



# Friends Peace Teams Peace Ways

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by David Zarembka

## Extended Service Volunteers

In the last fifty years, peace work has become professionalized. Courses, departments, and training in universities have increased substantially. Research and evaluation of peace work has become more specialized. Unfortunately, that trend has not brought greater peace to the world.

One reason Friends Peace Teams (FPT) was started in 1993 was that opportunities for volunteer Quakers and other peacemakers were drying up in this tide towards professionalism. One of the successes of FPT is to re-involve volunteers in peace work.

Since the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) began as a program of FPT in 1998, AGLI has recruited Extended Service Volunteers (ESV). These volunteers, aged 16 to 86, set up local clearness committees and commit a specific length of time for their peacemaking. AGLI looks at their resumes, their interests and training, and with the approval of its African partners, places them in peacemaking assignments lasting from three months to several years. As a volunteer in long-term projects in Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, the ESV, with the support of his or her clearness committee, each contributes to on-going peace activities.

At the moment, AGLI has three ESVs. A brief background on each will suggest the variety of opportunities possible for a volunteer.

Barbara Wybar, originally from Canada and a member of Germantown Friends Meeting, attended three AGLI work camps in Bududa, Uganda, starting in July 2003. When she retired from teaching in Philadelphia, she moved to Bududa to help

organize the then-flagging technical school, now called Bududa Vocational Institute, and an orphan support program called Children of Peace. She has been an ESV in Bududa since October 2007.

Alexandra Douglas, after college and a one-year internship with Friends Committee for National Legislation, wanted some first-hand experience in Africa. She had worked on women's health issues, so a posting with the Kamenge Clinic in Bujumbura, Burundi, was ideal for her. She arrived in October 2009 and will return in June to study to become a doctor, public health officer, or both.

Steven Bhardwaj, from Fifteenth Street Meeting in New York City, has been assigned to work for four months in the twin cities of Gisenyi, Rwanda, and Goma, Congo. He is a mechanical engineer graduate and is using his skills to develop additional plans for the Gisenysi Peace Center and two safe houses for rape survivors in the eastern part of the Congo.

There is a large scope of possibilities for ESVs—and not just in Africa. Both Peacebuilding in Las Americas (PLA) and the

Indonesian Initiative (II) have short- and long-term volunteers. Volunteers in AGLI not only help out with the AGLI-affiliated programs, but also learn an abundant amount as they become emotionally attached to another part of the world. Their inner wisdom, their willingness to be closely associated with people from other cultures, and their involvement in the problems and issues in the region and the world are strong indicators of the importance of Extended Service Volunteers.



**Bujumbura, Burundi: from left, Gladys Kamonya; Dr. Alexia Nibona, Director of Kamenge Clinic; and Alexandra Douglas, AGLI Extended Service Volunteer, in front of the clinic, built by AGLI work campers**

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## Thank you!

Thank you for letting your heart reach out, caring for others in the world.  
Thank you for having your life and priorities in order, so you're available to others.  
Thank you for noticing the little day-to-day opportunities to connect to each other.  
Thank you for believing in the Power of the Spirit that lives in direct relationships.  
Thank you for being part of Friends Peace Teams and making peace possible!

The first motion is love. The second motion is faith; to know the palpable power in still, small ordinary places—a breath, a glance, an outstretched hand. Human destructiveness, though tragic on a human scale, is no match for the regenerative, persistent power of life!

At Alternatives to Violence Project workshops, we asked the family and community who were not participating not to peek in through the windows, doors or cracks in the wall because what is said and done in the workshop is confidential. That way participants feel safe. Just after the Peace Accord was signed between Aceh and Indonesia, we conducted an



*Mislan, AVP coordinator for North Sumatra, playing a game with Dean Hoover of Lewes, Delaware*

Alternatives to Violence Project workshop in a family home. I went to the kitchen on break. The mother of the home cried, "I'm so, so sorry! I'm so sorry! I **peeked!**" With a big smile, I mocked a scolding, "Tsk, tsk." She looked at me, "It's been over thirty years since I've seen people, all kinds of different people, in a living room, laughing." She began to cry. "And this is **my** living room!"

At many of our gatherings, I remind people (pointing around the group) that this gathering of ordinary people is outlawed when we declare war. Why? Because the gathering of ordinary people coming together and talking to one another is a force more powerful than war itself. Gather, laugh, affirm life, listen, speak, cooperate, seek solutions, build, tend—these are the

miraculous acts we witness each day.

When we declare war, we know we need to act. So we collect funds, raise an army, train people and actually fight. But when we declare peace, for some reason we all fallaciously think we can just sign an accord and go home to pursue our own interests and desires.

On the other hand, through Friends Peace Teams, we declare peace. We collect funds, involve and train people and actually make peace—travel to meet and get to know each other and the planet, share our conscience and faith, practice nonviolence, heal trauma and illnesses and learn and develop through play with each other and natural materials, making peace with each other, making peace with the earth! Thank you!

