

PUBLIC SERVICE SCHOLAR

News&Views

Volume 23/Winter 2006

Peace Corps Moldova: *A Volunteer's Perspective*

By *Eva Angelica Rios*

Public Service Scholars take many paths after they leave the program and begin their search for meaningful, productive work. Some go on to graduate school; others begin careers in the private sector. As you will read below, *Eva Rios* took the opportunity to continue to serve the public good through a two-year stint as a volunteer in the Peace Corps in Moldova. Along the way, she inspired others to see that they too can make a difference in their communities. As a Scholar, *Eva Angelica Rios* worked in the office of Council Member *Walter McCaffrey* of the 26th District in Woodside.



Photo courtesy of *Eva Rios*

I am pleased to have this opportunity to write to other Public Service Scholars and Alumni about my experience serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Eastern Europe from June 2003 to August 2005. As a bit of background, the Republic of Moldova came into existence in 1991 after the breakup of the Soviet Union and is home to ethnic Romanians, Russians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians and Gaugauzians (of Turkish descent). It is a small country slightly larger than the state of Maryland located between Ukraine and Romania. It is the poorest country in Europe, but its fields of rich soil are filled with grapes, sunflowers, wheat, and nuts. The town where I lived, Ceadir-Lunga, with a population of about 30,000, is about a two-and-a-half hour drive from the capital city of Chisinau, where other Peace Corps volunteers would gather at times to unwind and share experiences.

Every volunteer's experience is completely different. Some are good, others are not—either way, it is a learning experience. There are some volunteers who do not stay for their

Eva celebrates with her host family and their friends in Moldova

full two years of service. They may not like their work or their living environment. Some don't follow the rules and are sent home. Others just miss life in the United States. There are some volunteers who find serving in the Peace Corps difficult because of their ethnic background. But they stay because they know that overcoming the challenges they face will help make them more confident.

I am one of those volunteers who had an absolutely amazing experience in Moldova where I taught English to students in Grades 6 through 11 at the Mihail Guboglo Lyceum. Prior to the Peace Corps, I had only tutored students in English but never actually taught in front of a classroom. Fortunately,

my classroom sizes were usually small, ranging from seven to 13 students. An intensive 10-week training program prepared me well to begin teaching in Moldovan classrooms. I

have to admit that, at first, I was not so excited about teaching English for my assignment. I do not, however, regret it in the least now, because how could I have ever known how wonderful it is to work with young, bright and talented students? The biggest challenge was overcoming the language barrier, which in my case was Russian. I wish I had spoken Russian better, so that I could have offered more to my students. Instead, I was teaching them English, and they were teaching me Russian! Another challenge was overcoming the feeling I had at times that I should not really be there teaching English, because the other Moldovan English teachers that I worked with were so dedicated and good at what they do. At those times, I realized that cultural exchange is one of the biggest contributions Peace Corps volunteers make in their communities. Some of my students still write to me via email, and it is truly an amazing feeling to continue to be in touch with them.

There are problems facing the young country of Moldova, and sometimes my students were optimistic about their future and that of their country and sometimes not. Without a scholarship, it is difficult for many of them

► *Story continued on back cover*

A VIEW FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR



Elaine M. Walsh, Ph.D.

WELCOME EVERYONE—SCHOLARS, alumni, friends! We've reached the halfway mark in another busy year filled with a lot of news and events. Our 19 Scholars are immersed in a range of policy issues—child welfare, education, economic development, housing and homelessness, and immigration, among others—as they learn first-hand what it takes to make New York City an affordable, livable city for everyone who calls the city home. You will read about their work as well as news from program alumni Di Luong and Eleonor Velasquez inside. A special feature from former Scholar Eva Rios describes her work in Moldova with the Peace Corps.

I am thrilled that we have been able to raise the Scholars' stipend to \$6,000 this year. This makes it feasible for students to commit to this very rigorous program with less economic worry. In turn, we are able to recruit from a wider range of potential candidates resulting in a diverse group of young people who bring an amazing range of interests and talents and who each make the entire group stronger with their participation.

This year brings changes to our Mentoring component as we welcome Arlene Kendall as the new Co-Chair. Arlene has long been a supporter of the program and has been a mentor to several Scholars over the years. I look forward to working with Arlene and Co-Chair, Liz Wilson-Anstey, and the rest of the mentors to help guide the students.

