



2025

ANNUAL REPORT



Prepared For :
Milwaukee Peace Corps Association

www.milwaukeepeacecorps.org

From the President

Everyone who serves in Peace Corps has a COS (close of service) date. For some it comes sooner than you expect, others extend, but regardless you have a time when you officially leave. For me COS was one of the most difficult and emotional days of my life. I entered a community as a stranger and left with a new family. These were people I shared many meals, conversations, and laughs. I witnessed births, deaths, weddings, and celebrations. I was challenged to experience life from a different perspective. These feelings of leaving something you built for 2 years left me with a huge amount of grief, and being lost on what was next for me.

That is why four years ago when I found out MPCA was considering going on a hiatus due to challenges of engagement from the pandemic, I made the decision to lead the board having just moved to Milwaukee myself. It is the community I found in returned groups that allowed me to find friends and direction. The purpose of these groups is to provide the soft landing for when you return, and continued memory of your service when you have settled. Bring up any topic among RPCVs and the stories will flow.

At the lowest point of when I took over it was Anne and myself as the only board members entering Peace Corps week 2023. We made the appeal that we needed others to step up and join for us to survive, and 2 more joined the board that day. From there we have continued to grow to once again having a stable and active board. Through the active leadership of our board we have built up our grants and giving fund to once again being regularly supporting volunteer projects We are providing a wide range of monthly events to be in community together. And when needed advocate for the Peace Corps and its future.

While my COS from the Dominican Republic was met with tears and great sadness. This COS is less so, I will continue to be part of the board working on building our new platform Connect+, and I am excited for our new President Emily Wild to have the opportunity to lead our board. Over these four years we have been able to build a solid foundation to make our organization sustainable for Milwaukee RPCVs of the future.

Yours in Service,

Peter Hulbert

Dominican Republic 2012-2014

OUR BOARD



Peter Hulbert
President



Emily Wild
Vice President/
Grants and Giving



Anne Leplae
Treasurer



Bobbie Zerfas
Secretary



**Catharine Swan
Buccowich**
Outreach



Jodi St. Charles
Membership



Maggie Krochalk
Events

OUR MISSION

MPCA is a community of former and future Peace Corps Volunteers , friends, and families who continue to promote Peace Corps ideals through cultural education and the support of both local and international development organizations. It also provides social activities and emotional support for RPCVs and for those returning from abroad.

Organization Founded: 1968

35 members at the end of 2025

Website: www.milwaukeepeacecorps.org



MEMBERSHIP

Thirty five may not seem like many, but history shows us that this is plenty. In trying times, when it comes to change, it takes only a few to hit the stage. Our difference may not be felt today, but it is our small joint efforts that pave the way!

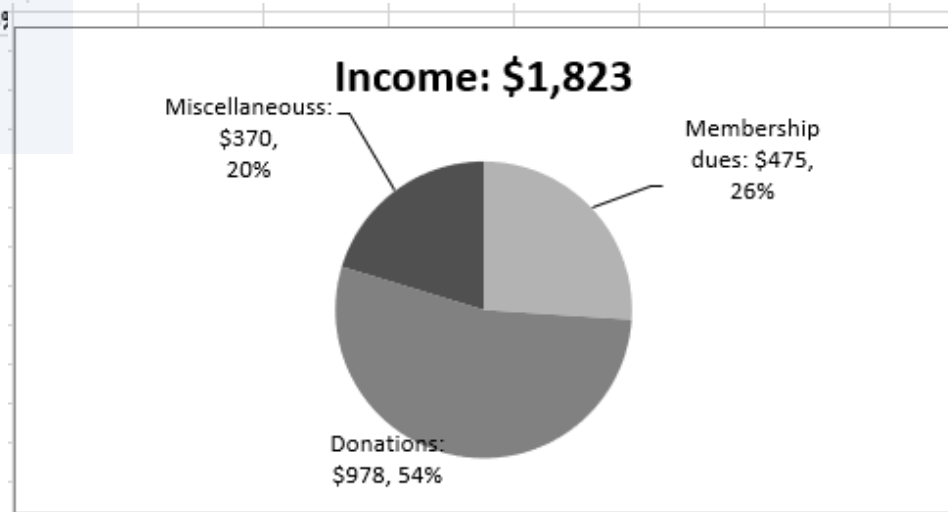
Times in history when only one person made a difference (One.org, 2025):

- The Salt March led by Gandhi in India in 1930 sparked the fight for Indian independence.
- Rosa Parks did not give up her seat which inspired the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955.
- In the UK in 1913 a Woman's Suffrage Activist, Emily Davidson, was killed while protesting.
- In China in 1989, an unknown rebel blocked military tanks at the Tiananmen Square Protests.
- "Corazon Aquino toppled authoritarian rule & restored democracy in the Philippines in 1986."

