

V E S T I

Қ А З А Қ С Т А Н

True to Your Roots

Ashley Taylor encourages all vegetarian Kaz 20s to never waver in the face of sausage.

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Going Back

Tim Suchsland tackles the eternal debate: to visit home, or not to visit home?

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It is not Manipulation

...but it can be xitryy. Drew Boggs shows you how to truly live it up with a Host Family.

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Now with Recipes!

You may have Mastered the Art of French Cooking, but can you handle ҚЗ Crabcakes?

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Come gather 'round people wherever you roam, and admit that the waters around you have grown...

from John Sasser

PST is finally over. Thanks to Karen and Aitzhamal for filling in for Nina and Dinara and keeping the OCAP training going smoothly until November 7th. I recognize how tough that was and appreciate the great job they did. Also thanks to Ekaterina, Natalia, Ufilmalik, Alma, Lena Galina, and to all the PST staff, who got the Kaz 20s ready for their service. The trainees were eager and ready to go when we finally swore them in and gave them their new pins.

Speaking of Swearing-In, I really enjoyed it. It was a lot more home-grown, with more trainee/volunteer participation than I've seen other places. We had slide shows, video clips and many songs. I have to say, it was a lot more enjoyable this way. We could improve the ceremony with fewer and shorter speeches. I'll make that my job for next year.

Swearing-In would have never happened without Lena, who worked until 3:00 AM the night before putting together the 15th year brochure and the program, thank you. Also, thanks to Jim Riggs for providing the artwork. Kate Munro and Nora Williams, you were wonderful as Masters of Ceremony, and we appreciate everything you have done for us, and for Kazakhstan, these last 27 months. I cannot forget to mention the Admin folks, who bore the extra burden of arranging for both food and transportation. We had a bunch of new volunteers leaving right from the ceremony, which could not have made things easy on them. Finally, I must recognize the University of World Languages for letting us use their hall. It was an ideal venue. Once again, to all of you, and to any else I have forgot to mention, thank you very much. I hope you enjoyed the ceremony; I certainly did.



Who We Are

Peace Corps has been serving in Kazakhstan since 1993. Through the Education and OCAP programs 105 volunteers serve the interests of Kazakhstani schools and small businesses. Volunteers serve 2-3 years in their communities, learn the culture, help others to understand America, and help America to understand Kazakhstan.

The Vesti is a quarterly news journal focusing on the multifaceted lives of PCVs and of the people who make their service in Kazakhstan possible. The opinions expressed herein are those of individual volunteers and do not reflect the opinions of the Peace Corps as a whole.

THE STATE OF THE SERVICE



Day by day, decreasing the International Smiling Children Gap between us and Nazerbayev.

Changes

Karen comes to the end of her five-year Peace Corps contract in January and will be leaving. She has brought stability to the P&T unit and organized excellent training after excellent training. The first thing I heard from Jody Olsen when I arrived was how good the IST/PDM last year was. She organized a participatory process involving all staff and facilitated the process of creating our three-year planning document for the past two years. She is also responsible for giving life and energy to the PEPFAR HIV/AIDS trainings and grants. As noted above, she stepped up when we needed someone to complete the Kaz 20 OCAP's training without missing a beat. And on top of that she got our OCAP Project Plan completed and approved. We will miss her diligence, intelligence, knowledge of the Peace Corps, and most of all, absolute dedication to the Volunteers. She has committed heart and soul to your support, well-being and success. We will all miss her. I wish her good luck in whatever path she takes from here.

Our new PTO will arrive in March. As soon as his or her medical and security clearances come through, and we will make a formal announcement.

We have also hired our new Regional Manager, Elmira Galiyeva. Karen will soon elaborate on who she is and how things are going to work from here. I am thrilled to have Elmira on board. She has experience both in teaching and working with NGOs, including NGOs with which Peace Corps Volunteers have worked. She came originally recommended by the Volunteers with whom she worked. Her selection process was no cake walk either. We began with over one hundred applications, narrowing these down to ten finalists. These finalists were interviewed by Karen, Carol, Aitzhamal, and by one or more of the following volunteers: Perry Teicher, Kate Munro, Justin Kimmons-Gilbert and Nora Williams. We considered the volunteer perspective

essential, as Elmira will be working with all of you for the foreseeable future. Finally, Victor, Ekaterina and I interviewed the top four choices. It was a tough choice. All of the final four were great, and I would have been happy to have all of them working for Peace Corps. Elmira, welcome to our ranks. It is great to have you with us.

Leave Policy

Concerning International Leave, the leave policy through January 31st is the one you have lived with since Jody Olsen changed it. To wit: "Leave days are calculated using work days and therefore exclude Kazakhstan holidays and weekends. The vacation begins the day you leave the community and ends the day you return." After January 31st, we will join the rest of Peace Corps and go with the new policy for international leave, in which:

Annual leave for out-of-country travel is computed in terms of **calendar days**, including weekends and host country and U.S. holidays. The day after departure from Kazakhstan through the day of return to the country of assignment are counted as annual leave days. The computation of annual leave days does not include the necessary minimum time to travel between the Volunteer's site and the point of exit out of or entry into the country of assignment.

I have gone over the details of this with the Kaz 20s, and will do so with the Kaz 19s at MST. Yes, the new policy counts weekends as annual leave, but you get a break for travel to and from the border/airport, which really helps in Kazakhstan.

For leave inside Kazakhstan, the policy remains the same as the Jody Olsen policy already quoted once above. As a reminder, "Leave days are calculated using work days and therefore exclude Kazakhstan holidays and weekends. The vacation begins the day you leave the community and ends the day you return." The official policy for Peace Corps is different, and does not work for us. I have appealed that to our Regional Director, who saw my point and promised to discuss this issue with the Peace Corps policy committee. For the time being, and hopefully into the future, we will stick with the old/current/Jody Olsen policy for internal leave.

And finally, a belated thank you to Andrew Holets, who COSed in October but is not forgotten. I neglected to thank him publicly for all the work he did as one of the *Vesti* editors and the "lay out guy" on *Vesti* while he was a volunteer, so here is my apology. Thank you, Andrew, for all you did during your service, and for your work on *Vesti*.

THE EDITORS



Submit to the Vesti!

Do you know what is the only thing more dismal than the Siberian Steppe in January? A Vesti with nothing but text. True, your articles, stories, jokes and incoherent invectives are second to none, but we believe everyone needs a little color in their life and are counting on you to help supply it.

With the Kazakhstani holiday season quickly coming upon us, the Vesti wants PCVs to submit photos of the beastliest feasts (the more beasts the better) they come across over the next few months. There is nothing more beautiful than a tender sheep's head that has been boiled for 4 hours, and we all want to see it! Even better, send us a link to your Flickr, Picasa, Facebook, MoyMlr, or Match.com accounts. If it has got photos, we can use them.

No feasts? No problem! As all of our content comes from you, we are not in the game of being choosey. What do you think this is, Давай Поженимся?

Please send all submissions to pcvesti.kz@gmail.com.

Our next deadline will be Feb. 27, 2009.

Respected friends and colleagues,

We have recently seen an historic change in leadership. It has been a long and difficult campaign, full of heated debates, scandals, and mudslinging. But it has finally been decided. Your new *Vesti* editors are Tim Suchsland and Michael Quinn. They have a difficult job ahead of them but are more than able to meet the challenge.

Perhaps just as significant, we have a new President-Elect. Barack Obama has made history as the first African American to fill this position, and he has already started work transitioning into the role of leader of the free world. While he may not have to bear the burden of Kazakhstan's finest source of independent volunteer news, he also has got a difficult job ahead of him.

We hope the Kaz 20s are adjusting well to their new homes and getting settled into their new jobs. Congratulations on finishing PST; we hope you are enjoying having a fully functioning brain again. You will need it. There is a lot of work for you as well.

Seizing the opportunity of this transition period, our *Vesti* editors-elect have made a few changes to this old warhorse, adding even more photos, new sections, and lots of color for those of you looking at the digital version of our paper. Even though a hardcopy is available upon request, from here on out, we are designing the *Vesti* with internet distribution in mind. Peace Corps Kazakhstan, welcome to the 1990s.

If you like what we have put together or have ideas to make this paper even better, please let us know. The *Vesti* is straight FUBU, in only the best of ways.

Thanks for reading,
Matt, Michael and Tim



FROM THE OFFICE

P&T, Better than Ever

Here is a brief "who does what" for the P&T Unit. Transitions are not 100% complete so please copy your RM or PTO on messages so we can help fill in gaps. The transition will take time and it will be several months before everyone is up to speed on both programs and new regions.

Regional Managers

Aitzhamal Mansurova

Covers the Karaganda and Pavlodar oblasts.
Lead for the OCAP Program (project plans, etc.)
Contact for WID/GAD initiatives at PC

Alma Sholpankulova

Covers Zhambyl, S Kazakhstan and Kyzlorda oblasts;
Peace Corps Partnership manager
Contact for the ICT (Information Communications Technology) initiatives at PC

Elmira Galiyeva

Starting with PC on December 1st
Covers the Kostanai and Aktoobe oblasts
HIV/AIDS initiative contact
Manages the PEPFAR programs, grants and trainings

Natalia Kotova

Covers the North Kazakhstan and Akmola oblasts
Lead for the EDU program (project plans, etc.)
Manages World Wise Schools programs (correspondence match)

Ufilmalik Turguzhanova

Covers the East Kazakhstan and Almaty oblasts
Contact for Youth in Development initiatives at PC
Point of contact for summer camp information

Training Manager

Ekaterina Matyunina

Manages and handles logistics for all training events (PST, IST, MST, COS, etc.)



Hello everyone!

I would like to address the Kaz 20s.

Hope you have settled in at your new places. So if you like to get mail from the office, please send your mailing addresses to me ASAP.

Also, if you don't have proper access to Internet and would like to get hard copies of the electronic information sent to PCVs from the office, let me know.

