



Fellows

NEWS ABOUT PEACE CORPS FELLOWS/USA



Teachers College Fellow Yvonne White and Peace Corps Deputy Director Jody Olsen

Deputy Director Visits New York Program Sites

When leadership changes at the Peace Corps after presidential elections, the best way for Fellows/USA to acquaint newly appointed leaders with the program is to engage them in site visits. March 20-22, Peace Corps Deputy Director Josephine (“Jody”) Olsen became the first of the new leaders to accompany Fellows/USA staff on such visits. The group went to Teachers College, Columbia University (TC) and the Milano School of Management and Urban Policy at the New School University in New York City.

Olsen met TC Fellows/USA Coordinator Daniel Tamulonis

and New School Fellows/USA Coordinator Joseph Encarnación, their Fellows, university officials, faculty colleagues, and community partners. She also visited Fellows’ work sites at several public schools and St. Vincent’s Hospital, which played a key role in receiving and treating victims of the World Trade Center attacks.

At the Peace Corps senior staff meeting the next week, Olsen described her visits to the other Peace Corps administrators in glowing terms. She told them that to see the work that the Peace Corps Fellows are doing “just brings tears to

your eyes,” and related what she had seen in some detail. Thanks go to Tamulonis and Encarnación for arranging such excellent visits to their programs. Fellows/USA staff hopes to take other Peace Corps administrators on visits in the fall.



New School University Fellows (l,r) Timothy DeHart, Sean Nagle, Laura Griffis, and Cynthia Holahan

Director Reflects Upon Exceptional Academic Year

Dear Readers:

As this issue of *Fellows* goes to press we find ourselves at the close of another academic year. The period has been particularly eventful for us at the Peace Corps, and for many of our program partners as well.

After nearly 14 months without a permanent director, Peace Corps welcomed Gaddi Vasquez into the organization, clearing the way for many Agency offices—Fellows/USA among them—to take action on initiatives that had been on hold pending the arrival of a

permanent chief executive.

Our Fellows and colleagues at Teachers College, Columbia University and the New School University in New York City were faced both personally and professionally with the events of September 11 and their aftermath. At Temple University, the College of Education now finds itself suddenly in charge of *five* of Philadelphia’s public schools as a result of a state take-over of the city’s troubled public school system.

Fellows/USA has survived the presidential transition period and is emerging into a

promising time. Our program partners at Teachers College and the New School University have both taught and learned much working through the city’s terror-borne crisis with their pupils, associates and clients. We trust that Temple’s Fellows/USA program will be part of the solution to the challenges facing “Philly’s” schools.

Now summer 2002 brings us a June Fellows/USA Convocation, timed to precede the National Peace Corps Association’s grand celebration of Peace Corps’ 40th

anniversary “plus one” (postponed from last September) at its annual conference. At both gatherings, we will all have much to reflect upon, to learn and, yes, to celebrate, having reached this point in our lives and our work by exercising that essential quality for Peace Corps people – perseverance.

Peace,

Michele Cisco Titi, Ph.D.
Director, Peace Corps Fellows/USA

GWU Fellow Answers Life's Calling

By Gina Wynn

(Russian Far East

1996-1997)

Fellows/USA Marketing
Coordinator



Crosby and his cooperating teacher at Takoma Park Middle School, Griselda (Chris) Califa, plan for his next five weeks of student teaching.

This issue of Fellows will feature articles written by and about current and former Peace Corps Fellows to explain how and why they enrolled in Fellows/USA and to describe their experiences in their programs.

Fellows/USA has sent these and similar articles to the Fellows' former Peace Corps posts for publication in current PCV newsletters, and is eagerly seeking more articles!

*If you would like to tell PCVs in your country of service about your Fellows/USA experience, please e-mail an article of no more than 800 words to:
gwynn@peacecorps.gov.*

Eleven years ago, Orlando Crosby could not have predicted the career path that would put him in the midst of a multicultural group of middle school students. As an international relations major at California's Pomona College, he wanted to someday work for the State Department as a diplomat. In preparation for this career, he even learned Chinese. But then he joined the Peace Corps (Guinea 1998-2000). His experience teaching English for two years made an impact on his life that he could not ignore.

