

INTERACTION



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PCV Works in Dental Hygiene

The following article is drawn from one of a number of responses to the call raised in the September issue's "Letters to the Editor" column for a issue focusing on health care. It is written by Peace Corps volunteer Carol Turner, a dental hygienist who studied at the University of Nebraska and worked in private practice for two years before joining ACTION and going to Bogota, Colombia.

* * *

I'm a dental hygienist with the Peace Corps in Bogota, Colombia. So far as I know, I am the only hygienist who has worked in this field in Colombia, so my work is challenging.

My training group arrived in Colombia November, 1973 and finished language training in January, 1974. I then began working in the Javeriana University (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana), a private university 350 years old this year. I teach dental students (third and fourth year students in a five year program) in the clinics of periodontia and diagnosis. A hygienist has intensive training in these areas, so I feel well-equipped to teach them.

Several people on the faculty here were interested in beginning a dental hygiene program. I acted as a resource person for the curriculum and helped materialize our ideas.

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RSVP Vol. Joins Cancer Fight

RSVP volunteer Verna Jenkins, 67, of Portsmouth, Ohio, has worked in many aspects of nursing during her 49-year career. Beginning as a public health nurse, she served in this capacity for 17 years and later became director of nursing in a small city general hospital. At age 60, after years of nursing administration, Mrs. Jenkins retired from her position of director of nursing to become a staff nurse.

Mrs. Jenkins relates that trained nurses are just as apt as the rest of us to think that serious illness always strikes someone else. But, when she was 62, the unforeseen did occur. She discovered a lump in her breast; the lump was malignant.

The first year following surgery was difficult for her emotionally as well as physically; however, during her rehabilitation, she received a mastectomy kit from a volunteer who had also had a mastectomy. It was then that Mrs. Jenkins thoughts turned to yet another dimension of nursing.

As she began to recover, Mrs. Jenkins realized that she could not sit home and waste her talents. True to her philosophy that "service is the rent you pay for



10th Anniversary A Salute to VISTA

The following is the statement of Frank E. Williams, Director of VISTA, on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of Volunteers in Service to America.

* * *

The mission given to VISTA by Congress has remained constant in its ten years of existence. The success of VISTA lies in precisely the fact that it has fulfilled and continues to fulfill its mission. Let us again state the mission and look at its component parts.

The Congressional mandate to VISTA is stated as follows in the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973: The purpose of VISTA is to strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate poverty and poverty-related human, social, and environmental problems in the United States by encouraging and enabling persons from all walks of life and all age groups, including elderly and retired Americans, to perform meaningful and constructive volunteer service in agencies, institutions, and situations where the application of human talent and dedication may assist in the solution of poverty and poverty-related problems and secure and exploit opportunities for self-advancement by persons afflicted with such problems.

The mission statement makes it clear that VISTA was to center its human and financial resources on the problem of poverty.

One is immediately struck by a paradoxical set of circumstances, namely, the putting of several thousand volunteers in a battle against serious poverty problems affecting 25 to 30 million people! The ratio seems preposterous. And yet Congress wanted a new program and a new group of volunteers to bring a special dimension and cutting edge to the devastating problems of poverty.

What was the response to such a Congressional call? In January, 1965, and immediately thereafter, thousands of primarily young people responded to the call. In almost seeming disregard of the odds against them, young people volunteered for the VISTA program.

And who were they? Primarily young people from families who were not in poverty straits; young people who did not know poverty from first hand experience. 1965 seems so long ago. But the *tempora* and the *mores* of the period, with perhaps just a twinge of the Camelot aura generated by a recently assassinated President, propelled young people to join a movement to work with people who found themselves to be islands of poverty in a sea of material well being around them.

The early years of VISTA were hard ones. The enthusiasm and talents of youth had to be channeled and structured in an orderly way to analyze the problems of poverty and work out potential solutions. And this work could not be done apart from groups and institutions equally concerned about poor people and their plight.

At first the volunteers were viewed by many people with caution and by some with a jaundiced eye. But the caution and jaundiced eye would soon be replaced with praise and admiration. And the praise and admiration came first from the poor themselves, for they were quick to perceive that these volunteers were a visible sign of people who cared, of people who were willing to give a year, or perhaps two, of their lives to work in ghettos and poverty stricken rural areas.