Galina

Resource Center Manager

Manages SPA process and convenes committee to review proposals

Language and Cross-Cultural Coordinator

Lena Stepanova

Manages all language trainers during PST
Organizes all language training programs and manages language testing
Provides on-going language support
Overseas and/or provides all cross-cultural training

Resource Center Manager

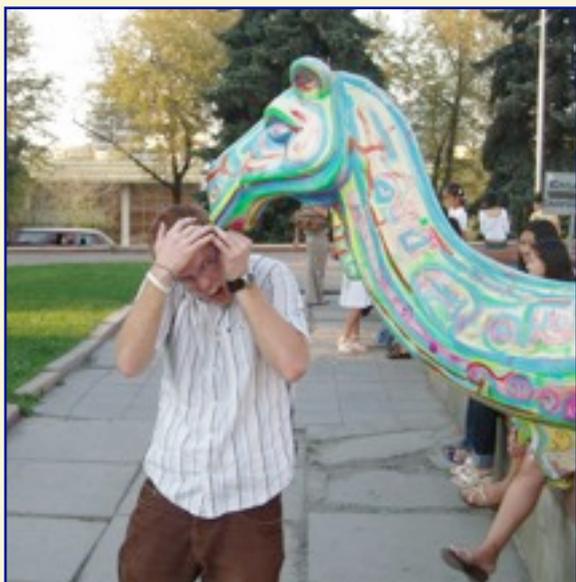
Galina Petrova

Manages the resource center
Coordinates and monitors the whereabouts reporting
Contact for Volunteer mail

KAZAKHSTAN COUNTRY DIRECTORY

Name	Position	Number	Importance
John Sasser	Country Director	777 370 8032	Principal Richard Belding
Karen Ramsey	PTO	777 370 1002	Zack Morris
Aliya Kassenova	Safety and Security	777 370 8033	Kelly Kapowski
Yerkin Toiganbaev	Logistics and Documents	777 210 8410	Screech Powers
Elena Stepanova	Language Coordinator	777 370 8044	Miss Bliss
Victor and Nadia	Medical Officers	333 370 8035	Slater and Jessie

SAFETY AND SECURITY



...and one ceramic camel attack.

In Brief

We have had 10 crimes committed against Volunteers in the period of September 11 to November 21, 2008.

- Robbery in Almaty
- Other Sexual Assault in Almaty
- Intimidation in Borovoe
- Other Sexual Assault on a train
- Theft on a bus in Almaty
- Other Physical assault in Shymkent
- Aggravated Assault in Uralsk
- Major Physical Assault
- Unknown incident in Almaty oblast, PST site
- Theft in Satpaev, Karaganda oblast

Thank you for prompt reporting of the incidents that occur with you and/or might potentially affect you. Your reporting allows us to help you and other Volunteers.

Theft on a bus, Almaty

Description: PCV was on a crowded bus. He had his wallet and iPod in his inside jacket pocket. When PCV exited the bus at the bus stop he discovered that the wallet was missing from his pocket.

Recommendation: Buses are a common place for pick pocketing. The general recommendation: make sure you keep your valuables like wallets, IDs, cell phones, and money in your money belts (if you have one), zipped up inner pockets of your purses, bags, or inside pockets so that you can feel it when someone tries to reach into it. Use security devices such as "leg safes", hidden money pouches or tricks like pinning your pockets together.

Keep a hand on it! Keep an eye on it! Zip it up!

Other physical assault, Shymkent

Description: At approximately 3:00 AM PCV walked on the street alone returning from a night club, when an unknown car appeared and the PCV was pushed into the car. There were four Kazakh men in the car, who hit the PCV 5-6 times in the face.

Recommendation: Recommendation for situations like this will not be new, but are important to reiterate and follow. Don't walk alone, especially at night. Go with local friends if possible. Go with other PCV's at a minimum. If you are out late, take a cab, even for short distances (this is a key precaution!).

Aggravated Assault, Uralsk

Description: The four PCV's were walking along the street in the evening hours, when eight local men approached them and asked for a cigarette. The PCV's

did not have any, so they ignored and kept walking. One PCV encountered his local acquaintance on the street, so he stopped for a small talk with the acquaintance. At this point the eight local men approached the PCV's, and grabbed, pushed and hit one PCV in the jaw. The PCV fell on the ground. The assailants continued to kick the PCV. The other three PCV's tried to help and got into a fight. PCV's were able to run away from the assailants, get into a taxi and escape.

Recommendation: Generally speaking, in situations like this it is important to be able to recognize the danger signals, dangerous circumstances, but unfortunately often the victims tend to ignore them, do not see them or do not recognize their significance. This is where what you "think" you know about crime and violence will blind you to these danger signals. There is usually plenty of warning, and plenty of opportunity to recognize the danger. The criminals do not just attack the victim. They select the "safe" victims and do the "testing" before they actually attack. The most common method they use to test is establishing contact with potential victim and engage you until he/they attacks. They engage you by asking common questions like the time or for directions or cigarettes.

To cut the long story short, be on the lookout for suspicious persons, especially people following you or paying too much attention to what you're doing, trust your instincts and recognize the danger signals. When you feel or know that something is wrong about the situation or a person – immediately disengage and escape from the dangerous situation at the early stages not letting it escalate into an actual attack.

Remember, crime is a Process!

SAFETY AND SECURITY

“Unknown,” Almaty oblast, PST site

Description: Host father caught secretly watching PCV through the banya window while PCV bathed in full nudity with her host mother and host sister.

Recommendation: Unfortunately, there is little that the victim can do to prevent situations like this. However, such situations do not always happen without preliminary signs.

Any unusual behavior, looks, moves, conversations from the part of any of the host family member that make you feel uncomfortable or uneasy should alert you. If something “just doesn’t feel right” don’t let it go or ignore it. Make us, in PC, aware of the situation, even if you think it is minor. Often sexual assaults and harassment are preceded by some testing in the form of odd touches, looks, behavior, which are some of the tactics the sexual assailants use to test the potential victim, to see how far the victim will let it go before they assault.

Major Physical Assault

Description: A local guy had been stalking a PCV for a several months, before one day he knocked on the PCV’s apartment front door. The PCV opened the door. The man immediately pushed the PCV in and broke into the apartment. The assailant pushed the PCV around and tried to grab her. The PCV physically resisted the assailant and hit him, after which the assailant ran out of PCV apartment.

Recommendation: As was mentioned above, in many cases violent crimes like robberies, sexual assaults, physical assaults, etc. are preceded by certain stages of crime development before the attack takes place. What is important here, is to recognize the potential danger at the early stages and alert yourself and others to it, so that preventive measure can be taken to avoid an assault.

Feel free to call and alert us anytime! Residential security is important! Please use the peephole (if available) or ask for who it is before opening the door to visitors.

Theft, Satpaev, Karaganda oblast

Description: Two PCVs were walking along the street during the daytime. A local man ran up to them and said he needed to make a phone call. The PCV had his cell phone in his hand at the time. The assailant snatched PCV’s cell phone from his hand and ran off.

Recommendation: The general recommendation for when property is the assailant’s motive is to just give it up rather than trying to fight for it. Otherwise you may end up fighting for your life, not the property. Call for help. Report the crime as soon as possible.

What’s It Going To Be? Your Money Or Your Life?



We often hear robbers say that in the movies. They point a gun at the person they are robbing, and they ask the victim to make the choice: either give up the money or pay with their life. Well, it can happen in real life too, even if the robbers do not say those words.

Anytime a criminal threatens you with a weapon, there is a real possibility that you could get seriously hurt or killed.

In almost every circumstance it is better to surrender your money or property rather than put your life at risk by resisting an armed robber. Your cell phone, iPod, camera and money can be replaced. You cannot.

Remember, in the Peace Corps Personal Safety Strategies, “Defense” is the very last resort. If you are conscientious about practicing the skills of Awareness, Vigilance and Mitigation it will significantly reduce the likelihood of facing a serious criminal threat. If you are confronted with a dangerous situation, “Defuse” is an essential strategy for keeping things from getting out of control, especially if it gives you an opportunity to “Escape.” Only when all those other strategies fail should you turn to “Defense.” Even then we recommend that you try verbal or psychological defense before resorting to physical violence.

Once you start fighting with a robber, the whole situation changes and instead of just fighting for your property, you may well be fighting for your life.

Practicing the personal safety strategies is something that all volunteers must do every day. Be smart. Be safe.

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Proper Precautions Against Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



Yes, you can build a campfire with coal. No, you cannot do it indoors.

from the Medical Staff

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas that can poison you and kill you if there is too much of it in the air you breathe.

Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from CO poisoning. Infants, older adults, and people with anemia or heart or lung disease are particularly sensitive to high levels of CO.

How does it occur?

Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by breathing high levels of CO. When this happens, your body does not get enough oxygen. You may become unconscious and your brain may be permanently damaged if you survive.

CO is produced by the burning of fuels such as natural gas, gasoline, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal. If appliances, such as a gas stove or furnace, are not working properly or are used incorrectly, poisonous levels

of CO may result. The level of CO may also become too high by the burning of fuel, such as by a gas or kerosene heater, in an area that is not properly ventilated. For example, levels of CO may build up in a house attached garage and the garage door is closed, even if the door between the house and garage is closed.

What are the symptoms?

Many of the symptoms of CO poisoning are like the symptoms of mild stomach flu or food poisoning. Symptoms include:

- shortness of breath
- mild nausea
- headache
- dizziness
- confusion
- fainting

If you continue to be exposed to high levels of CO, you may die.

If you are sleeping when the CO levels become too high, you may not

wake up to have any symptoms. This is why it is so important to use proper heating and ventilation in your home.

If you are having symptoms of CO poisoning, you may not realize that CO is the cause. If you have symptoms only in your house, or if they go away or lessen when you leave home and come back when you return, you should suspect CO poisoning. Also suspect carbon monoxide if others in your household have similar symptoms, especially if everyone's symptoms started at about the same time.

How is it diagnosed?

Your PCMO will ask about your symptoms and examine you.

How is it treated?

If you have symptoms that you think could be caused by CO poisoning:

Get fresh air right away. Open doors and windows, turn off appliances and heaters, and get everyone out of the building.

Call your PCMOs and tell them you suspect CO poisoning. CO poisoning can be diagnosed by a blood test if it is done soon after exposure to CO. If available at your site in the hospital you may be given oxygen.

How can I prevent carbon monoxide poisoning?

Have fuel-burning appliances such as oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make sure that the flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked. Choose

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

appliances that vent their fumes to the outside whenever possible, have them properly installed, and maintain them according to manufacturers' instructions.

If you live with the host family, the host family members should do it.

Don't use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.

Never use a charcoal grill indoors.

Don't sleep in any room or space with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.

Place carbon monoxide alarm in your bedroom. It will sound an alarm if the carbon monoxide level in your home is too high.

Don't ignore symptoms, particularly if more than one person is feeling them. You could lose consciousness and die if you do nothing.

What to do if CO Alarm is not working properly

In October-November, 2008 several Volunteers reported that their CO and Smoke Alarms went off without any objective reasons (no burning sources in their homes/apartments prior to the time when CO detectors went off).

Please read the info below on what is important to do in order to avoid false alarms of your CO detector:

Clean the Alarm at least once a month; gently vacuum off dust from outside and inside of the cover after disconnecting the battery. Never use water, cleaners and solvents.

If the Alarm horn "chirps" about once per minute, it is probably related to low battery warning. Install two new AA batteries.

If the Alarm horn does three rapid "chirps" every minute; LED has 3 rapid flashes with "chirps", device is not working properly, and needs to be replaced. Call Aliya and ask her for a new CO and Smoke detector.

