



Cuerpo de Paz El Salvador

Description of Peace Corps Volunteer Service PCV Patrick McGee El Salvador, Central America

Patrick McGee was invited to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in El Salvador in 1998, six years after the conclusion of the civil war. With solid volunteer experience in HIV prevention, Patrick was chosen to be a member of the Water/Sanitation group which was slated to have an increased emphasis on health education. In March 1998, he began intensive language, cultural and technical training with World Learning, which included living with a Salvadoran host family in San Vicente, El Salvador.

Patrick showed great interest and ability in health education during the three months of technical classes, and upon successful completion of training he was sent to work with Agape, one of El Salvador's leading health promotion agencies.

Matched with one of Agape's health promoters as a counterpart, Patrick was assigned to Cauta Arriba, a small farming community in the foothills of Mount Apaneca. The remote site was one of the most difficult among Peace Corps communities with no electricity, running water or transportation.

Patrick made numerous house visits with his counterpart and soon set off on his own, making at least 40 house visits a month. Using the visits to promote health and address the people's needs, Patrick was responsive to the community's problems and opportunities. He vigorously promoted latrines when the European Union offered the community a sanitation project and conducted an extensive house-to-house education campaign to combat the cholera outbreak that hit the country in April 1999. Results show that people were receptive to Patrick's educational techniques; not a single case of cholera was reported in his community and the number of families participating in the latrine project more than doubled.

Patrick strove to make his support of the latrine project holistic with words and deeds. He helped the community with manual labor including the construction of a storage house for the materials. Patrick followed up with another round of house visits educating people on how to properly use and maintain the latrines he helped build.

Patrick repeated this cycle of thoughtful education and dedicated labor when the European Union started a water project in the community in September 1999.

Soon the community's youth group and women's group requested educational sessions in their meetings, and shortly after that Patrick founded a health committee to offer health education to all members of the community. He worked with the committee's elected leaders, helping them develop educational themes and presentations. Attendance at the monthly meetings never dropped below 30.

After recovering from dengue fever in June 1999, Patrick returned from the hospital to campaign against the disease outbreak. Once again the results testified to his ability to

reach the people; only one other community member fell ill with the mosquito-transmitted disease.

As Patrick's reputation as a health educator grew, his teaching abilities were requested elsewhere. Agape asked him to share his techniques with their other promoters, World Vision, another agency working in El Salvador, invited him to make presentations at their monthly meetings and community members asked him to teach them English. Weekly English classes started in June 1998, continued to the end of Patrick's service and far surpassed all his original goals.

With health promoters outside Patrick's community using his teaching techniques and World Learning asking him to help train new volunteers, USAID agreed to publish a book of his health lessons. Co-authored by fellow Peace Corps Volunteer Angelina Zamboni, *Actividades Saludables* addresses most of the major health issues in rural El Salvador and includes culturally appropriate lessons for literate and illiterate people. Copies were requested by numerous agencies.


During his more than two years of service, Patrick also proved very effective in soliciting outside institutions to meet the needs of his community. From agencies such as Red Cross to multinational corporations such as Johnson & Johnson and Procter & Gamble, Patrick brought in food, clothing, medicine and even a donation of beds and roofing materials to help a families who lost their homes in a storm.

Patrick also successfully solicited USAID for funds to build a vehicular bridge which greatly improved access to the community school and clinic. Once again Patrick was swinging a pick ax and lugging rocks with the men, but this time he also had to manage the volunteer work force of more than 40 and coordinate efforts with the mayor's office. Construction was finished - under budget - in July 2000, the final month of Patrick's service.

This is to certify in accordance with Executive Order No. 11103 of April 10, 1963 that Patrick McGee served satisfactorily as a Peace Corps Volunteer. His service ended on July 28, 2000. He is therefore eligible to be appointed as a career conditional employee in the competitive civil service on a noncompetitive basis. This benefit under the Executive Order entitlement extends for a period of one year, except that the employing agency may extend the period for up to three years for a former volunteer who enters military service, pursues studies at a recognized institution of higher learning or engages in other activities which in the view of the appointing authority warrants extension of the period.



Mike Wise
Peace Corps Country Director
El Salvador



David F. Fleisig
Associate Peace Corps Director
El Salvador