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### Friends Peace Teams

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) is a Spirit-led organization working around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. FPT's programs build on extensive Quaker experience combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution.

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*Sarah and Nick Rozard sitting in front of Pak Andreas' family (to the left) and Pak Pri's family (to the right) in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. The Rozards will move to Jogjakarta in May 2011 to spend one year working with Pak Andreas and Pak Pri on research and development of ceramic water filters for Indonesia.*

## A Tale of Two Team Members

Forty years apart in age, we traveled two different paths to arrive in El Salvador in January 2011, for a month of Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshops.

### How we Joined PLA

**ML:** In September 2009, I lost my paid employment. AVP was already a significant commitment in my life. When I saw Val Liveoak's note on the AVP list asking for a companion for her work in the winter of 2010, I felt a calling to join Peacebuilding en las Américas (PLA). My initial commitment was for three months, but I got hooked and returned in June for Trauma Healing workshops. Invitations to present workshops in the rural communities with local facilitators brought me back in November 2010, and here I am again in 2011. The group that began as my clearness committee at Purchase, N.Y., in fall 2010 has evolved into an ongoing support group.

**AY:** Fall semester was quite hectic, so I did not spend much time coming up with creative projects for Oberlin January Term. I had decided that my project was to be reforestation in rural Guatemala—until I received a phone call from Margaret Lechner on behalf of nominating committee for the monthly meeting. We ended up talking about January Term. We had previously facilitated AVP together, and she informed me that PLA needed my skills and it would be a wonderful opportunity.

**Our Words of Wisdom:** Recruiting team members happens in unexpected ways. Talk about Friends Peace Teams' work



*Graduation day for the AVP Basic workshop at El Sitio Cenicero, a rural community in El Salvador. The facilitators, with their AVP adjective names, are Ceci "Sinsera" ("Sincere" Ceci - second row, far left), and (back row, left to right) Alejandro "Alegre" ("Happy" Alex), Mercedes "Mensajera" ("Messenger" Mercedes) and Margarita "Madrugadora" ("Dawn" Margaret).*

everywhere, because you never know where the next volunteer is waiting. College kids have January terms, semesters abroad, internships and senior projects—all opportunities to connect with FPT. Teachers have summers; some older people may be able to put together a month's vacation.

### Paying our Way

**ML:** In 2010 I was fortunate to receive significant support from my Friends Meeting [Purchase] and the local AVP council. Because Alex decided to participate less than a month before departure meant that we purchased tickets and began working with faith that we could retroactively raise funds. Additionally, Alex and I decided to pool expenses and do fundraising together, since we would approach many of the same people.

**AY:** A wonderful way to obtain funding is to establish official college organizations with the express intent of working with AVP, FPT, etc. This coming semester, I plan to start a club/organization at Oberlin focused on PLA, with

the intent of getting an account with the Student Finance Committee. Once this is done, I will be able to do work such as tabling, doing teach-ins, and soliciting financial assistance from student cooperatives, who all have funds put aside for projects like this.

**ML:** Don't forget craft sales. I have earned one roundtrip plane fare selling shade grown coffee from a Guatemalan coop and crafts!

### Working in Teams

Factors contributing to our success included

- regular check-ins on how we were doing and how well we were accomplishing the work of PLA;
- valuing the experience and perspective brought by each partner;
- balancing support with space for each to work his/her own way;
- patience; and
- gratitude.

**ML:** Thank you, Alex, for asking all those questions I never thought to ask, which opened whole new windows on my PLA experience!

**AY:** Thank you, Margaret, for your constant and reliable support, and sharing your wisdom and experiences with me!

**ML & AY:** Thank you, FPT, for this opportunity. Thank you Purchase Monthly Meeting for your many forms of support—on behalf of both of us as well as dozens of Salvadorans.

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# PeaceWays

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***Ririn, Nadine, Kamilia, Dahlan and M'Dian celebrate an unlikely Christian and Muslim workshop facilitator team in the conservative mountains of Alue Merah, East Aceh, in 2010. Even though a Peace Accord was signed in 2005, 2010 was the first year anyone was allowed to travel or gather freely in this area without military permit and escort. We were told the people here were too militant and the military too suspicious for us to be able to do an Alternatives to Violence Project workshop. But we did it, the workshop was full and they loved it!  
Peace... step-by-step...  
—Nadine Hoover***

Please contribute to the Friends Peace Teams initiatives and to the general fund. Undesignated donations to FPT go to the general fund to provide shared administrative support, publish PeaceWays and maintain the website. Checks should be made out to "Friends Peace Teams" and mailed to the address at right. Donations can also be made on line at [www.friendspeaceteams.org](http://www.friendspeaceteams.org).

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