If Smoke Alarm sounds when no smoke is visible, unwanted alarm may be caused by non-emergency source like cooking smoke. Silence Alarm using Test/Silence button; clean the Alarm's cover with a soft clean cloth. If frequent unwanted alarms continue, relocate your Alarm. Alarm may be too close to a kitchen, cooking appliance, or steamy bathroom

We would kindly ask you to read the instruction for your CO and Smoke detector Alarm again.

Knowing how to use, install and take care of it might save your life.

Baran or Baklajan?

by Ashley Taylor, Bishkul

Before joining the Peace Corps we were all overwhelmed with reams of papers, more of them better stuffing for the recycle bin than reading material. But a few of us had an extra document; a promissory note not to be a vegetarian, should it ever become necessary in your host country, and it was made quite clear that it would become necessary. So those of us who had stopped feeding on flesh, promised to start eating our four-legged friends again—even if the first taste was served up as a sheep's head on a bed of noodles and onion. I, like so many others, signed. Having been a vegetarian across the world in a number of different cultures and having never in my 12 years since giving up meat (that is right I was 11) for even a moment regretted it, I was pretty confident this was not going to be a problem.

The Kaz 19s arrived with 20 something vegetarians eating on a completely separate floor than the rest of the group at Toboggan. We were the smelly kids, segregated by our eating choices. The next time we got together for a meal, during counter-part conference our numbers had vastly diminished, down to about 6 or 7—OCAPs and TEFLs combined. Some folded at the smell of the savory street side shashlik; others wanted to fit in better; some had no idea what to eat and stay healthy. And still others were daunted by the voice of the Kaz 18s which sounded like a battle cry of "You will NEVER do it." A few went home. Some got placed up north and said "No freaking way." Our smelly kid table shrunk. When we met back for IST in March we were down to 5 'vegetarians,' 2 of which were eating chicken and fish. We dined together in a back corner on plates of pure potatoes and buckwheat; they even denied us the vegetable garnish of tomatoes that everyone else got with their meals. (Clearly showing that the word vegetarian translates in Russian as "strange eater" not "vegetable eater"). But after another ET (that had nothing to do with being a vegetarian) our pure vegetarian count was down from 23 to 3—and there we remain.

But fear not Kaz 20s still holding to the faith of the green, the numbers are not half as daunting as they seem. I live in a suburb of Petropavlovsk, geographically the farthest away from produce one can get in the Peace Corps. Our other vegetarians live in Karaganda and just outside of Astana. So, the weather, the locale, and the produce mean very little in the argument for Baran. Only once in my 14 months in country have I eaten around the meat, and that was my first night with my

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

host family in training. But I will grant that I arrived as one of the lucky ones, having studied abroad in Russia, I could already explain that I did not eat meat and why, when I got here. In my personal experience, I have not offended anyone by being a vegetarian. In fact, it has opened doors into my community.

On site visit I made clear to potential host families that I would remain a vegetarian. When people feel compelled to tell me why they are not vegetarians, I joke around with them about Green Peace and pretend that living in a cold climate justifies fur—never pointing out that I am going on my 3rd Siberian winter and I have never worn any in my life. And as a guest I always accept on the condition that “it is okay and would not be a problem that I do not eat meat.” My neighbors got a real kick out of making me monty from potatoes, cabbage, pumpkin, carrots and soy meat last winter. I throw eggplant on a shashlik skewer and eat the garnish at the beshbarmak gatherings. Not only was it entertaining for people, but as they came to gosti at my house, my host mom would offer them some plov from soy meat, or a veggie burger. My whole family had become vegetarians, by choice. Neither money nor time was an issue, they just liked it. (Let me note here that my host mom is possibly the only woman in this country who cooks with spices, lots and lots of spices.) After eating her delicious foods, including monty, pelmini, a German strudel and my lasagna and spaghetti with soy meat, and hearing how healthy and how much cheaper of an alternative it was, the trend started to spread. Tyotyta Rosa switched to soy and has lost 15 Kg so far and even started an exercise

video. Tyotyta Lilia is using soy because she cannot afford the meat. Wealthy friends think it is very modern and “in” because the American is doing it. In shops people ask me for my host mom’s nearly coveted soy recipes. What used to be bought exclusively for dog food has become a product of high demand at my site. Even the guys are trying it. While my host dad, a high up in the Ministry in Astana, and ultimate manly Kazakh would not serve it in Astana, he will eat it in soup or plov when he comes to visit up North. Teachers in my school, who do not know and have never met my host mom, who live on the opposite side of town, and hang out with a completely different economic class of people, have heard of it and asked. And on those long Siberian Sundays in the dead of winter, when opening the door feels like the worst of all types of pain, my host mom and I go into the kitchen and try out new recipes. It is bonding, it is healthy, it is cheap, it is tasty, it is integration, and, best of all, it is vegetarian.

I realize not all people can be in places where this will work, at least not easily. But the point really is that it can—no matter what anyone says. It is perhaps the most informal project I have; converting my little suburb of Petropavlovsk into vegetarians, but I suspect when I am gone it will have been the most lasting—the most useful. Rather than being one of the strange 3 who do not eat meat, or feeling uncomfortable about it, I diced my Peace Corps contribution out of baklajan.

KAZAKHSTAN PEER SUPPORT NETWORK

Providing confidential, objective and non-judgmental support to

Peace Corps Volunteers and Trainees in Kazakhstan.

Joe

Taldy Korgan. If you're bummed or concerned, call me and we'll talk through it: 8 777 165 0249

Vicente

Shymkent. I acknowledge that we are all in a strange place, and I am willing to talk about whatever is making your life absurd at the moment: 8 777 165 5605

Aaron

What up peops?? This is Aaron (aka AR-BOOS) in Atbasar, Kazakhstan. I'm a 4 hour train ride toward Kostanai from Astana. Please call me if you would like to talk about anything: 8 777 471 0098

Leah

Hey it's Leah, I'm in Kokshetau—that's north. I am happy to talk about anything—no worries: 8 701 616 9747

Scott

Scott here in Sarashaganak, village of 1200, 60km north of Pavlodar. Whatever you want to talk about I will listen: 8 777 150 6679

Jim

37 years old. From the northeast USA. I now live and work with the disabled in a small, predominantly Russian village in northern Kostanai oblast. Feel free to call with any concerns: 8 777 635 4885

Mike

Shchuchinsk. I am always available if someone wants to talk, especially if it's about rodeo, hunting, or anything else involving Wyoming: 8 777 119 1538

Justin

Koilyk, Almaty Oblast. Ready to listen to your village problems. 8 777 348 9436

Katie

Holler! keepin' it real in Karaganda City, my booming metropolis. I cling to my phone like fresh tomatoes: 8 777 165 0236 kmrkazakh@gmail.com

Lindsey

Taldy Korgan: 8 777 348 9501

VOLUNTEER ADVISORY COUNCIL

The VAC met on November 5th, 2008, at the office in Almaty. Ann Marie attended via telephone, proving that in Kazakhstan, all things are possible.

A Few Friendly Reminders

Volunteers have to start buying their own steel doors. Peace Corps is not going to do it. Antibiotics expire—CHECK THE DATES! And think about a flu shot.

Leave Policy is Beautiful

The internal leave policy is simple—it loves weekends and local holidays—and therefore, will stay the same unless DC says otherwise. The new international leave policy goes into effect on Jan 30; however, it may not be as beautiful.

New RMs and Trainees

Interviews are underway for new Regional managers, questions range from programming difficulties to pregnancies. We have got some incredible applicants. Admin. is exploring ways to smooth out the RM shifts—the 20's will not feel much disturbance, and the 19's could help things by reaching out to new RMs saying “hello” and whatnot—maybe *peet* some *chai* and eat some *bashbarmak* together. PC predicts that there will be a 6 month learning curve for the new RMs to adjust. Serious discussion is taking place on when the new trainees will arrive. It was noted by all attendees of the VAC meeting that arriving at site at the time winter begins to get colder and darker violates the 8th amendment of the US constitution (cruel and unusual punishment...).

Money Matters

Staff is going to look into the SMS communication mode for important things—i.e. MST. Speaking of MST, everyone will automatically receive money to travel *cupe*. In the future the train ticket will be needed to reimburse *cupe* expenses. A living allowance tier review committee was formed by volunteers and staff to reevaluate our somewhat antediluvian system of pay. (Change we want to believe in —YAY!) PC wants to move Almaty offices. Since money is tight these days, PC is asking for help from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The dream is to take over the former French embassy building closer to the center of town. This brings us to the budget, everyone's favorite topic! October started a new fiscal year. Between October and November 6, things look “well”. This definition of “well” incorporates further personnel reductions; however, PC is in no way planning to lessen volunteer support. So fear not, you are not entirely alone out there on the steppe. *Per diem* for travel time is changing to a simpler plan. Reimbursements need to be submitted within 3 months to Admin., not to RMs. Admin. will confirm all faxes and phone calls received within 24 hours. If they do not confirm their receipt, they did not get the form—so send it again!

Новый Президент and PC Petition

An international Peace Corps letter and petition have been circulating around the world. The petition began with Peace Corps Thailand, reminding President-Elect Obama of a few campaign promises he made regarding the Peace Cops. Mika Yasou, Kaz 18, passed the petition on to Karen, who has sent it to all volunteers in-country. The petition also requests that readjustment allowances be reconsidered. So check your email, consider the ole' John Hancock and send the petition to everyone in your email contact list.



In Attendance

Peace Corps Staff:

John Sasser
Carol McLaughlin
Karen Ramsey
Aliya Kassenova
Victor Britcov

Kaz-18

Ann Marie Diegnan
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Kaz-19

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For all serious discussion on these issues please refer to the e-mailed notes. Don't forget contact your VAC representative with any questions, concerns or issues you'd like addressed.

В Ч Е Р А Ш Н И Е Н О В О С Т И

US president-elect vows to boost ties with Kazakhstan leader

BBC Monitoring Newsfile
19 November 2008

The US president-elect, Barack Obama, intends to actively develop cooperation with Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has said.

"I had a conversation with the US president-elect, Barack Obama, last night. We discussed in detail problems of our region, security issues (Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Central Asia), relations with Russia, as well as relations between Kazakhstan and the USA in the energy, political and other spheres," he said at the Kazakh Foreign Ministry's expanded-format meeting in Astana today.

"Mr Obama said that Kazakhstan was a friend of the United States of America. He highly rated cooperation in the sphere of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in recent years, as well as Kazakhstan's participation in anti-terror operations," Nazarbayev said.

The president also said that Obama "will pay more attention to cooperation with Kazakhstan and expand it. He will also try to visit our country".

"I think that this is a good signal and our embassy and the [Foreign] Ministry should develop these relations with the new (US - Interfax-Kazakhstan) president's administration," he said.