Upon returning to his hometown of Washington, D.C., he taught at a private language school that catered to young adults preparing to enter American universities.

However, he was uncertain about committing to a career in education. It was while working at a large development consulting organization that he decided to take his career in another direction. "I felt more and more that my calling was as a teacher," he said.

To teach in the United States, however, Crosby needed to become certified. This reality led him to consider Fellows/USA because he could earn his master's degree at a reduced cost at the same time.

In January 2002 he became a Peace Corps Fellow at The George Washington University (GWU) in Washington, D.C., and began an internship teaching English as a second language at a high school in Montgomery County, Mary-

land. The GWU program places Fellows in two successive five-week internships at a high school and a middle school. Fellows take courses in the evening. During the second year of the program, Fellows advance to a permanent placement. After their fellowships, they are required to teach in Montgomery County for at least one year.

"I have a lot less time now [than I did in Guinea]," said Crosby. "I get up at 5 a.m. and spend the day student teaching. Then, I have classes three nights a week. Each class is three hours long and there's preparation outside of class." He added, "It's very rigorous. I have very little free time. But I'm doing what I want to do ... and it's worth it."

In spite of his busy schedule, Crosby emphasized the program's positive attributes. "The good thing about this program is that we are all former Peace Corps or Americorps Volunteers. We have most of our classes together. Some of us are working in the same schools. We share our experiences, our difficulties, our successes."

Although Montgomery County is home to some of the most affluent communities in the United States, many of the county's public school students are immigrants who do not speak English at home, or speak English fluently but cannot read or write it. Some are not even literate in their own languages or have had their educations interrupted. At Takoma Park Middle

School, where Crosby taught recently, such students are part of a special program called METS (Multidisciplinary Educational Training Services).

"It's challenging working with METS students because their needs are so great," said Crosby. "Many of them come to school not knowing how to write and do not have the fine motor skills that other kids do. You have to work on cultivating school-appropriate behavior as well."

According to Crosby, most people do not realize that this population exists in his school system. "People hear that I work in Montgomery County and they think that I work in a rich school, but there are pockets of extensive need throughout the county."

He described the differences in teaching in Guinea and the United States: "In Guinea, schools were crowded. My classes ranged from 65 students upwards to 90 students. Here, my classes are between 12 and 15 students. There are also differences in terms of resources. In Guinea, I had very few resources, which forced me to be creative in how I put materials together and used the space in my class. Here, I have a wealth of resources."

Despite the challenges of work and study, Crosby remains passionate about his profession. "I love teaching because it's more active—you're up and moving more. It's more creative. You're also making a contribution. You're helping students get to where they need to be."

From Mathematician to Teacher: WSU Opens Doors to Opportunity

Like many Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), I came to teaching through nontraditional means. It was through a graduate school teaching assistantship in mathematics at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (UWM) that I realized that I belonged in education. At UWM, I taught algebra and basic math and oversaw a tutoring center. These jobs increased my awareness of educational challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds. They also made me realize that if I wanted to stay in the field of education I would need to add to my training. A degree in mathematics gave me factual knowledge, but I lacked the credentials and experience I needed for a teaching career.

I left Milwaukee to join the Peace Corps, serving as a high school math teacher in Kenya where many students in my area struggled financially to get even a primary education. Despite interruptions by teacher strikes, elections, floods, and terrorist attacks, the students' remained focused on the opportunities they could gain through education. I tried to give them the foundation in math they would need for jobs or further training. I also began to contact Fellows/USA programs for information on my own opportunities.

The Fellows/USA program at Wichita State University (WSU) seemed tailored for me. Wichita is a city of approximately 300,000 in the heart of the Midwest. The city is large enough to provide varied academic, social, and cultural opportunities. As the largest

city in Kansas, Wichita also faces a shortage of qualified teachers, so there was a need I could help fill. When I visited Wichita for a closer look, I met with principals at four schools. Their willingness to see me on short notice when I had not even applied for a job convinced me of the school district's support for the program. I was also attracted by the program's summer start date and the opportunity to earn both teaching certification and a master's degree. However, it was the combination of school district and university support for the Fellows/USA program that sold me. When I was offered a teaching position at a high school, I packed up and moved to the Great Plains.