On a sad note, this past fall, Lynn Basch, a beloved mentor and longtime friend of the Public Service Scholar Program, passed away after a battle with cancer. Inside, you'll read how she influenced several of the young women to whom she was not only a mentor, but a special friend as well.

And it is with very mixed emotions that I let you all know that I will be spending the next two semesters on a part-time sabbatical from the Public Service Scholar program. This much needed break will be an opportunity to rest and to work on a book about the impact of the Public Service Scholar program on the lives of women and men who have participated over the years. I am leaving the day-to-day teaching in the very capable hands of Dr. Susan Nayowith, Director of Advocacy at the Department of Homeless Services. She has extensive experience in the non-profit and public sectors and is a highly regarded leader in the area of homelessness.

I will continue to administer the program, including admissions and coordinating student placements with agencies. Nick Giampetruzzi will keep the myriad details in order. Of course, I will miss being involved and keeping up-to-date with everyone but I know that I will return rejuvenated and ready to take on new challenges as we continue to build the foundation for the Public Service Scholar Program's future.



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Director, Elaine M. Walsh

Writer, Lisa Marie Michener
Designer, Andrew Ross

Editorial Board, Ursula Mahoney
Betsy Wade
Nicholas Giampetruzzi

The Public Service Scholar Program seeks to improve our cities and the lives of people by preparing talented undergraduates for careers in the public and nonprofit sectors. Centered in the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, the 18-credit, full academic year program gives these students, especially women and minority-group members, an opportunity to explore public service through internships in government agencies, legislative offices, and nonprofit organizations. Scholars participate in academic seminars on city government and public policy. Students also receive stipends, which are underwritten by grants and contributions from foundations, alumni, private citizens, elected officials, government and non-profit organizations. *News & Views* is supported by grants from the legislative office of Assemblymember Alexander B. Pete Grannis.

Remembering Lynn Basch

In September 2005, the Public Service Scholar Program lost one of its long-time friends, Lynn Basch. Lynn spent many years supporting the program and heading up the mentoring program. Over the years, she served as a mentor to seven Scholars. We asked several of her students to tell us what it was like to work with Lynn and how she helped influence their lives.



Webster defines a mentor as “A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” Lynn Basch exemplified all of these, especially wise. No matter the problem or the situation, it seemed she knew just how to counsel me to find a great solution. She mentored me through a complete career change, and probably one of the most exciting and difficult times as I began my journey as a Public Service Scholar at Hunter. Even after my fellowship, I would walk to my favorite soup shop and she would wait for me on the

corner and turn to greet me with her luminous smile. Her life was full of fun and exciting friends and stories and she always knew how to turn a lunch into a laugh, smile and trusted advice. Lynn was much more than a mentor, she was one of my greatest friends.

—Rebecca Hutton, PSSP '03-'04



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Hutton

▲Rebecca Hutton and Lynn Basch

Ms. Basch was simply amazing. She helped me to realize not everything was ‘urgent’ and to take time out and smell the roses. She is missed.

—Essie Brew-Hammond, PSSP '04-'05

Lynn influenced my life in many ways: she helped me improve my writing and communication with people, she taught me to sort out my priorities at work as well as in life. We connected as friends and talked about everything. Most importantly she taught me how to lead an ethical and respectful life.

—Ana Hristova, PSSP '01-'02



Photo courtesy of Ana Hristova

▲Lynn Basch and Ana Hristova

Keeping Up With Our Alumni

Di Luong—'02-'03

Ms. Luong, in September 2005, began to work at Citizens for NYC, a nonprofit organization that mobilizes New Yorkers to improve their neighborhoods by providing small grants, workshops, information, and other assistance. The organization supports 12,000 grassroots volunteer groups in the five boroughs that focus on the urban environment and beautification, safety, poverty, and youth and senior services. The organization received a September 11 Recovery grant from the American Red Cross Liberty Disaster Relief Fund. One of Ms. Luong's current projects is to help neighborhood groups with emergency preparedness, providing grants

based on community needs. The particular area she is involved with is Lower Manhattan, specifically the low-income areas in Chinatown and the Lower East Side. Ms. Luong says: “My experiences have given me a wider perspective on the needs of the community. Many residents know they need to be prepared but do not know how to get there. They are grateful for a program like ours.”