"Everybody knows that the USA is a driving force of most global processes. [Kazakhstan's] aspiration to establish normal mutually beneficial cooperation with Washington's new administration is quite understandable," the president said.

Kazakhstan's 'New Silk Road': Becoming Central Asia's crossroads

From The Economist
Nov. 13th 2008—ALMATY

The leadership of Kazakhstan has long hankered after international recognition. It sets great store by league tables, wanting the country to become one of the world's top oil producers and to be counted among its 50 most competitive economies.

Helping thwart their ambitions has been Kazakhstan's creaking infrastructure, particularly its roads.

A few main road arteries have been refurbished—e.g., from Almaty, the largest city, to the capital, Astana and to Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan. But some 60% of roads need big repairs. Even where they have been fixed, notably in the big cities, the work is often so poor that they need to be repaved two or three years later.

But in this respect too the government is thinking big. This week the Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced a \$700m loan to improve part of a 2,715km (1,700 mile) road from China in the east to Russia in the west. It is part of a bigger, \$6.7 billion project, co-financed by other international institutions, due to be completed by 2015. Juan Miranda of the ADB says it will increase travel speed by 40%, and reduce freight-transport costs by half. Despite the current financial crisis, road-freight transport is forecast to grow by about 10% a year and the number of vehicles by 5%. The road should be a big boost to the economy of Kazakhstan and the region: "a new Silk Road", boasts Mr. Miranda.

It may even help Kazakhstan's abysmal ranking in another league table: for road-safety standards. More than 2,000 people are killed in accidents every year. Between 2005 and 2007, this figure has gone up by more than 19%, thanks to speeding and a lack of security barriers, lighting, and police oversight. Poor medical facilities on the long roads of a vast country make it more likely accidents are fatal.

The authorities, conscious that this is hardly the record of a developed country, are at last making serious efforts to improve road safety. Since August, traffic rules have been tightened and the requirement to wear a seat belt is being enforced. Fatality rates are already said to have dropped by around 10%.



VOLUNTEER WRITING

The Exotic, Far-off America



Now THAT is a dish with meat!

by Tim Suchsland, Yavlenka

To go home on leave or not to go home on leave?

Ask this question in a Hamlet-esque, Shakespearean voice - it will sound much more profound. So... “to go home on leave or not to go home on leave?” that is the question, the question many PCVs ask themselves as they figure out how to use the 48 days of leave which Peace Corps generously provides.

In fact, some PCVs answer it by simply waiting out the whole 27 months of service before they head home. These volunteers use their leave to travel to exotic locales such as Mumbai, Bali, or Istanbul, often meeting friends and family along the way. Others bring the USA to Kazakhstan. Countless PCV parents, siblings and friends have visited Kazakhstan over the years. The best part about this deal is the PCV does not use much, if any, leave to experience the wonders of home.

I was faced with this decision this past January. Before I left for the Peace Corps, I was like many PCVs—I had no intention of going home until my 2 years of service were

complete. I made elaborate plans to travel to Greece, Turkey, Japan, India, and China. How I would fund all these trips, I did not know. I was not even sure if I would have enough leave days to make all these grandiose voyages. Yet, I still dreamt of cruising the warm, blue waters of the Mediterranean and riding an elephant up to the Taj Mahal. (Is riding an elephant up to the Taj Mahal even possible?)

Meanwhile back in Reno, Nevada my sister’s boyfriend decided it was time to get married, consequently, to my sister. Since this was my only sister and weddings typically come once a lifetime—sometimes twice—I needed to use some of those 48 days to travel home (for the wedding) in August. I bought my plane ticket for Reno and submitted three weeks worth of leave to Peace Corps. While I was excited for my sister, using leave to travel home meant my dreams of journeying to Greece, Turkey, India, and Japan were dashed. (I still plan on going to China.)

Now, do not think I am whining or complaining about taking leave to travel home, because I am not. If I

had chosen to travel to Greece, Turkey, Japan, or India instead of being at my sister’s wedding, I would have regretted the decision for the rest of my life. Although there were no elephants or Taj Mahals involved in my trip back to the States, it was still a worthwhile vacation. In fact, I had an amazing time being home. I was able to spend time with family and to reconnect with friends. The wedding was definitely the highlight of the whole trip. I was able to see many family friends and relatives and talk about my experiences in Kazakhstan. The experience was almost surreal. Being able to see friends and family, eat tasty American food, and shower on a daily basis was mind blowing. Yet the trip also led to some self-reflection. I was able to ponder over my Peace Corps service—what I had learned during the first year and what I wanted out of the second.

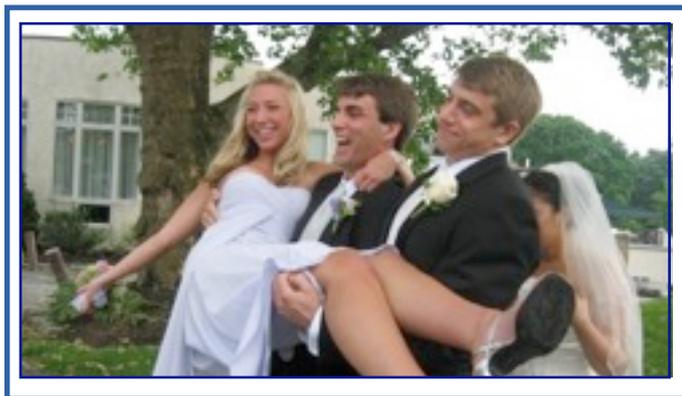
Come back to Kazakhstan

These are the words my former regional manager Ekaterina, spoke to me the day I left for the USA. I was a little surprised when she told me this. I thought, “Of course, I’ll come back to finish up my service.” Yet Ekaterina knew that many past volunteers went home on leave thinking the same thing and they never returned to finish their service. Indeed, the implications may be more profound than PCVs originally think. What I advocate is for PCVs to think twice before vacationing in America.

Since I had such a great time being home, it was tougher than I originally thought it would be to return to Kazakhstan. In America I was comfortable and I understood everything—the language and the people all made sense, and the food was so good. It was difficult saying goodbye to my parents and leaving-home again. I think it was more difficult to leave home the second time than the first. The sweet Sirens of

VOLUNTEER WRITING

America sounded quite pleasant as I boarded my flight to Almaty. I was tempted to turn around right then and there and stay in America. However, I knew that I had a commitment in Kazakhstan. Not only did I have a commitment to the Peace Corps and my school, but also to my PCV and local friends. Luckily, once I returned to Kazakhstan I quickly got back into the swing of things. I owe this greatly to the all-important network of friends I created during my first year of service.



PCVs Домой

I was not alone in the decision to travel home on leave this summer. Several other Kaz 19s chose to use their 48 days to go home too. Those who journeyed home this summer all have their own reasons for going. The PCVs I talked to have varying perspectives on of their journeys, and their opinions are mixed and differ greatly. This makes it difficult to say what the overall feeling is on the subject. Some advise not to go home on leave, while others suggest otherwise.

Jeff Whitehill of Pavlodar went home to the Seattle area this past July. Like me, he had no intentions of using leave to travel home when he first arrived in Kazakhstan. "I didn't expect to go home—unless the Seahawks went to the Super Bowl again," said Jeff. However, his plans changed. He explained, "I went home because I was facing a long summer and hadn't made plans for many summer camps. I couldn't imagine so much free time sitting around, so I figured what the hell, I'll go."

Matt Graber of Cherkasskoye also went to America for a few weeks during the summer. However, unlike Jeff, Matt knew before he left the USA the first time that he would return in mid service for his brother's wedding. "I had planned to go back from the start of my service, and my brother once said that the wedding would not go on without me," explained Matt.

I asked both Jeff and Matt if they recommend other PCVs to take a vacation in the USA. They differed in their responses. Jeff explained, "I think for those PCVs that are really homesick it'll possibly cause problems. It's

definitely better to stay in country and travel to summer camps or go to another foreign country and take advantage of the chances you have being over here. I wish I had traveled in country myself, because America wasn't as mind blowing as I expected." Jeff continued, "Basically, I'd just advise not taking leave (to go home), because everything at home will still be there in two years. It's much better to take advantage of what you have here and make new friends with all the zany volunteers we have." On the other hand, Matt argued, "I'd certainly recommend volunteers do something like it. Seeing lots of my friends and family was a spectacular boost in the middle of my service."

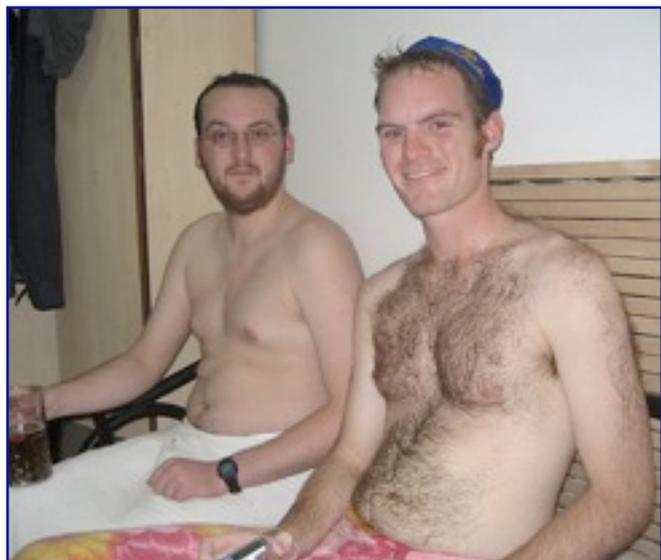
The primary reasons for taking leave to go home may shape the PCV's outlook and reflection of the experience as well. Matt and I went home for very special events, while Jeff went simply to go. Matt's experience was unique in many ways. Matt explained, "My parents now live in Virginia, but we grew up in Philadelphia and all of my friends are there in the Philadelphia area. Thus, I was staying with friends or in hotel rooms the whole time there. Also, since I went to the wedding, there were many relatives whom I hadn't seen in a very long time—a perfect, joyful occasion to go back home to."

Since I found it somewhat difficult to leave for Kazakhstan a second time, I was curious to see what other PCVs who experienced this thought about topic. So was it difficult for other PCVs to come to Kazakhstan a second time? For some it was not, but for others it was. Jeff did not think it was any harder to return for a second time than it was to go the first. He said, "It wasn't any harder. First time it was great because it was new and exciting. The second time I'd had my fill of America and the lazy life I led for two weeks and was ready to get back to work." On the other hand, Matt acknowledged, "It was probably more difficult leaving the states the second time." Yet, like my own experience, Matt affirmed, "Once I arrived in Kazakhstan, I felt better than I did the first time. I've established a good network of friends and a good situation in Kazakhstan." Marianne Midwinter of Karaganda went home to Minnesota this summer. Marianne responded to my question by explaining that she did find it more difficult to return to Kazakhstan. She found readjusting to the Kazakhstani life was more difficult than actually leaving America, and it took her a few weeks to readjust to Kazakhstan.