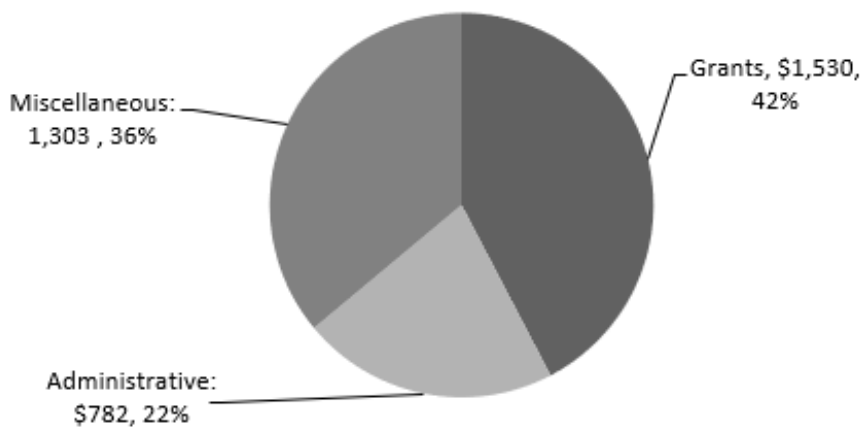


FINANCES

Income:	\$1,823	
Membership Dues	475	26%
Donations	978	54%
Miscellaneous	370	20%
Expenses:	\$3,614	
Grants	1,530	42%
Administrative	782	22%
Miscellaneous	1,303	36%



Expenses: \$3,614



OUTREACH

Building Community Partnerships

To celebrate Peace Corps Week, 2025, and help us spread the news about Peace Corps to a new generation, MPCA partnered with the Department of Global Studies and the Center for Student Experience and Talent (SET) at UWM where they hosted a Peace Corps Panel in February. Undergraduates from any major who plan to apply to the Peace Corps are encouraged to participate in the program. Upon successful completion of the prep program, students receive a certificate from the Peace Corps and a competitive edge when they apply.

United We Stand - Advocating for a strong Peace Corps, Now and In the Future

With major cuts to other aid and humanitarian organizations in the government, NPCA provided support in creating a mobilization campaign to garner awareness of the cost and impact of the Peace Corps. At several of our Peace Corps events in the spring and summer, postcards were available for RPCVs to write their Senators and District Representatives to advocate in support of the Peace Corps and the Peace Corps 2026 budget. Several RPCVs in our area successfully advocated to their representatives. We thank everyone who participated in our outreach.

GRANTS AND GIVING



In 2025 the MPCA community showed strong support for volunteers serving abroad and leading community-led projects in their sites across the world. In 2025 MPCA distributed \$1,430 to Peace Corps projects. We are so grateful for your support as we continue to make a big impact funding grants through the Peace Corps Partnership Program.



In 2025 Your Grant Dollars Supported:

Adam Riley - Peru - Youth Development



Our MPCA grant enriched students' educational experiences and civic engagement by establishing four student-led clubs that build leadership, teamwork, and technical skills through collaboration among students, teachers, and community members. Funding provided essential resources and training to ensure the clubs are a sustainable, long-term part of the school's programming.

Hahns Huebsch - Zambia - Health

On August 5th the MPCA awarded \$500 to an HIV prevention project in Zambia led by Hahns Huebsch from Osceola, WI. Our funding supported training for local health volunteers in HIV counseling, testing, and ART drug distribution, improving access for remote communities. The project also promotes peer education to dispel HIV myths and reduce stigma.