At WSU, Fellows/USA is part of a larger Transition to Teaching program. This program enables adults from many professions to earn teaching certification while working as teachers. The first summer of coursework builds an educational foundation for participants, preparing new teachers to go into their own classrooms. In my courses, I found that the RPCVs' and other professionals' diverse backgrounds increased everyone's knowledge and preparedness as we shared experiences, ideas, and plans.

Teaching while learning was invaluable because what we learned in our coursework we used in our classrooms. While my past classroom experience was helpful for the background it gave me, this was my first time as a teacher in a comprehensive public high school. Every day brought learning

opportunities as I discovered new procedures, styles, and methods. I believe this affected my students positively because in striving to be the best student I could be, I became a better teacher. In addition, I was able to attend Fellows/USA, Global TeachNet, Bridges, and Technology conferences. These gatherings allowed me to share thoughts, learn from the experiences of others, acquire knowledge, and make contacts that I could bring back to my school.

After a second year of coursework, I finished the certification portion of the program. I have taken time off from my studies and plan to resume work on a master's degree in curriculum and instruction this summer. Most students complete the combined program in three years or less, but I have chosen to stay longer. I am happy to remain at the same high school and the principal continues to show support for Fellows/USA and Transition to Teaching by interviewing RPCVs whenever such applicants are available. The skills I gained through teaching and coursework along with my previous professional experience prepared me for a teaching career in a very practical way. I landed in the field of education without any traditional preparation, and Fellows/USA helped me gain experience and earn the credentials to make education my career.

By Laurie K. Kiss
(Kenya 1996-1998)
Fellow, Wichita State University

Peace Corps Fellows/USA

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PROGRAM UPDATES

Grits and Guacamole: USC Fellow Adjusts to Southern Culture

By Wendy Sellers Campbell
Fellows/USA Program
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Amanda Martin and friend, Michael Berg, dressed in garb from Guatemala and Haiti for a SC-RPCV Halloween Party.

Amanda Martin, a Peace Corps Fellow at the University of South Carolina, wakes up every Saturday morning at 7 a.m. and drives 85 miles to Greenwood, South Carolina. In Greenwood, she heads a grass-roots community center in a low-income Latino and African-American neighborhood. She spends her day developing wellness seminars and health promotions with voluntary professionals, leading young children in a “Future Nurses” group, conducting interviews with local residents, and organizing after-school programs. Describing her community work, Martin said, “As in my Peace Corps experience, I never know when one person or 50 will arrive for an event!”

During breaks, she socializes with local women from Mexico and Guatemala, sharing stories about her Peace Corps experience in Guatemala and cooking tamales and tortillas. In the evenings, Martin and her community

group often host community picnics that provide opportunities to discuss neighborhood concerns. Previous guests include the Greenwood mayor. On such days, she spends the night at the community center.

Martin reflected upon the adjustments she had to make as a Peace Corps Fellow. “I moved to South Carolina 15 months ago from Bolivia. I grew up in Connecticut, and this is my first time living in the South. I still feel as if I am living abroad, because South Carolina is so different from New England: the food (grits and shrimp, collard greens, fatback, okra, and boiled peanuts), the colloquialisms (“y’all,” “bless his heart”), the way people interact (taking time to say hello, calling people “sir” and “ma’am”), and the climate (no snow, lots of sand, and big insects). I wasn’t sure how I would fit in here, but to my wonderful surprise, I have found many terrific people and opportunities for learning, thanks in

great part to the Fellows/USA HABLA project. Columbia is a small city with several enjoyable parks, a great library, a university with many international students, and best of all, everything is within biking distance from my house!”

When not in Greenwood, Martin attends classes toward a dual M.S.W./M.P.H., works part time as an interpreter/translator for state agencies, conducts cultural competency trainings, participates in social actions through the SC Progressive Network and SURE (Students United for Rights and Equality), and runs four miles every morning.

Asked when she sleeps, Martin said, “Every night, from midnight to 7 a.m. I don’t have a television, VCR, or Internet access in my home. This keeps me from wasting valuable time and allows me more hours to do the things I feel strongly about.” Spoken like a true RPCV!