In the end, it really is up to the individual PCV to decide if he or she wants take R & R in the states. The PCV should think twice about the repercussions and decide whether it is the right choice. And if you do decide to take a vacation back to the USA during your service, have fun and "come back to Kazakhstan!"

VOLUNTEER WRITING

All Baths are Equal, but Some are More Equal than Others



The Banya is MANtastic.

by Michael Quinn, Shchuchinsk

The Russian does not change his clothing on a journey, and when he reaches his destination, he is like a pig himself. Then he takes a banya - the banya is like the Russian's second mother.

- A.S. Pushkin, 1832

Who doesn't love the skin-peeling bathing ritual of scalding steam and lashing birch branches that is the banya? This traditional bath is as old as the Russian people themselves, dating back at least as far as the early Slavic people of central Ukraine. In his *Histories*, Herodotus glowingly mentions that the Scythians near the Black Sea having a kind of steam bath with "vapour so thick that no vapour-bath in Hellas would surpass it: and the Scythians being delighted with the vapor-bath howl like wolves." By now, the vast majority of you have been lucky enough "to howl like wolves" in the heart of a Russian bath, and those who haven't probably do not need me to convince them why they should. Instead, I hope to

guide Peace Corps' banya tenderfoots towards a more enriched Russian bath, with hopefully a little advice even for those who have seen more than their fair share of saturated steam rooms.

While ostensibly an opportunity to clean yourself, the banya is in fact the preeminent social activity in all the Russified world, challenged only by the combination of a bottle of vodka and never-ending plates *zakuski*. Clearly the banya can be enjoyed for its own sake but nothing compares to a night of eating, drinking, and unending conversation that occurs during a group banya. In the same way bridge, dancing, and cocktails have served as the social lubricant of our Victorian predecessors, the banya has helped create enduring ties between generations of Slavs. Stories abound from all periods of Russian history of foreigners being struck by crowds of naked peasants, both male and female, frolicking through snow banks after their baths. During the reign of Peter the Great, Friedrich Christian Weber, the ambassador to Russia from Hanover, observed:

Those who have a mind to bathe, undress under the open sky, and run into the bagnio; after having sufficiently sweated and got cold water poured upon them, they go to bask and air themselves, and run up and down through the bushes sporting with one another. It is astonishing to see not only the men, but also the women unmarried as well as married ... running about to the number of forty or fifty, and more together, stark naked, without any shame or decency.*

The company you keep, regardless of all other factors, will determine the quality of your banya experience. This is why personal private banyas cannot be wholeheartedly endorsed, as their convenience often encourages the dreadful solo sessions. On the same token, unless you invest in developing a regular banya crew, public banyas will not offer much in terms of company either. Your best bet for consistently filling the bath is through activities that have banya associated with them after-the-fact, like sports clubs. While the purported reason of gathering may be to play chess, box, or do pull-ups, you will almost certainly be rewarded every time after "sports" by a boisterous hour or so in the *par*.

* See Weber, Friedrich Christian *The Present State of Russia*, 2 vols. London, W Taylor, 1723. p. 31

VOLUNTEER WRITING

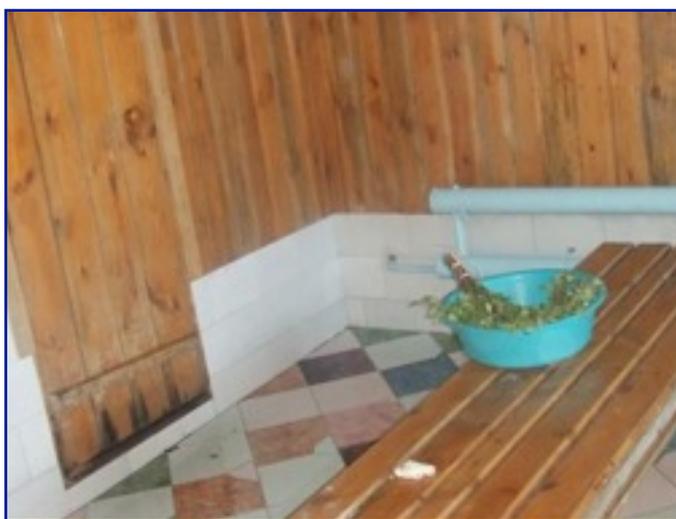
The vast majority of you will set foot into a passably hygienic Soviet steam house at some point during your Peace Corps careers. This is nothing to be frightened of or ashamed about; official Peace Corps vocabulary would call it “integration.” But as *Eastern Promises* makes pointedly clear, by going to banya you are acknowledging that you are willing to put yourself in a vulnerable position. There are a few things that you need to be aware of before disrobing in front of ten Russians flaunting *vory v zakone* tattoos. First, just because a banya is “public” by no means guarantees that it is safe. Robberies, fights and physical intimidation do happen, so general safety and security rules apply. Unless absolutely unavoidable, or unless you are very familiar with the place, do not to go alone. Only carry enough money for the banya. Avoid banyas that have cafes attached to them, and never go late at night. Also, any public banya that smacks of gaudiness or tries to charge you more than a couple hundred tenge is not worth your time or money; they are looking to attract a more “specific” clientele.

Crossing through the vestibule, you should be marking a few things off your mental checklist. Is there at least one, if not more, *dezhurnyy* looking after the bathers? Do they get up and move around every once and awhile? Does the *predbannik* (changing room) have real lockers, and are there usually people in it? This is the time to trust your first impressions. If anything feels off, do not be afraid to look somewhere else. Most towns have more than a handful of baths available, so do not settle for something less than satisfactory simply because it is the closest.

Beyond simply getting out alive with all of your precious tenge, a few other factors should be considered when choosing a bathhouse. Without a doubt, the *parilnya* (central steam room) should be, at the very least, wood-

paneled and have seating arrangements staggered across different heights. Both factors provide greater temperature control, allowing you to sit and sweat longer. Heated rocks are preferred to steam vents for similar reasons, as they produce a hotter and finer form of steam. In the washroom, showers are an often-overlooked convenience that makes cooling off happen much quicker and with far less exertion. The banya is an excellent opportunity to shave some of the more unsightly hairs you might have and why not since you are already naked and lathered up. But you should bring your own razor and make sure that a decent mirror is available.

Any banya worth its salt will also have a range of



Welcome to my pleasure palace.

accessories available, and not just soap and shampoo. The most famous accessory is perhaps the *veniki*, birch branches used to whip the toxins out of your skin. A good loofa is just as effective at the same task and can be used and reused dozens of times. Fashion conscious bathers might also want to invest in a felt (*voloychnaya*) *chapka*, which beyond looking totally righteous apparently helps

keep your head cool too. Many bathers also like to wear sandals, for obvious reasons if you have spent time in a locker-room before, or felt gloves, for far less obvious reasons.

Russians will give you thousands of different reasons for and thousands of different methods of taking a banya. It can be healthy to open your pores every once and awhile, heat does tend to increase blood circulation, and steam may be the most effective safeguard against evil spirits. Ultimately, whatever reason gets you to strip in front of a crowd of relative strangers will be your own. But keep this in mind: when it is 40 below outside and all you have at home is a hot plate and a bucket, I doubt you will relish few things more than a long sweat and vigorous scrubbing. *S lyogkim parom!*

VOLUNTEER WRITING

In the Dark

by Katy Fitzpatrick, Kobda

I thought I knew all about Culture Shock. After all, I was an anthropology major. In college my friends and I often joked that ours was the discipline of people going far from home only to learn they hated the food, could not figure out how everybody was related, the flies there were awful, their supplies worthless, and the locals thought they were at best rude—at worst insane.

Furthermore, I proudly told myself, as we moved in with our host families and I began hearing the tales of fellow trainees, I had already experienced Culture Shock. Growing up in eastern Washington, a stone's throw from Idaho, deprived me of some important cultural knowledge when I showed up for college in New Jersey. Telling my freshman roommate I could not find her “coach bag” and then being informed the item in question was not, in fact, a saddle bag, had prepared me heart and soul for the rigors of PST.

I was blessed with a few of these cute cultural mishaps throughout training. Paranoid about blowing my nose in public, I left the room in shame the first time I sneezed. After all, my host mom had responded by telling me “goodbye.” And I will never forget sitting at the tea table with our school director as one of my fellow trainees announced that because he was going to Pavlodar he needed to buy *moloko*. If he had not been emphatically pointing at his head maybe we would have been spared the laughter that rattled the cups and jiggled our stiff bodies into long-sought ease.

As I trudged through the trenches of training however, the adorable little mistakes grew teeth, claws and a tough hide. Real culture shock stalks you on the days you do not get enough to eat. It prepares to spring when you could not sleep, pounces when you tried and failed for the umpteenth time to get the soap out of your hair. Real culture shock is more than frustration, more than irritation, more than homesickness. For me, real culture shock is anger. Surprisingly, unsettling deep and furious, the last emotion I would have expected to experience roared forward and took all my polite, sensitive, anthropology-

major sense away. How can they expect me to look perfect all the time without any water infrastructure? How can they expect me to stay healthy if they are dumping animal fat all over everything on my plate? How can they expect me to be on time for class if I have to drink ten cups of tea before I am allowed out the door? How can they expect me to learn the language if “repeat slowly” (in Kazakh) somehow means “the same but much louder and the faster the better.” These people were at best rude—at worst insane.

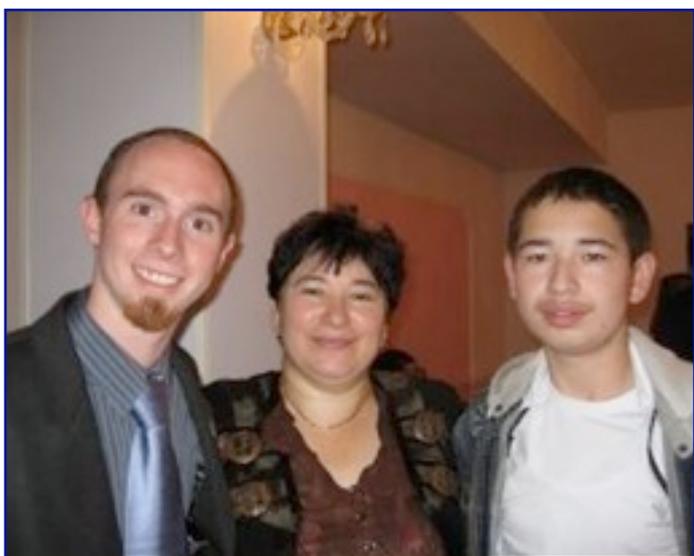
My sister in college back home called me just after site visit, fretting about the options for her Thanksgiving break. Eastern Washington is a long way from the east coast. She had an invitation to go home with her roommate, a nice girl who she liked well enough, but “I’ve been to her house before,” she said, “and these people are cold. Just cold. I mean, her siblings were in the house and they weren’t introduced to me when I went for the weekend.” She paused, considering her words before launching on. “I feel really stupid talking about culture shock when you’re in Kazakhstan,” said with serious earnest, “but she’s from a really rich blue blood family. I used to think those differences were glamorous—now it just makes me mad.”