Hewan Peterson - Madagascar - Education

As part of our Peace Corps Partnership lunch in September in honor of Dzidra Benish the MPCA supported a small, stand-alone library and multipurpose room at a local high school, providing dedicated space for studying, clubs, community events, and digital literacy training for students, teachers, and neighborhood members. With strong community involvement and a long-term management plan from the school, the new space will serve as an inclusive educational hub that expands access to learning and supports more than 1,800 people directly and indirectly.



Hunger Task Force - Milwaukee - Food Support

After the extensive government shutdown and many in the Milwaukee community facing hardships, the MPCA Board also organized a November Giving Drive to support Hunger Task Force, a local organization that helps feed families across Wisconsin. MPCA is providing a \$250 match challenge to support local families.

EVENTS

Peace Corps Week

Thank you to all the Milwaukee Peace Corps Association members who joined us to celebrate Peace Corps Week this year. We began the week in service on February 22, volunteering with the Hanan Ramadan Food Box Drive to support Milwaukee's refugee community, and we're grateful to everyone who lent a hand. We wrapped up the week with wonderful conversation and community while enjoying delicious Nepali food at Himalayan Yak in Bay View on March 1st. For those who couldn't make it, we missed you—and we hope to see you at our next gathering! And as we plan future events, please send us your restaurant recommendations so we can continue exploring diverse cultural cuisines while supporting local businesses.

Game Day

We tried something new this year and hosted a game day at Old Guard Games in November. It turned a regular day into an afternoon of strategy, laughter, and good-natured competition. The event proved once again that tasty treats and a few good games are all it takes to bring people together and enjoy some community.

Spring Steam Day Clean Up

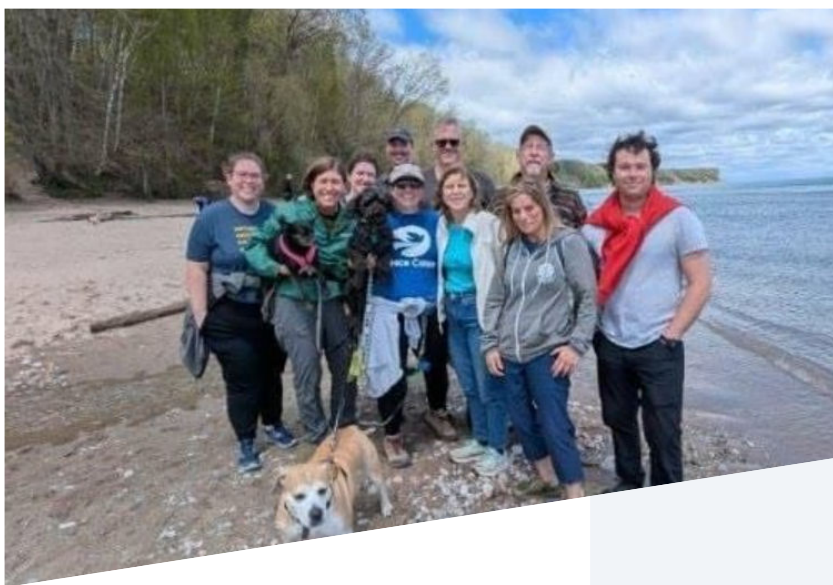
Another great year partnering with Riverkeepers to help clean up the Milwaukee watershed. MPCA identified two clean-up sites and promoted the event on the MPCA website, along with directly reaching out by email to members. The RPCV, along with friends and families, gathered tons of junk as the photograph shows. The participants liked being involved in the community and working together to keep the environment clean. This outdoor activity not only allowed us to give back to our community, but it also gave RPCVs with young children the chance to participate in one of our events and spend time in nature.



EVENTS

Hike at 7 Bridges

In May we gathered at Seven Bridges for an afternoon hike. The day offered a welcome chance for MPCA members and friends to step away from our busy routines and reconnect in a relaxed, natural setting. The trail provided a peaceful backdrop for conversation, reflection, and a renewed appreciation for the city we call home. The hike served as a gentle reminder of the value of slowing down, spending time together, and grounding ourselves in the mission that brings us all together.



Apple Picking @ Barthel Fruit Farm

A dozen RSVPs enjoyed a sunny October day in an apple orchard - some of us picked apples, others stayed in the beer garden to chat. We all enjoyed meeting Travis Matthews (Namibia 2016-18) from the National Peace Corps Association, who came to the event from Chicago with his family. We ended the excursion with a walk through the corn maze.

