored. People say that she was working as a prostitute in Mbabane. They tell me this with a smug, righteous expression that very plainly says, "this girl deserves what

she gets." But I don't care what they say. I feel drawn to Mbali, and even though I know there is nothing that I can do to make her better, I keep going back to see her. We don't talk about much of anything really. Where she's from, where I'm from, do I have children, does she? Why are my clothes always so clean, the weather...I don't know what her whole story is and my guess is that I never will. The first day after I met Mbali, I cried. The next day I went back to see her and again the day after that. But I'm finished crying now. To set off on some heroic quest to save this girl, whatever that even means, seems unfair to me and to her. But just to talk to her...somehow that feels ok. I think what keeps taking me back is the thought of how easily I could be Mbali, or she could be me. I pass her homestead and I think about her inside that little house and I wonder what she is thinking about. Is she scared, in pain, does she feel angry or repentant? Maybe she doesn't feel anything at all. We are so different, she and I, and we both know it, and we both know that I could never understand her reality, why she is where she is or how she got there. But Mbali doesn't hold that against me, and I don't hold any of her rumored vices against her. I just want to know her, that's all, and I think she wants to know me too.

Dear Peace Corps Swaziland,

So back in America I have yet to regain all my weight but my sanity has slowly come back. I just took a job with Habitat For Humanity in Clarksdale, Mississippi, known for being the heart of the Delta Blues and Morgan Freeman owns a blues club there. I will be the volunteer coordinator which includes construction coordination, out-of-town volunteer coordination, and community involvement development. I am really excited to get started which will begin August 26. I also have plans to disappear into Asia for a long time. I could teach english in South Korea or Thailand or just be a bum. I'll keep everyone posted though.

Good Luck Group 2 with COS!!! Way to go.

Love, Colin



T-shirt Elections

Option 1



Emblem could be large on front of shirt or small at the breast. The shirt would navy while the print is white, except for the AIDS ribbon which will be red.

Option 2



"Peace Corps Swaziland, 2005-2007, Umntfu Munye Angawenta Umehluko." Print one color. If you vote for this option, offer us a preferred color for the shirt itself.

Hey Group 3. With minimal enthusiasm, we have received two T-shirt ideas in which we now must vote for the most desirable. Send your votes via SMS to either Justine (631-6004) or Kim (631-6083) before September 27th. We are still looking for "quotables" - one-liners, phrases in SiSwati, etc - to print on the back. Some we have come up with:

- "Those who never fell never climbed"
- "We are knights who say 'ngi'"
- Umntfu munye angawenta umehluko

With 8 weeks of rigorous training left in the dust, a successful swear-in, and a full month of integration under their belts, the new group of volunteers are on their way! But we want to know: What was the first thing you bought with your settling-in allowance?



"My phone...and I went shopping for clothes too"
--Roselane Miller

"Numchucks!"
← Becky Predrotty



"Clothes...for this ceremony"
← Kendra Oliver

"These shoes"
--Kate Anderson



"Rice noodles and garbanzo beans"
← Virginia Gervin

"Cell phone, pots, and deoderant"
--Caroline Wheatley



"Chip clips, and knives"
← Tommy Rimbach

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

- ...you don't empty your pee/ toothpaste spit bucket until the threat of overflowing onto the floor forces you to.
- ...you make and/or receive phone calls from the pit latrine.
- ...you intentionally light your hand on fire in an attempt to light a cigarette.
- ...you get hit by the rearview mirror of a moving car and don't even flinch.
- ...at the encounter of a black mamba you take pictures rather than run in fright.



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

- ...you almost consider ETing so that you can get a fashionable haircut including thick bangs.
- ...rather than preparing for a boys and girls camp, you spend the evening with your friends straightening each other's hair.
- ...your only injury throughout Peace Corps is spraining your Snake-playing thumb.
- ...you are so terrified by a rat that fell from the roof that all night you sleep with the covers over your head and the parrafin lamp lit.



the night fell
paint down black
into an ocean Mozambican
we were little animals
dancing in a train
down the sand
our silhouettes slicing the wet air
from the backs of trucks
knives
enticingly
too sharp to be touched.

.justine.

Classifieds (These are real!)

For Sale: 2006 GRE Kaplan book with 2 CDs for practicing. R50 (worth \$30US). Contact Julie Z 6118114

Looking for: Bookcases, dresses, sleeping bag, etc. for our sites. Willing to pay in U.S. dollars. We are in the Nhlngano area. Brasil 624-0098 or Karen Peebles 642-0094

Looking for: Yoga mat that a Group 2 volunteer might be willing to give to a good home after COS. Willing to buy for fair price. Contact Kim 631-6082

Remember! Always feel free to use Sojournal as a means to sell, advertise, and/or look for items other Sojo "subscribers" might be interested in.

September (Inyoni)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					Joe's Birthday 1	2
					HOF Mozambican Beach Party 9pm	
3	Vincent's Birthday 4 Umhlanga Holiday, Office closed	5	6 Swazi Independence Day, Office Closed	7	8 Group 2's COS Conference	9
10 Amber's Birthday	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19 Craig's Birthday	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
				Sojo Production Computers in use		

The Swazi SoJournal

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