“The thing about culture that makes it so hard,” I said, feeling suddenly sagacious after two months on the far side of the planet, “is that it’s the little things that sting the most. The fact that my co-workers welcomed me to my school with a sheep’s head was bizarre for a few minutes. Then it became the subject of a great story. The fact that nobody in my host family says “goodbye” at the end of a phone call drives me nuts. I hate it—and it’s far less exotic than a sheep’s head. And that’s why it hurts so much.”

I thought I knew all about Culture Shock. Turns out, like the man feeling the elephant in the dark, I had grabbed on to the tail and mistaken it for the whole beast. After PST, at least I have a flashlight – sort of. (It only works when I hit it but that might be because I got it from the Peace Corps office.) Now I can at least shine my beam across the broad back and underbelly. And maybe, just maybe, two years from now I will figure out how to turn on the lights.

VOLUNTEER WRITING

Making the Most of Your Hosts



One of these things is not like the others.

by Drew Boggs, Zhezkezgan

When I was told at the end of staging that PST would be an intense three month period consisting of a crash course in language and technical training, I brushed it off. “Of course it will be demanding,” I thought, “what part of Peace Corps life won’t be?” Eager to leave for the Crazy KZ, I imagined each part of PC service would be equally challenging and equally exciting. Now as I relax after work in my top floor apartment in Zhezkezgan (which I have affectionately dubbed the Penthouse), I think back and wonder how I ever made it through the mire of frustration known as PST. This is not meant to be a tirade against the training program. I think all former trainees would agree that some aspects of PST were vital and ET preventative while others were not. However, the necessary yet tiresome scheduling combined with the shock of being in a foreign country for the first two months was *almost* too much for this recently ordained Volunteer to handle. If you had asked me prior to service what would get me through the rougher patches of PST, I probably would have said friends and beer. Though these were definitely conducive to relaxing, it was my host family that kept me sane and safe during that initial adjustment period.

Some of you Kaz 20’s may remember my host mom giving a speech during Swearing-In. For two months and through the worst of days, that beautiful, shining beacon of humanity hugged, coddled, and fed me into blissful complacency. Mama, along with my host sister who served as a translator and my host brother (who even in the throes of puberty managed to remain civil and generous) were more than just a host family, they were my life-line. What made the formation of this familial bond even more incredible, were my shortcomings that would have tried the patience of even the most American of families. Upon agreeing to host a volunteer, I am sure my family had no idea that they would have to endure late returns home from Almaybak, gratuitous napping, and the time I woke up in the middle of the night and puked in my bed for no reason. Through it all, they showed me nothing but love and hospitality and I truly felt like a member of the family. Now that we 20’s are adjusting to life in our second host homes, I would like to share a few tactics I found helpful for developing and sustaining (it’s all about sustainability right?) relationships with the new Fam.

1. Smile often. It may make your family realize you don’t absolutely hate their house and/or family, also many awkward situations can be resolved with a big smile and a shoulder raise (this roughly translates to “I’m a silly American”).
2. If you speak Russian and live with a Kazakh family, try to learn *some* Kazakh words and at least pretend like you are trying to learn Kazakh as well.
3. If Mama or Papa offer you “Sto gram” of vodka, and you aren’t totally averse to drinking, take it. It relaxes you both and you may find that two shots is exactly what you need to move up from intermediate low to intermediate mid.
4. Stay at the table for AT LEAST 3 cups of chai after each meal.

This is mostly self-explanatory. I realize it may be the luck of the draw that determines how well you get along with your new family for the next six months, but I think you can help mitigate the awkwardness somewhat. Just remember, it is probably even more stressful for your family knowing they are being monitored and possibly judged by an American in their own homes (I know I couldn’t host a stranger in my house for six months). Cut them some slack and maybe you will end up with an extra set of parents by the time you leave.

VOLUNTEER WRITING

Missed Understanding

by Sagar Gondalia, Shchuchinsk

There is a dark gray highway on the wall. The massive gray spots are zipping by, back and forth, and instead of crashing into each other, they simply pass through like ghosts. These shadows keep distracting me from the game at hand. The evening swarm of flies is racing along the clothesline, on its way to who knows where.

Our terrace in Kaskelen is covered, but still open to the quickly cooling temperature as the night sets in. The large cat has already come for its food and set back off into the night, prowling its territory. The white cat is asleep on a banister, as usual, enjoying the end of another hard day of lounging, sleeping and eating. Meanwhile, the small 4-month-old black kitten, with the tan phantom mask patch of fur and matching opposite right paw, sits cuddled up in my lap. The Format is playing, and as Norah starts to wail sexual tension into the night sky, it is hard not to reminisce. Only a few months gone, and yet it feels like I have left behind a completely different life.

Serrick, my host-dad, is getting anxious and urges me to make my move. Unconcerned with the game, I barely look at the board before retreating my bishop for the second straight time. I set a trap seven moves ago, and he is falling for it, falling hard, about to lose his queen.

Big, bulbous and drowsy, Serrick's eyes dart around the box of chocolates, indecisive as to which one looks the most appetizing. I wish they had labels too, not that it would matter too much to me. They would still be in (*ed: naughty word*) Russian. The only tip off he is Kazakh is his darker skin tone. His roundish protruding nose does well to compliment his eyes, and his mouth is half sheathed in a mustache so character building his wife can not and has not ever seen him without it.

Using my three weeks of Russian education and a lifetime of charades practice, I have been attempting small talk during our semi-regular, post-dinner chess bouts. This is made even more difficult as Serrick's tone is gruff, and he barely opens his mouth, to talk or to eat. It is, in fact, so little that his mustache manages to hide what

little movement does occur. Nevertheless, I have learned that although born and raised in the same house we live in today, as a teenager Serrick studied in Leningrad, and lived there with his aunt. After four years in the Soviet Army, he returned to his ailing father and has effectively spent his life as an entrepreneur.

He has done all kinds of things to make money. Even now, in his "retirement," he runs a small store that makes copies for people who need them for the real estate office across the street. The store also sells a few nick-nacks and odds-and-ends, staying open whenever he feels like sitting there. Every two nights, he also works as a night watchman at the office building. This means his big dog Aktos lives in the back of the office complex, while Serrick watches TV at home all night, checking the windows every thirty minutes or so, making sure no one is messing with said building. He had not played chess in ten or fifteen years until I came, but his games are getting noticeably stronger every game we play.

Chorny, the black kitten, has recaptured my attention and Serrick lets out an uncharacteristically impatient mumble. The match is in my hands. Expectantly, I look down to find his knight is not where it should be. He saw the trap and in my confidence managed to set up one of his own. With a brilliant move, I am not going to get his queen. Worse he has forced me into deciding whether I lose a knight or a bishop.

Needless to say, a few moves later I was checkmated.

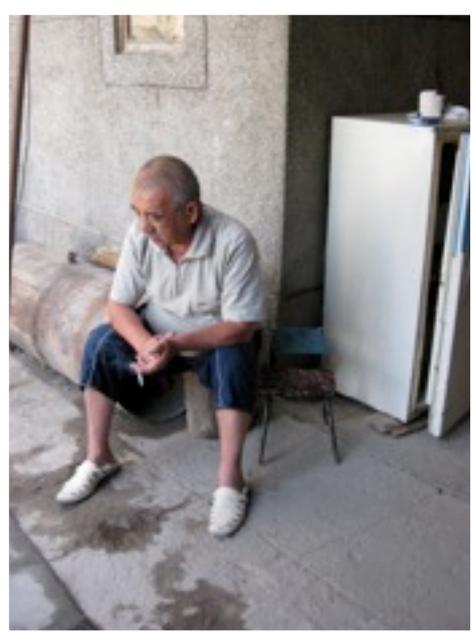
Serrick mentions that he once flew to Germany with his friend, bought an Audi and drove it through the Soviet Union.

"Zavtra my budem igrat."

Another game tomorrow.

Conceded, my Russian is still non-functional at this point, but apparently my charades have also failed me. As he disappears into the banya I start to wonder what I actually understood. And what it was he wanted me to understand. Was it the *Red Army* he served in? That he *studied* in Leningrad? *Years* since he last played chess?

"Germany." Sure.



VOLUNTEER WRITING

Work is What Horses Die Of



Let's start with the basics...

by Christopher Reed-Waddell, Makinsk

I really like my site. My students are bright, well behaved, and I have a great counterpart. As a primary and secondary teacher, I don't get to teach on very complicated themes. The work is important, do not get me wrong, but past simple, ENT preparation, and teaching the days of the week gets repetitive once in awhile. Lacking a cinema, 18-30 year olds, and ground coffee, it becomes necessary to leave Makinsk once in awhile, too. Astana is a great place, but it's a bit far away from Makinsk to go just for fun. Once I had hit Ramstore, walked through the art museum, and grabbed a doner, I realized I had only been there a couple hours, ran out of things to do, and had already spent half my living allowance. It was a pretty horrific waste of time, even by summer standards. Thankfully, I found a remedy.

Combining trips with work at American Councils for International Education has really improved my impression of Astana and offered a great opportunity to expand my service. They have year-round programming that draws advanced students from schools and universities from around Astana. Programming includes English clubs, educational advising, and presentations on various topics. Irina Shubina, American Councils' Astana representative, has an authoritative knowledge of US-sponsored exchange programs and other opportunities to study in the United States. They also have an extensive library of test preparation materials. It's a good place to drop by if you want start studying for the GRE or GMAT and a good place to send people to who need a guide to the TOEFL.

My first presentation at American Councils was a pre-departure orientation for students who were planning to attend universities in America. I was surprised to find

one of our participants studied for a year at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wis., about thirty minutes from my alma mater. Sven Stafford, Kate Reynolds, and I presented on the different aspects of American university culture, covering topics such as study skills, academic integrity, the dorms, and budgeting skills. It was important to emphasize the professional development that can happen while still a student, through leadership in student organizations and internships.

Our next presentation I did with Michael Quinn. Our theme was on preparing to qualify for US exchange programs. It was impressive how many people turned out on a Saturday afternoon. We gave our presentation at the Presidential Library in Astana, a great facility. We had people from across the board, school pupils hoping to spend a year at American high schools via FLEX, university students hoping to do an exchange year through UGRAD, and a few hoping to do masters studies through Muskie. We were privileged to have several alumni of exchange programs in attendance, to offer a personal take on the selection process and the programs themselves.