Fellows at Work

Fellows/USA staff recently visited University of Maryland, Baltimore County’s Shriver Peaceworker Program, John Hopkins University’s School of Nursing, and The George Washington University’s Teacher’s 2000/GW Teaching Corps Partnership. During these visits they met with Peace Corps Fellows, university coordinators, and community partners.



Shriver Peaceworker Fellows attend a weekly ethical reflection seminar (l,r) Marc Douglas, Paul Meier, Kendra Cornwell, Tineka Archer and Summer Rosswog.



JHU first-year Fellow Shannon Micheel and second-year nursing students (l,r) Jane Hannon, Anne Film King, Jennifer Klein, Nancy Waxman, Gloria Chu, and Richard Muus hosted Fellows/USA staff.

Teaching is 'No Sacrifice' for TC Fellow

Teachers College, Columbia University Fellow Kalimah Fergus knew she wanted to teach. She was so steadfast in her conviction that she turned down a full scholarship that would have kept her in coursework full time at Teachers College (TC) to become a Peace Corps Fellow instead. She knew that as a Fellow, she would be able to gain hands-on experience in New York City public schools in addition to acquiring classroom knowledge.

She applied to the Fellows/USA program soon after returning to her hometown of Brooklyn, New York, from Peace Corps service as a math teacher in Tanzania from 1997 to 2000. She needed to complete her teacher's certification in order to achieve her career goal. Earning a master's degree would be a logical complement to this endeavor. "Being able to teach and get a master's simultaneously while becoming certified would save me a lot of time and energy," said Fergus. "In the state of New York, teachers are required to earn a master's degree within five years after they begin teaching."

Fergus began the program in the fall of 2001 as a TC student and science teacher at the High School for Legal

Studies and had little difficulty settling into her new lifestyle. "At some points I do feel overwhelmed," she said. "But so far so good!"

However, things became slightly more complicated for Fergus after the events of September 11. "I have a hard time describing how my students were affected by the September 11 thing. My older students were frightened. Some of the students saw out the window when the plane hit," she said.

"Within a couple of weeks, people were back to normal once they found out their families weren't hurt. A lot of them are from violent or drug-infested communities, so they have to deal with realities that are closer to home. It's interesting to think about it in those terms. How does something like that affect someone who deals with instances of violence on a smaller level every day?"

The turbulent lives of her students often result in behavior issues that were not common with her Tanzanian students. "In Tanzania, I got used to the students being completely quiet while I was teaching. I was surprised when I realized that it's not the same here," said Fergus. "I think that's good because my

expectations are higher than those of the other teachers. It makes things easier because I don't tolerate things that other teachers let them get away with. It helps to set a more structured classroom."

She notes some similarities between teaching in New York and teaching in Tanzania, however. "We're dealing with the same issues, like lack of resources and large class sizes," she said. "I'm teaching motivated students, but they feel that they are behind in terms of the resources that they have. It's a different environment. This experience is just as rewarding, though."

It is rewarding enough for her to continue teaching in Brooklyn after she completes her fellowship. "I'd like to stay for a few years," she said.

Fergus described what drives her ambition: "[When I teach,] I get as much as I'm giving because this is something that I've always wanted to do and something I enjoy doing. It doesn't feel like a burden to me. It doesn't feel like I'm sacrificing anything. For me, being a martyr would be sitting behind a computer all day."

By Gina Wynn
(Russian Far East
1996-1997)
Fellows/USA Marketing
Coordinator



Soon to be second-year TC Fellows Elizabeth Bagnulo, Fergus, and Kathleen Rucker share their experiences at a monthly Fellows seminar.



GWU first-year Fellows (l,r) Ericson Perez, Marc Grossman, Heather Thompson, Coordinator Jeanne Embich and second-year Fellows Kerry Zahn and Ailish Zompa study and work with other Fellows.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Fellow Uses Slovakia Experience to Benefit Rural Illinois, Build Career in Business

By Christian Tscheschlok
(Slovakia 1996-1999)
Fellow, Western Illinois
University



Tscheschlok (l) discusses downtown revitalization plans with a small business owner in Rock Falls, Illinois.

Dare I ask how many times you, as a PCV, thought “what would it take” when you came up with what you imagined to be a great idea for a project? Wondered “what would it take” to accomplish an objective, take the next step, try something new, or help your host country counterparts understand your “strange” approach to meeting challenges.