Coffee & Community Blum Coffee Garden

To make the end of winter a little less dreary, a group of our members met at Blum Coffee Garden in Greenfield to enjoy a cup of coffee and connect in a safe space when the world around us felt uncertain. It was wonderful to see new and old friends and enjoy each other's company.

EVENTS

Annual Picnic

Picnic: an excursion or outing with food usually provided by members of the group and eaten in the open (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2025). And we concur—it was a grand yet laidback occasion and perfect picnic weather aside from the Canadian wildfire smoke! It was hard to pick a favorite dish...was it the homemade middle eastern bread, the quinoa salad, or the mango sticky rice? Building community sometimes only takes small, simple steps and sharing a meal together is one way to do so that is both shared around the world and also right here with us. We always appreciate our members showing up to events and especially enjoyed seeing some MPCA members at the picnic who had not been to an event in quite some time—you are always welcome to share our next meal together!



Story Slam

The Story Slam theme from 2025?? “Where There Is No Doctor”! RPCV’s, friends, and other Art Bar patrons enjoyed hearing the random and quirky stories about RPCV’s and their scary or embarrassing dilemmas which may sound familiar to fellow international travelers...whether it was unexpected bathroom time on a bus with clothes on, rugged deep wounds treated at a rural clinic with straight up alcohol that made one’s bones shake, or alas the ever-popular experience of being perpetually ill for one’s entire peace corps service with stomach bugs! Health is often the wealth we take for granted and MPCA wishes all of our members, families, and friends a healthy new year!!

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

On September 27, 2025 members of the MPCA and family members of Dzidra Benish gathered for a Peace Corps Partnership lunch at the Cafe India on Kinnickinnic Avenue in Milwaukee. The lunch was a grand time to enjoy a delicious meal and to remember the service and spirit of two of MPCA's long-time members Dzidra Benish and Paul Kinsley.

Dzidra served in Zamosc, Poland from 1992-1994 as a teacher trainer. Dzidra began her service after she retired from Milwaukee Public Schools. Her family was also originally from Latvia so she had a deep connection to the area where she served. As an MPCA board member Dzidra was very active in organizing events like the summer picnic, educational events for children, and the new volunteer send-off celebrations. She often hosted MPCA board meetings at her home and believed deeply in the mission of the Peace Corps. Her passion for social justice was a guiding force throughout her life.

Paul served in Turkey from 1965-1967 as a community development volunteer in two villages near Samsun, a major Black Sea port. He loved to tell stories of his service and returned to visit Turkey several times. In Milwaukee, Paul was a reading teacher and community organizer before retiring. He served on the MPCA board for many years as the MPCA historian and conducted interviews with area RPCVs for the Oral History Archives Project at the JFK Library in Boston. He was active with many MPCA boards over the years which offered valuable continuity to the group. Anyone who ever met Paul will remember his laugh and willingness to give of himself.

The funds raised at the lunch went to the project of a current Peace Corps Volunteer in Madagascar who is creating a small single school library for high school. Thanks to the many MPCA members who attended the lunch or donated.

Mary Mueller created a beautiful remembrance display for both Dzidra and Paul that will also be on display at the Holiday Party.