Working with American Councils has certainly been a high point in my service thus far. Irina has been extremely helpful with information on FLEX testing and TOEFL. Talking with FLEX participants and alumni offered strong insights into how I can prepare my students to be better candidates for the program. It has also been a great way to make contacts in Astana with people who may be good partners for secondary projects. I look forward to working with them well into the future. We are already planning to host a program for international education week, focusing on strategies for participants to go out and develop extracurricular and internships at their schools and universities. I really look forward to working with American Councils for the rest of my service.

The vital change of scenery has broadened my outlook on Kazakhstan and given me a chance to work with additional advanced English speakers. Having a more diverse pool of students really helps prevent teaching from becoming monotonous. It also has been a great opportunity to use information and skill sets that do not get much use at my site. By helping people in Astana with applications, I was better prepared to help my counterpart fill out her IREX TEA program application. Possible future projects include resume writing, persuasive essays, and project management. If you are in the greater Ak-mola region and are interested in collaborating, please give me a call.

American Councils' Astana office is located at Beibitshilik 18, office 409, in Astana and can be reached by the number 10 bus. For more information, visit <http://www.americancouncils-kz.com/>.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

“The Way of the Elder” or the Origin of Kazakh Law



"If you do not know what to say, say what your elders said" - Kazakh proverb

By Omrali Korabaev, Director of the Kunaev Institute for the Humanities.

The Kazakh nation, from generation to generation, from its earliest origins to the present day, is based on a special tradition that virtually describes its national existence - the “way of the elders.” The Kazakh people came into existence gradually over many centuries. Tribes that had roamed far and wide across the steppes from prehistoric times became joined together through match-making and intermarriage and eventually evolved into an indivisible, united nation. The newly emerging Kazakh people developed a tradition of respecting their elders, a tradition that ethnographers have termed “the way of the elders.” According to the “way of the elders,” older persons were always given the first turn when entering a house, at meetings, during special occasions or festivities, when dividing military spoils, and at funeral ceremonies.

In this way, the Kazakh people created close relational ties and became brothers to each other. This was the beginning of the Kazakh traditions, and the tradition lives on. For the Kazakh people, obeying their el-

ers and solving problems according to the advice of their elders proved to be beneficial social policies. And any Kazakh person who violated these rules was punished.

According to the ethno-territorial view, the Kazakh people were divided into three parts, called the three “hundreds:” the “elder-hundred,” “middle-hundred,” and “younger-hundred.” Their languages, traditions, religions, and most of their laws were the same. These laws came in several forms: “Ata-baba djolu,” or the “way of the elders”; “Ereje,” or rules; “Jarluk,” or announcements; “Turelyk,” or ruling powers; and “Jurn-josyk,” or the giving of advice. The general aim of these laws was to improve the lot of the Kazakh people in all modes and aspects of life: electing a leader, entering into contracts, prohibiting marriage among blood relatives, providing for inheritance, preventing social disorder, eliminating thefts, providing for military discipline, and so on. All of these laws were based on a humanistic point of view, and had democratic intentions the foremost was to encourage honesty and fairness in dealing with one another.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Adverbs Үстеу

Adverbs in the Kazakh language are an important part of speech. The adverbs are formed by adding suffixes to nouns.

-ша/ше	қазақ + ша ағылшын + ша	in Kazakh in English
-дай/дей, -тай/тей	қыз + дай гүл + дей құс + тай	like a girl like a flower like a bird
-да/де -та/те -нда/нде	жаз + да түн + де қыс + та осы + нда	in summer at night in winter here
-қа/-ке -ға/-ге -на/-не	арт + қа ал + ға айы + на	back forward in a month

There are several types of adverbs:

1. Adverbs of Time (мезгіл үстеуі) which answer the question қашан? ‘when?’ since ‘when?’

as far back as	ежелден	one of this days	бүгін- ертең
before	бұрын	recently	жуырда
early in the morning	таңертең	sometimes	оқтын-оқтын
in the evening	кешке	the day after tomorrow	бүрсігүні
in the night	түнде	then, at that time	әнеугүні
in the noon	түсте	this year	биыл
last year	былтыр	today	бүгін
next time	ендігәрі	tomorrow	ертең
now	кәзір	yesterday	кеше

2. Adverbs of Place or **direction** (мекен үстеуі) which answer the questions қайда? қай жерде? ‘where?’ қайдан? ‘where from?’

above	үстінде	here	бері, мында, осында
after	соң, кейін	in front of	алда
behind	арттан	near	жақын
bottom	төмен	on the way	жолшыбай
everywhere, around	тұс-тұстан	over there	онда
far	алыс	top	жоғары
forward	алға	under	астында

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

3. Adverbs of Manner (сын-бейне үстеуі) which answer the questions қалай? 'how?' қалайша? қайтіп? 'in what way?'

(to take) aback/by surprise	қапыда	hardly	зорға, әрен, әзер
by force	еріксіз	quickly	тез, дереу, шапшаң, жылдам
by turn	кезекпен	separately	жеке
directly	тікелей	simply	әншейін
exactly	дәл, тұп-тұра	slowly	ақырын
face to face	бетпе-бет	together	бірге

4. Adverbs of Measure (мөлшерлік үстеуі) which answer the questions қанша? қаншадан 'how much?', 'how many?'

one by one	бір-бірден
so much, so many	снша, соншама

5. Adverbs of Purpose (мақсат үстеуі) which answer the question неліктен? 'what for?'

in/for/from spite	қасақана
On purpose, deliberately, for fun	жорта, әдейі

6. Adverbs of Reason (себеп-салдар үстеуі) which answer the questions не себептен? 'by what reason?'; қалай? 'how?'; неге? 'why?'

willy-nilly	лажсыздан, амалсыздан
for nothing, in vain	босқа, бекерге

6. Adverbs of intensity (күшейту үстеуі) which answer the questions қалай? 'how?'; қандай? 'what?'

as a whole	бүтіндей	too...	орасан
rather	тым	very	өте
the most...	нағыз		

Жайлау

Жылда төрт маусым бар, әр маусымда үш ай, яғни тоқсан күн болады. Көшпелі халық әр маусымға қарай мал жайылымын өзгертіп, қоныс аударып отырған. Оны көк-теу, жайлау, күзеу, қыстау деп атаған.

Ерте кезде малшылар көктем айларында қыстаудан алыс жерге көктеуге көшіп малын төлдететін. Содан кейін жайлауға көшіп, маусым, шілде, тамыз айларын сонда өткізетін. Жайлау – қыстаудан алыс жатқан жердегі жазғы қоныс. Оны шөбі жақсы, суы мол жерден таңдайды. Онда жылдың үш маусымында да ешкім болмайды. Қыстан арық-тап шыққан мал жайлауда тойынып, семіреді. Мал ғана емес, адамдар да рақаттанады. Бие байлап, қымыз ішеді, айран ұйытып, құрт, ірімшік қайнатады. Қысқа арнап азық-түлік әзірлейді.

Біздің Республикамызда табиғаты аса сұлу жерлер мен тау жайлаулары бар. Олар – Қарқара, Асы, Шалкөде жайлаулары.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Russian verbs with prefixes

The fundamental principle to remember about Russian verbs is that they are basically imperfective. However, when a prefix is added to them, they automatically become perfective. Each imperfective base verb, like **писа́ть** and **чита́ть**, has one perfective mate whose meaning is identical with that of the imperfective form. Most often the perfective is derived from an unprefixed imperfective base verb by means of a prefix. For **писа́ть** the prefix is **на |** (**на | писа́ть**) and for **чита́ть** it is **про |**-, as in **про | чита́ть**. The verb forms with and without the prefix in these cases form the perfective - imperfective pair required of most Russian verbs.

When prefixes other than the one designated to simply perfectivize the imperfective base verb are added, however, the result is a new verb. For example, when the prefix **до |**- is added to the base verb **чита́ть**, the result is a new verb meaning 'to finish reading'. Since prefixation perfectivizes verbs, this new verb now requires an imperfective mate. Imperfectives are usually formed from perfective verbs by the addition of a suffix **- | ыва | ть-**. The imperfective of **до | чита |**-, for example, is **до | чита́т | ыва | ть**. Of course, if the final root consonant is soft, the ending will be **- | ыва | -**. And at last some good news about accent: the accent always falls on the syllable immediately preceding this suffix. Below you can find verbs derived by prefixation whose imperfective is subsequently formed with this suffix.

The verbal prefixes vary the modality of the verb in one of two ways. When added to verbs of motion, they indicate the direction or path of the action: over, under, across, along, up to, away from, as far as, convergence and divergence. When added to other verbs, they specify the state of the action: whether it has been begun, finished, carried through successfully, reversed, repeated, or done excessively or mildly.

Read and translate a text below. Pay attention on the verb читать/читать with different prefixes (Translations is available upon request via estepanova@kz.peacecorps.gov)

По доро́ге с рабо́ты я зашёл в кни́жный магази́н, что́бы купи́ть но́вый фантасти́ческий рома́н Лукья́ненко, и неожида́нно застря́л на ка́ссе, так как скáнер не мог **счита́ть** штрих код. Касси́р объясни́ла, что кни́га но́вая и ещё не внесе́на в ба́зу да́нных, по́тому я до́лжен немно́го подо́ждать. Домо́й я пришёл дово́льно по́здно. Когда́ я продемонстри́ровал кни́гу жене́, она́ то́лько фы́ркнула: «Очередно́е **чт́иво!**» и уткну́лась в свою́ рабо́ту (мо́я жена́ рабо́тает реда́ктором и иногда́ **вычи́тывает** ру́кописи до́ма).

То́лько я откры́л кни́гу, как появи́лась мо́я до́чка-первокла́сница и попроси́ла, что́бы я послу́шал, как она́ вы́полнила домо́шнее задáние: «Па́па, на зáвтра по **чт́ению** за́дали **отчита́ть** рассказ «Анто́н и соба́ка» и **прочита́ть** ещё вот это́ стихотворéние». На домо́шнее задáние ушло́ 30 мину́т. После́ этого́ я присту́пил к **чт́ению**, а до́чка уткну́лась в телеви́зор.

Не́которое вре́мя ка́ждый занима́лся своим де́лом. Вдруг жена́ воскли́кнула: «Нет, это́ **чита́ть** невозмо́жно! В деся́тый раз **перечи́тываю** это́ абза́ц, **вчи́тываюсь**, **вчи́тываюсь** - и ниче́го не понима́ю! Мне послезáвтра **отчи́тываться** на редколле́гии, а я ника́к не могу́ **дочита́ть** эту́ дура́цкую ру́копись!»