Eleonor Velasquez—'01-'02

Eleonor is now working for U.S. Representative Hilda L. Solis (D-California) on Capitol Hill where she been exposed to the inner workings of how the

federal government works, how laws are made, and what influences our nation's public policies. This broader perspective has been a shift from her experience in the Program and at her placement with the Taxi and Limousine Commission, which taught her about how local government and various public policies can affect those less fortunate.

Right now, besides handling a portfolio of issues—immigration, education, social security, and judiciary issues—she is working on two pieces of legislation: a “Resolution Celebrating Salvadoran American's Culture and History” and “Smart from the Start Preschool Education for America Act,” which is aimed at providing

every family with high quality voluntary pre-school education.

Eleonor plans to pursue a law degree in the future—after three years of being “inside the Beltway,” she feels ready to do work that is more connected with advocacy, particularly in immigration. She is grateful for having been a part of the Public Service Scholar Program and having had the opportunity to explore the public service arena. Without the program, she would not have received the Hispanic Caucus Fellowship and had been able to work in Washington. The skills that she learned at Hunter College and, in particular, in the program have been invaluable, professionally and personally.

2005-2006 Public Service Scholars

Luisiana Baez

Herman D. Farrell Fellow

Urban Agenda

At Urban Agenda, the policy center of City Limits magazine, Luisiana is working on two core projects related to affordable housing in New York City—the New York City Apollo project and Building the High Road: Blocking the Low Road. She is helping to develop NYC Apollo's communication strategy and researching trends concerning energy efficiency and "green" technologies in New York City's infrastructure.

Gerdy Beleut

Paul Burns Fellow

New York City Administration for Children's Services, Policy & Planning

Gerdy is working at New York City's Administration for Children's Services—an agency currently under extreme political pressure—in the Commissioner's office in the Division of Policy and Planning. She is conducting research and presenting information regarding repeat child maltreatment, as well as family realignment. She also interacts with a variety of divisions within the agency that serve to broaden her knowledge of how the Administration for Children's Services functions and serves the city's most vulnerable children.

Celina Cowan

Helena Rubinstein Fellow

Agenda for Children Tomorrow

Celina is working on "For the IMPACT" (Informing More Parents Across Communities Together) project. She is researching what is available to undocumented immigrants in health care and health insurance, public primary and secondary education, language services, and child care options and availability.

Eleonora Demetrio

Helena Rubinstein Fellow

Palladia, Inc.

At Palladia, Eleonora is working with the family-supportive housing program. Her responsibilities include collecting, organizing, and analyzing information for two of the agency divisions: the real estate division that deals with leases, rent collection, vacancies, and evictions, and the social services division, which handles services for tenant families. Her analysis will include a look at those factors that may predict success within a family-supportive housing framework.

Amarilys Estrella

Herman D. Farrell Fellow

American Jewish World Service

At American Jewish Work Service, Amarilys is conducting research on Latin American policy issues, particularly related to Bolivia. She is also responsible for gathering, summarizing, and translating a range of documents from AJWS partners for use in educational and public relations materials.

Reed Forbush

Raymond P. Murray Fellow

United Way of New York City

Reed is working in the United Way of New York City's Management Assistant Program. The program's goal is to increase the organizational capacity of nonprofit organizations throughout the five boroughs, regardless of affiliation with United Way. Reed is researching current nonprofit trends and building organizational best practices into the program's design. Reed also assists the United Way's Strengthening New York City Nonprofits campaign by researching funding prospects for their Nonprofit Leadership Development Institute. Recently, he has been assigned to work on housing—one of United Way's action areas.

Deliang Gao

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

New York City Department of Youth & Community Development

Deliang is placed in the office of the Director of Youth Initiatives, where he is working on homeless and runaway youth. His responsibilities include data analysis and compiling statistics for the Mayor's Management Report, as well as reviewing the DYCD's Request for Proposal process and monitoring youth programs. He is also the division's "computer wiz"!

Latoya Greenidge

New York City Department of Education, Region 9

Latoya is managing the "Penny Harvest" program which enables New York City public school children to learn the value of "giving back," by collecting pennies and distributing the collected funds to a charity of the group's choice. Latoya will conduct outreach, recruit and educate students in Region 9, one of the lowest performing regions on the project, to get greater participation among the students in the region. She is also working on the region's 21st century grant and collaborating with DOE and community-based organizations.

Ronda M. Jack

Paul DuBrul Fellow

Baby Buggy, Inc.