That all-too-familiar question confronted me once again recently, but this time the tables were turned as my stateside host community colleagues posed aloud that very question during a meeting in Rock Falls, Illinois, where I will soon complete my internship as a Peace Corps Fellow.

Three years of friendships, adversity, success, challenge, and shared accomplishment as a PCV in Slovakia, provided me with the confidence and desire to take the many skills gained while abroad and transform them into a new opportunity in the United States. I was, in short, eager to make my Peace Corps experience work for me back home and the Fellows/USA program in rural community development at Western Illinois University seemed like a natural key to doing so. I could earn my M.B.A., take advantage of a unique graduate assistantship with the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, and immediately cultivate a career by putting my newfound knowledge to work in an intense 11-month internship. Still, nothing could have prepared me for the depth at which my Peace Corps experience would connect to economic and community development work in Illinois.

Rock Falls is a community of nearly 10,000 in north-central

Illinois. My experience here began with the tedious task of working with my community liaison committee to draft a work plan for my internship. My concerns regarding its applicability to real life quickly evaporated as local residents came to me with myriad project ideas and concerns. The work plan helped me filter through these requests and essentially provided both the community and me with the necessary focus so critical to actually accomplishing mutual goals. It also gave us benchmarks for measuring progress.

Soon after, I ended up facilitating communication between a developer and the city to resolve a dispute over development of a key property along the Rock River. What would it take? Quite a bit because the mayor and City Council were dissatisfied with the developer’s lack of progress on the property’s abandoned building, which is a unique limestone structure of historical significance.

Recognizing this, I strove to help both sides understand each other’s positions and work at the common goal of seeing the property develop into a “keystone” for riverfront development and a historical landmark for the entire region. The discussion might have been heated and perhaps resulted in solutions that would have been a detriment to solid development, but, instead, with my help—or at least I like to think so—it became productive.

The main thrust of my efforts in Rock Falls have, however, centered on helping a fledgling group of interested local residents build consensus and take ownership of their economic destiny through the creation of a coordinated community development

program. I began by asking of the original group of five or so, “What would it take?” We “brainstormed” our way through several options. Momentum began to take hold. Soon I was leading a team of 13 business leaders and elected officials through the one-year process of establishing a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Not that the effort has not faced more than its share of difficulty and skepticism. My favorite example stems from the comment of a local industrialist who came to a meeting one morning and said flat out, “You have three meetings to prove to me I should be sitting here.” Understandable ultimatum, I thought, given this was not the first such initiative to cross his path. There were many “failures” in past economic development efforts. The reasons they ultimately lost steam can be summed up by the lack of funding, full-time and experienced leadership, consensus, focus, and regional thinking.

Fellows/USA essentially provided my community the counter to all those lessons learned from past efforts. The industrialist? Well, he is now the president of the Board of Directors for the Rock Falls Community Development Corporation (RFCDC). I can safely say that Rock Falls is not worried about its return on investment with the program.

Selfishly speaking, neither am I. I recently heard the “What would it take?” question posed a little differently at a meeting with various members of the RFCDC Board. They wanted to know what it would take to keep me in Rock Falls as executive director for the RFCDC. I was moved by the offer which was also a symbolic beginning to much more.

Internships Begin for WIU Fellows Group

Congratulations to the following WIU Fellows who have begun their internships:

In Hamilton, Illinois, **Brandy Garrett** (Ghana 1998- 2000) will help development of a city children’s park, a recreational path project, a downtown revitalization initiative, and a community center. She will also help organize a community development group that may become a nonprofit organization.

Brad Walker (Jamaica 1998-2000) has been placed with the American Farmland Trust in DeKalb, Illinois. Brad will organize and coordinate community-based activities that promote the protection of farmland and planning for agriculture in DeKalb, Kendall, and Boone counties.

Michael Louie (Jamaica 1997-1999) will work on a statewide greenways and trails project with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Overseas Recruiting Garner's Interest in Program

Fellows/USA staff members have recently made the first Fellows/USA overseas recruitment trips since former Director Fran Bond traveled abroad in search of prospective Fellows in the mid '90s.