В это́ вре́мя из своёй ко́мнаты появи́лся наш ста́рший сын и попроси́л не шумéть, так как у него́ зáвтра экза́мен и ему́ на́до ещё́ кое-что **подчита́ть**. Жена́ тут же **отчита́ла** его́ за то́, что он не подгото́вился за́ранее и что уже́ по́здно и пора́ спать. Он отве́тил, что зáвтра у его́ подру́ги день рожде́ния, и ему́ ещё́ на́до **начита́ть** ей поздра́вление на диск.

Жена́ с дочкой отпра́вились спать, а я так **зачита́лся**, что оторва́лся от кни́ги то́лько о́коло пяти́ утра́, так и не **дочита́в** её. Шеф, уви́дев мо́й воспа́ленные глаза́ и зная́ мою́ любо́вь к **чт́ению**, то́лько и произне́с «**Дочита́лся!**», но тем не ме́нее попроси́л у меня́ рома́н.

К концу́ рабо́чего дня́ практи́чески весь о́фис хоте́л **почита́ть** эту́ кни́гу. Сто́ит ли говори́ть, что сна́чала мою́ кни́гу **зачита́ли до дыр**, а пото́м и во́все **зачита́ли**.

DOWN HOME COOKING

Crab Cakes

Ingredients

500g of crab meat
 1 egg, beaten
 1/2 bulb of garlic
 1 lemon
 1 cup bread crumbs
 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
 1 medium onion, grated
 1 teaspoon cilantro
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Butter or oil for frying



By Matthew Turner

The most important part of the crab cakes is, of course, the crab. It is no surprise that you are not likely to find fresh crab meat in your local bazaar. But what you can find is imitation crab meat called **Мистер Краб** (get it, Mr. Crab) in many magazine freezers, even in small towns. Now this is a poor substitute for the real thing, but it will suffice for our purposes. If you are lucky enough to have generous friends or family back in the states you can have them send you packets of crab meat too. I recommend the “Chicken of the Sea” brand.

First, take your crab meat and mix it in a large bowl with the egg, mayo, onion, garlic (crushed), and bread crumbs (but save a hand full for later) until you get a paste consistency (Note: I do not like measuring, so experiment with different amounts of ingredients until you find the right mixture for yourself). Now, take your lemon and squeeze the juice into the bowl, you may only want half a lemon depending on if you want less tartness. And lastly, add the cilantro, salt, and pepper and mix well.

Now place a frying pan on a medium heat and add the butter or oil and wait for it to heat. You do not need much, only enough to keep your cakes from sticking. Take your mixture and with a spoon scoop out balls about the size of a tangerine and sprinkle with your remaining bread crumbs. Place the balls in the pan and flatten them out into a nice round shape. Let them cook for five minutes on one side and then turn over. Both sides should be golden brown. It is difficult to get the right consistency so your cakes do not fall apart, so try a couple of test batches first and experiment until you get it (do not worry, even the mistakes will taste good).

Once your cakes are cooked place them on a paper towel or napkin to cool. This is a great main course with salad or your favorite side. Your cakes should have a zesty garlic flavor with a lemon finish. Crab Cakes are a welcome change of pace all year round.

We all know how beneficial it can be to have a nice home cooked meal. Nothing helps defeat the coldest days of winter like something hot off the stove. It is with this in mind that we at The Vesti would like volunteers to submit their favorite and most innovative recipes. Share your culinary skills and special ingredients. Do you have your own unique twist on traditional Kazakh recipes? What do you cook and how can we cook it too? So we don't repeat ourselves please limit your submissions to recipes not found in the PCV cookbook.

All recipes can be submitted to pcvesti.kz@gmail.com.

П о с л е д н ы е С л о в а

While Vesti-sponsored communication is usually a one-way street (from our keyboards straight into your brains), we like to think that is just because none of the streets have yellow lane lines down the middle. Or pavement. At the very least, we like to pretend we talk to each other from time to time. This month, Michael Quinn, Kaz 19, sent our very own Karen Ramsey a few questions regarding the close of her service with Peace Corps.

Karen, congratulations on finishing your second tour with the Peace Corps. Looking back to the beginning, when you were just signing up to volunteer, how has Peace Corps changed?

Peace Corps does change over time, and it has changed significantly since I was a Volunteer. I started training in December 1990 and served 3 years in Cameroon as a Community Development Agent and, during my third year, a PCV Leader. I was away from PC for 10 years before coming back as an Associate Peace Corps Director (APCD, which is similar to RM in PC/Kaz lingo) in charge of NRM and small business programs.

The world has changed considerably but PC has remained true to its overall mission and goals and has adapted to the times. Some changes I've seen are:

There are now cell phones and Internet. That keeps you closer to your family but also means more support, or intrusion depending on your stance, into a PCV's daily life. I had a mail truck drive through town twice a week and the nearest phone was a four-hour bush taxi ride away.

Security awareness and regulations are much stricter. I have to tell you not to do things that I was allowed to do as a PCV. This is good for your safety and is a result of a post 9/11 world.



More technical support is another change I have seen. My APCD/RM came to visit my site once – during the last three months of two years and just before I moved to a larger town as PCVL. Such infrequency no longer happens.

PST is the same – long. But the move to host families and training in the community is a big improvement over our center-based training where we lived in an old hotel complex – all trainers and trainees sharing rooms. We spent ALL of our time together for 3 months. That made language learning less effective or at least provided fewer opportunities to practice

with native speakers.

Where do you see it going from here?

While change is built into PC with things like 5 year staff rules, I am also looking forward to seeing where the organization is heading with our next administration. Each makes their own stamp and there will be a transition team to guide the changes. It will be an exciting time for you all to be PCVs!

Having seen the organization from both sides of the fence, what differences have you noticed?

Having been a PCV in Cameroon (91 – 94) and staff in Togo (2004 – 2007) and Kazakhstan (2007 – 2008), I can see many differences and many similarities. I have seen both sides of the fence – PC as a PCV and PC as Staff. The different locations have also shown me different regions and it feels more like 3 tours than 2 (PCV, staff in Africa, staff in EMA). Sometimes the differences between the Africa and EMA regions seem like working for another agency entirely. The goals are the same but the working styles are very different.

As a PCV, I did not focus too much on what was happening at the main office. Especially during my first two years, they were there when I needed them but I didn't need them all that much (except for that case of malaria...). As a PCVL, I saw more how the office

П о с л е д н ы е С л о в а

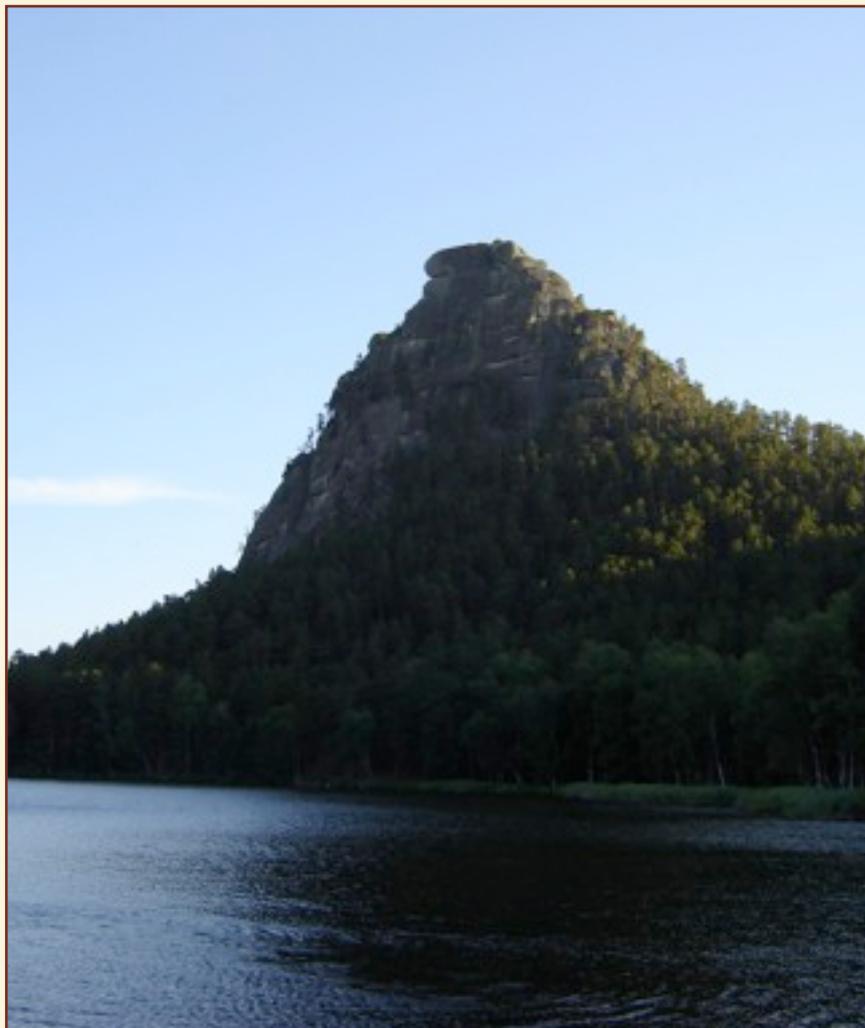
worked, how site development was done, etc. I came back to PC because I believe in what the agency does and the need to support PCVs while they are out working to meet both their program goals and the overall goals of PC. Now, there are some days when I think I may have seen more of the inside than I might have wanted to see but that comes with the territory!

You have worked in three different countries. How big of a factor does the host country play in the overall volunteer experience?

The host country obviously plays a major role in PC – whether through active involvement, benign neglect, or somewhere in between the two extremes. It can be hard to separate out the national government from local governments and local communities. Both are important but the largest impact on PCVs is most often seen at local levels, especially in terms of local community members and cultural exchanges. The more supportive the government can be – whether in terms of work plans, information sharing, direct financial support for training or housing, technical assistance at training, or participation in work – the better. Input is important for shaping the direction of PC in the country.

What can be more important than that is PCV motivation and ability to be flexible to make things happen. Those are more important than technical skills and can help PCVs to work most effectively in the host country.

Do you have something burning to ask Victor about? Wondering where John bought his grill? Need to publicly proclaim your undying love for Ufilmalik? Submit questions for PC staff to pvesti.kz@gmail.com



The Vesti was edited in a small room located in the “Pearl of Kazakhstan.” It required the help of an unmentionable amount of spaghetti, 105 volunteers, 15 tears shed for Randy Couture, 2 bags of Hershey’s Pack a Snacks, several hours on Skype, 3 editors and John F. Kennedy.

Thanks to all those who contributed, and to the rest of you who make living in the steppe just a little bit warmer for everyone around you.