During the past ten years not only have young people worked in VISTA but also sizeable groups from other age brackets. Some of VISTA's greatest success centers in work being done by senior citizen VISTAs in conjunction with their peers who are poverty stricken.

In addition to attracting people from all age groups, VISTA has enlisted the talents of many professional people, i.e., lawyers, nurses, architects, etc. Their specialized talents have been applied to poverty problems in strikingly successful ways.

The number of people from minority and ethnic groups who have become VISTA Volunteers has increased significantly over the past few years.

Locally recruited volunteers who work in their own community constitute fifty percent of the VISTA Volunteer group today.

Over the years VISTA has constantly improved its programming techniques. Specific goals and objectives for the volunteers are defined by the poor communities themselves. These goals and objectives are time-phased and their attainment can be measured by their impact on the problems identified by the poor community.

A recent study shows that a volunteer generates approximately \$28,000 of material resources for the community to which he/she

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RSVP Directors Form Association

RSVP directors in New Jersey (ACTION Region II) have established their own association with the aim of bettering communications, sharing proven project ideas, and continuing programs of in-service training and development.

Jr., New Jersey; Victor Hruska, Deputy Associate Director for ACTION OAVP; and Sister Ellen Desmond, President Elect, New Jersey Gerontological Society.

How to increase the total of 3258 RSVP volunteers was a major topic of discussion at the



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CONTEST

frames. They will be returned when the contest is over.

- Color prints must measure approximately 8 x 10. Every attempt will be made to return unused photographs.
- Your name, address and date and place the photo was shot must appear on the back of each print or cardboard mount.

We plan to have three prize winners in each category plus several honorable mention winners. There will be one Grand Prize Winner. There will also be a category for photos of VISTAs on the job, from which winners will be selected in either black and white or color.

Each contestant may submit a maximum of 15 photographs. Photos should be sent to:

VISTA Photo Contest
Room P-303
ACTION
Washington, D.C. 20525
Attention: Anne Bringsjord

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Telephone _____
(area code) _____

State _____ Zip _____

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conducting en- gibles and alerting them to their eligibility under SSI. In this outreach, an emphasis is also placed on sensitizing the general public to the existence of and the need for the SSI program. Through a public information campaign and personal contact with volunteers, people can become conscious of those around them that might be eligible for SSI, and refer them to the outreach organization.

More than a media campaign is needed to insure that newly eligibles obtain their benefits. As

to make an eligibility determination. Then, with the information collected, the advocate can sit and talk with the potentially eligible individual to get an idea where that person stands in regard to meeting the requirements for SSI.

This aspect of the enrollment effort can act as a screening mechanism for overburdened Social Security offices that must use hasty informal denials in order to reduce the backlog of applications as quickly as possible.

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VISTA Anniversary

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is assigned. This mobilization of resources does not reflect the dollar amount which could be assigned to the work of the hundreds of part-time volunteers enlisted by the VISTAs to work in poor communities.

The accent in VISTA today, and for the future is for volunteers to be mobilizers of resources. They will attempt to get more segments of a community to devote their time and resources to the community's poverty problems. The volunteers will put more stress on training local people to take over their work when they leave the community. In the immediate years ahead VISTA will work in nationally identified needs areas, e.g. health, in order to better tie into national resources and their utilization for the benefit of the poor.

VISTA has never been able to respond to all the sponsoring organizations and volunteer applicants who wanted to become part of the program. If more financial aid should become available in the years ahead, VISTA would like to sizeably augment its number of volunteers to work in more communities throughout the states and territories.

VISTAs by the thousands have answered the call to volunteer their time to extend the hand of fellowship to millions of Americans who are in poverty. Ten years and 35,000+ volunteers prove without a doubt that the Congress and every President since 1964 were right in the assumption that the idealism of the young and other dedicated Americans could be utilized to help the poor, the old, and the needy help themselves.

They all brought personal commitments to the fulfillment of the American Dream. They continue to do so. There are thousands of VISTA alumni in local, state and federal governments as well as other organizations throughout the country who continue to serve as advocates for the poor.

I salute all VISTAs who have served or are serving in this exciting human adventure. Our country owes them a debt of gratitude.