Ronda works at Baby Buggy, a new organization that collects and distributes slightly used clothes and furniture to organizations that work with children who are homeless or being discharged from foster care. Ronda, working with the Advisory Board, is responsible for developing evaluation guidelines, identifying and interviewing key stakeholders, conducting focus groups, and researching evaluation methods used by similar organizations. She has initiated the evaluation study and will present findings to the Board of Directors.

► Story continued on page 5

2005-2006 Scholars

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Sang Rhee Kim

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

New York Retention Network

Sang Rhee is working on a major agency project—the Zoning for Jobs Campaign, a citywide advocacy effort designed to raise public and government awareness for new zoning regulations and programs to help support and enhance the diminishing industrial sector in New York City.

Gayle Lizerbram

Ilene Zucker Fellow

Literacy Inc.

Gayle is working on the design and implementation of an evaluation that will enable the agency to better assess its impact on the partners and communities with which it works. She will conduct both qualitative and quantitative analysis, one or more case studies, and focus groups. She will also coordinate the agency's newsletter and website.

Adalina C. Merello

Ursula Mahoney Fellow

Office of State Senator Liz Krueger

Adalina's primary responsibility is to research housing issues related to the Division of Housing and Community Renewal—she will survey and report on individual experiences with the agency over the past 20 years. She also assists with research and analysis of a range of issues that Senator Krueger's office is working on, including energy legislation and education reform.

Erika Montes

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

New York City Department of Homeless Services, Budget Unit

Erika is working on policy and budget issues related to cost-of-living allowances as well as developing a procedures manual for the budget division of the agency.

Hei Laam Ngan

Helena Rubinstein Fellow

Neighborhood Family Services Coalition

Hei Laam is working on advocacy campaigns, including Campaign for Summer Jobs. Her work includes grassroots outreach to community organizations and others, developing education materials, and conducting advocacy workshops for youth and adults. Her responsibilities include organizing logistics for the winter Youth Day in Albany.

Gwendolyn Nieves

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

Office of Representative José E. Serrano, (D-NY)

In U.S. Representative Serrano's office in the Bronx, Gwendolyn is researching the feasibility of bringing a NASA-sponsored education program to the 16th Congressional District in the Bronx, which Mr. Serrano represents. She is also working on constituent services related to housing, the environment, and immigration. Recently, she worked on efforts to bring low-cost fuel to the Bronx.

Aneeba Rehman

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

Office of City Council Member Gale A. Brewer

Aneeba is focusing on two projects: the first is planning and coordinating an effort called Youth Revolution, a project on the Upper West Side that will unite all private and public schools for civic and neighborhood awareness, and build relationships with the local community board, block associations, and community gardens. She is also analyzing a piece of legislation before the New York City Council—the Municipal Voting Legislation—that seeks to lower the voting age for municipal elections to the age of 16. She is working with the Future Voters of America to garner support from council members, the media, and others.

Valentina Spalten

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

Bronx Council on the Arts

Valentina is working on the Bronx Culture Trolley project, an initiative to develop a trolley line in the South Bronx, a burgeoning artists' and cultural neighborhood. She is also working as a gallery assistant at Longwood Art Gallery @ Hostos—the Bronx Council on the Arts contemporary art gallery.

Nia Taylor

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York City, Inc.

Nia is researching and doing advocacy work related to youth action and government relations. She is developing a curriculum for teaching the youth action team members to educate their peers on how to make changes in the local budget process using factual advocacy techniques. She also supports other youth action projects with research and data analysis, including voter rights. In government relations, she will plan Advocacy Day in Albany in March 2006. This will include contacting legislators and scheduling meetings, and compiling information and statistics to support CCC policy priorities for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

Tedmund Wan

Ann S. Kheel Fellow

Chinese-American Planning Council

Tedmund is currently coordinating Equity Monitoring Project for Immigrant and Refugee Education (EMPIRE), which advocates for educational rights for immigrants, including more translation services in schools and more ESL classes. He also coordinates a youth group that helps young people become more aware of political issues around the world and understand what role they can play in making positive change.



Public Service Scholar Program **Holiday Party**

SCHOLARS, ALUMNI, AND FRIENDS shared holiday cheer on December 5. We'd like to thank everyone who donated to our raffle. And special thanks to the Visiting Nurse Association for allowing us the use of their space once again.