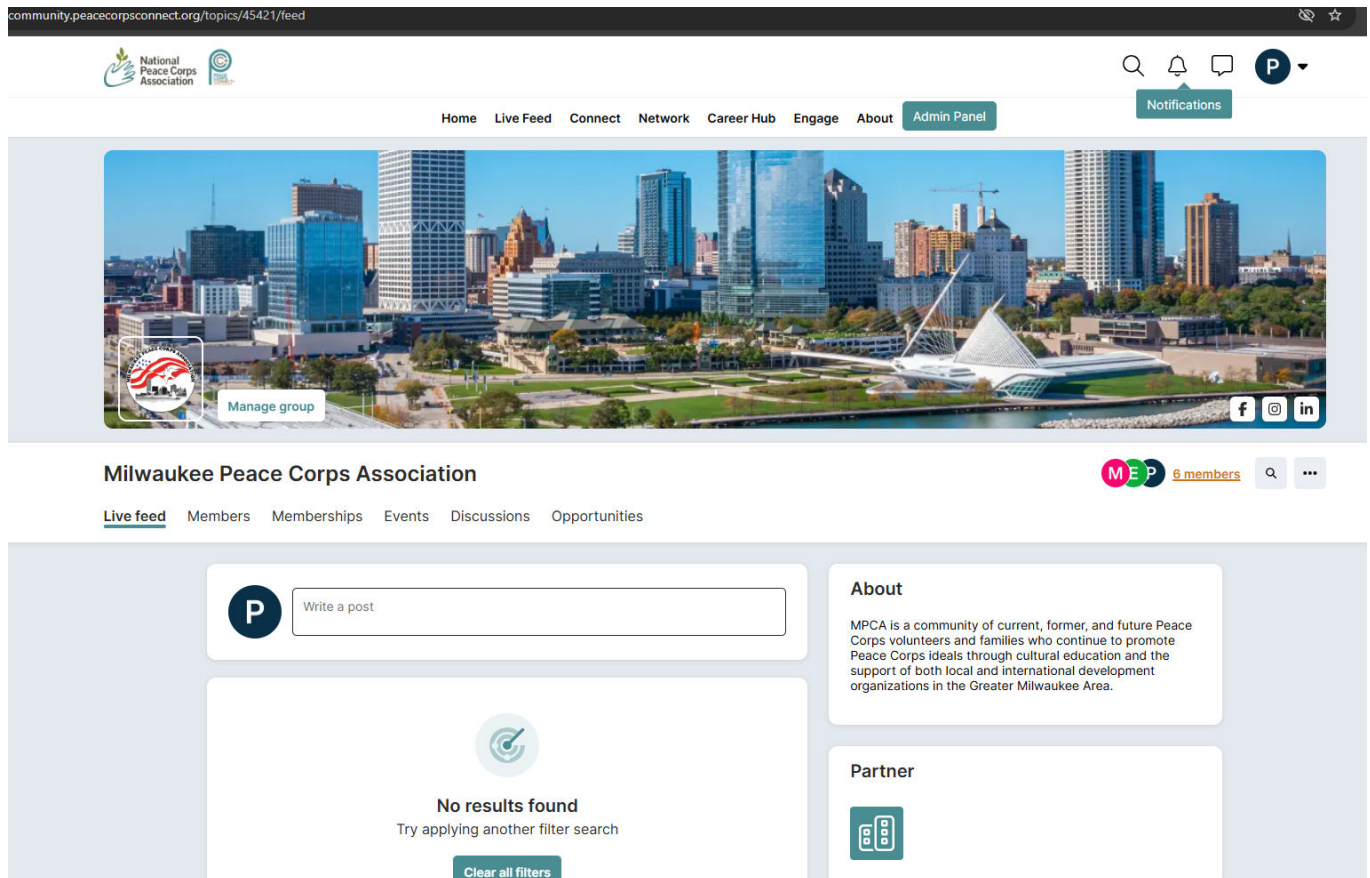
THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS!

Maggie Krochalk
Judith Larsen
Bobbie Zerfas
Debra Baesemann
Douglas Armstrong
Kaylee Beck
Jonathan Ward
Annette Mertens
Emily Summers
Kyle Borley
Anneliese Finke
Kaitlin Polacheck
Susan Ellsworth
Carrie Buccowich
Mark Buccowich
Peter Hulbert
Dan Diliberti
Ann Diliberti
Suzy Michaels
Tony Ramirez

Peter Lee
Anne Leplae
Chris Wilson
M. Jane Moore
Emily Wild
Elaine McDermott
Peter Brands
Fred Waddell
Jodi St. Charles
Robert and Sharon Richardson
Bridget Babcock
Allegra Troiano
Gerald Emmerich, Jr.
Kathy Reed
Mary Mueller



Join us on connect+



In 2026 we will be moving to Connect+ for membership. But it is much more than just membership. Connect+ will be a place to engage with MPCA online, find events, and even find fellow RPCVs who you served with in country. We are excited to grow this community with you!





EMAIL

Info@milwaukeepeacecorps.org



WEBSITE

www.milwaukeepeacecorps.org