To inform Volunteers about the merits of the program and to educate overseas staff who interact regularly with Volunteers, staff planned visits to each of the Peace Corps' three regions: Africa;

Interamerica and the Pacific; and Europe, the Mediterranean and Asia

In April, Cary Ballou visited the Africa region, where she made a Fellows/USA presentation at an all-Volunteer conference in Lesotho and a Close of Service (COS) Conference in Burkina Faso. Gina Wynn traveled to Romania and Ukraine early in May to address Volunteers at a language in-service training

and a TEFL Sector Conference. Michele Titi will visit Guatemala and the Dominican Republic to speak at COS conferences in June.

Fellows/USA staff will follow up with post staff and returning Volunteers, and will launch a multi-year plan to assess the effectiveness of these visits as part of Fellows/USA's overall marketing strategy.



Ukraine Peace Corps Volunteers collect information about Fellows/USA at a resource fair at a TEFL Sector conference in Kiev, May 6-9.

Richardson Gives Birth to Future Fellow

Program Assistant Natalie Richardson brought the newest addition to the Fellows/USA family, Kamau Richardson, into the world on May 24. Husband Kala reports that mother and son are in good

health. Kamau weighed 9 lbs. 4 oz. and was 20.5 inches long at birth. Sisters Ni'jah and Nahfisa are excited about the birth of their new playmate, according to Kala. Richardson will be on maternity leave

until the end of August. Her temporary replacement, new Shriver Peaceworker Fellow Aaron Brownell, will be assuming her duties until June 28.

Video Update Available as Marketing Tool

An updated version of the 1994 Fellows/USA video is now available to partner universities for program marketing, recruitment, and

outreach to potential benefactors. It features Fellows/USA alumni working in communities and discussing the merits of the program. To receive a

copy of this video, coordinators may contact Gina Wynn at <gwynn@peacecorps.gov> or call 800-424-8580, ext. 1434.

NPCA Program Offers Teacher Resources

You have lived and taught among many cultures and religions of the world. Now you want to encourage your students to respect others regardless of their religious beliefs, nationality, or appearance—to broaden their global perspectives. How do you find local and international resources for bringing current global issues into your classrooms? Global TeachNet, the National Peace Corps Association's (NPCA) education resource, can help you to continue to bring the world back home.

Having recently celebrated its sixth anniversary, Global

TeachNet brings educational strategies and lessons directly to your e-mail box. Gain access to this information by signing up for its free listserv at <list.vita.org>. Once each week, you will receive a concise summary of resources, professional development workshops, grant opportunities, and classroom activities.

Also, visit the rest of the program's website at <www.globalteachnet.org>. NPCA has developed a searchable database of (mostly free) global education resources and compiled a summary list including links to organizations that have classroom-ready

resources organized by issue (e.g., hunger, refugees) and type (e.g., general resources, other listservs). You can also access online lesson plans that correspond with *WorldView*, NPCA's quarterly magazine on the developing world. Global TeachNet members also receive the bimonthly newsletter, *Global TeachNet*.

Membership in Global TeachNet is free for NPCA members. For more information contact Global TeachNet Program Coordinator Annie Schleicher at 202-293-7728, ext. 11, or <teachnet@rpcv.org>.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Fellows/USA Welcomes New CED Programs

Continuing with efforts to diversify program offerings academically and geographically, Fellows/USA has added some new universities to its list of community and economic development (CED) partners:

Brandeis University

At Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, Fellows will be able to earn a master of arts degree in sustainable international development, with possible concentrations to include conservation and development, gender, microcredit, economic development, energy, and advocacy. Electives may be taken within the Boston area Consortium of Universities.

Fellows will complete internships at policy research centers with international connections on issues such as health, families and children, sustainable development, aging, hunger, and poverty.

Michigan Technological University

At Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Fellows will earn a master of science in forestry with two options—one for students with a social science background and one for students with a biophysical science background. After one year of academic studies on campus, Fellows will spend two years

as full-time employees in a U.S. Forest Service training program. Upon successful completion of the program, they can become permanent Forest Service employees.

University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

The University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee will offer master of arts and master of science degrees in urban studies, public administration, business administration, economics, history, and sociology. Fellows will help to promote economic revitalization in low-income, predominantly minority neighborhoods of Milwaukee's inner city.

Peace Corps Fellows/USA

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