A.S. Photo Lab, Inc.
\$200 Gift Certificate

Berkshire Berries
One Breakfast Gift Pack

Catskill Pharmacy, Inc.
\$100 Gift Certificate

Coogan's Restaurant
Two Gift Certificates for Dinner and Drinks

Dallas BBQ Restaurant
\$50 Gift Certificate

Don Filippo
Certificates for Two Large Pizzas

Essential Wellness Center
One Hour Massage

Finnegan's Wake
\$200

Paul Forbes
Two Bath & Body Works Gift Baskets

Good Burger
Certificate for Two 'Combo' Meals

Hawthorne Valley Farm
\$25 Gift Certificate

Karen Jack
Bath & Body Works Gift Certificate

Jonathan's SVC, Inc.
\$50 Gift Certificate for Dry Cleaning

Gayle Lizerbram
*-Four electronics Gift Bags
-Printer
-Satellite Radio*

Mariella's Pizza
Certificates for Four Large Pizzas

Mimi's Pizza
Certificates for Two Large Pizzas

Faye Ngan-Shih
\$25 Gift Card for Crate & Barrel

Omnicare Dental
One Dental Cleaning (\$125 value)

Portofino Sun Centers
Gift Certificate for One Tanning Session

The River Garden
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\$20 Gift Certificate

Scholastic Inc.
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Brian and Lavinia Snyder
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one Aromatic Candle
-One silver necklace and
one limited edition Silk Scarf
-One bag of "Epicure Best" Candy and
one Necktie*

Man Yu Tang
\$10 Gift Card for Toys 'R' Us

Nora Tanton
*Four Supervouchers for American
Museum of Natural History*

Kimberly Vasquez
One Custom Made Holiday Wreath

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Your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Please mail your contribution to: Dr. Elaine M. Walsh, Director, Public Service Scholar Program, Hunter College Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

2005 Holiday Party and Scholars in Action



Photo courtesy of Susan Nayowitz

▲ *Anne LaCasia-Seifried, PSS 1989-1990, and Baby Julia*



Photo courtesy of Susan Nayowitz

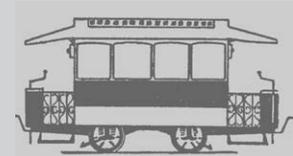
▲ *Paul Forbes, PSS 1997-1998, and Kathyne Leak, Ed.D, PSS 1989-1990*



Photo courtesy of Ursula Maboney

▲ *Valentina Spalten 2005-2006 with her supervisor Ellen Pollan working on the Bronx Cultural Trolley for Bronx Council on the Arts*

IN FEBRUARY, ALL SCHOLARS TOOK A TRIP ON THE Bronx Cultural Trolley and toured the Bronx Cultural Corridor. They visited several art galleries and attended an exhibition and dance show at Longwood Art Gallery at Hostos Community College.



Change of Address/Contact Form

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Please send completed form to: Dr. Elaine M. Walsh, Public Service Scholar Program,
 Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021.
 E-mail: ewalsh@hunter.cuny.edu

Peace Corps

▶ *Story continued from front cover*

to be able to afford higher education. Then, once they are educated in business, law, etc., it is difficult to find jobs in their fields of study. There are some university and government scholarships available to students based on achievement and need. However, paid internships, like the Public Service Scholar Program's that provide students with the necessary support and guidance to transition into the professional world while encouraging them to use their education and experience to make a difference in their communities, are almost nonexistent. A program like the Public Service Scholar Program would be a great success in Moldova, because it would help students to better understand how they

could turn their hopes and dreams for a better Moldova into a reality.

As for my host family, I could not have asked for a better choice. For two years, I lived with Evdocia Fedorovna Jelezova, one of the wisest and most incredible women I have ever met in my life. As an elderly woman who spent much of her life teaching students in the chemistry laboratory, she has the energy and strength of a woman half her age, not to mention a fantastic sense of humor. Leaving her was the hardest part of ending my service in Moldova.

I completed my volunteer experience with the Peace Corps in August 2005, and have since moved to San Diego. I am working part-time in a small real estate law firm while going to school for music technology. I encourage anyone interested to apply to the United States Peace Corps. I believe that I received more than I gave during my service. I was completely immersed in another culture, whereas I represented only a small part of the American culture. My host mother used to say to me in Russian, "You are the face of America." I hope this face did America proud by returning all the kindness and generosity bestowed on me by so many people in Moldova.

The Program welcomes anyone interested in becoming a mentor to a Public Service Scholar. For more information, please contact the program office at (212) 772-5599.



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