

Professional Desk
Division of Recruiting
PEACE CORPS
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ARTS AND CRAFTS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN FOUR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES
TO DESIGN PRODUCTS AND TO ORGANIZE VILLAGE LEVEL ARTISAN COOPERATIVES

Volunteers with handicraft and art skills have been requested by Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador to help expand present efforts to develop and promote arts and crafts production. This program was planned in hopes of materially raising the standard of living of thousands of host-country artisans. Plans include design and redesign of new products, technical production advice, the formation of producer cooperatives in villages, the formation of central cooperative companies and the promotion and sale of the products to the U.S. and other mass markets.

Host-country governments and, in Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, the Agency for International Development (A.I.D.) are responsible for the central cooperatives and the world-wide sale and promotion of products. The Peace Corps Volunteers will seek to communicate with the local artisans, provide technical and artistic guidance and, in some cases, help to form village cooperatives. To prepare for their assignments, the Volunteers will train for 12-14 weeks this fall at the Peace Corps camp in Puerto Rico.

WHAT YOU'LL BE DOING

Once overseas, the Volunteers will live and work in urban and rural communities where handicraft items are being produced. They will first integrate into the communities and learn what values and attitudes artisans place on their own work.



Volunteer activity on a day-to-day basis will be guided by the needs of the community. Volunteers may often have as a part of their living quarters an area they can devote to the exercise of their own art. By working and producing, the Volunteer provides the basis for continued dialogue within the artisan community. When possible, Volunteers will offer small classes in co-op principles and the most basic business methods. These Volunteers must translate the training they receive in cooperative record keeping to simple systems which will aid the artisan and his co-op to evaluate and plan; to price and estimate; to understand the nature of savings available in volume production; and to understand the use of savings as well as credit to build the foundation of knowledge which is essential to economic and social development. In this field, Volunteers will often draw on the assistance of other Volunteers in the country who have been programmed specifically in cooperative work.

The Volunteer can help educate and make the artisan conscious of the quality control necessary for acceptance outside of his community. If a product is first designed, a consumer market prepared for it, and then a product produced, the artisan cannot lose out as he could by stocking up a large warehouse of goods and then hoping to find a market. Volunteers will be continuously involved in designing and quality control because totally new, high-quality products will be necessary to sustain demand.

They will also help identify marketable products, redesign or improve the workmanship of marginal products and experiment with the creation of new products using indigenous skills and materials.

Finally, the Peace Corps Volunteers, who could include you, will apply the principles and techniques of community development to encourage the emergence of democratic leadership and pursue the "felt needs" of the community.

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

Through this program, it is hoped that the host governments with our assistance will accomplish the following:

- a. Organize in each country a national cooperative organization capable of handling all export transactions for individual producer cooperatives and capable of guaranteeing quality and delivery to importers.
- b. Establish a marketing system of interested buyers in the U.S.
- c. Establish a New York permanent display and promotion center for Latin American products.
- d. Provide technical backstopping to cooperative development when requested by the Peace Corps or individual groups.
- e. Arrange with host governments for Alliance for Progress loan funds to be made available to the producers' cooperatives to finance the cost of production of large orders.
- f. Provide top design technicians who will market-test products and provide data and counselling to artisan cooperatives to help with the continual refinement of products.

Marketing arrangements are already well advanced and several have committed their facilities to the program. For example, Sears Roebuck has built a collection of over 3,000 products based on their buyers' selection, and has committed eight pages of their latest catalog (35 million readers) to some of these products. Allied, AMC and others are giving all the cooperation needed. In addition, small importers are now indicating interest in small-volume importing and Milton Goldberg and Associates has established a handicraft sales and promotion center in New York.

The above program is a complementary one to that of the Peace Corps. Neither duplicates any functions of the other. Yet they can be mutually supporting, and the existence of U.S. marketing facilities already developed will be a substantial impetus to art and handicraft work in Chile, where the U.S. Agency for International Development's national program is not yet underway.

COMMENTS

Here are comments from Peace Corps Volunteer artists and craftsmen already in the field.

Puno, Peru: Lee Miller reports that they have some 75 inch rustic looms and some rug looms unoccupied at the present but he felt they have the potential of turning out 125 square meters per month. There are an estimated 1500 spinners in his area.

The Peruvian Government has granted \$160,000 for artisan development in the Puno and Southern Peru area, much of this is designed for raw materials.

They have a Peruvian controller. The spinners turn in their spun wool to him as well as the "leftovers" (which are used for stuffing) and are paid by him. The system needs revamping somewhat as they are a month behind in paying the people and the people are too poor to wait that long.

The payment system has been set up for alpaca thusly:

32¢ each pound for "grueso" (thick)
40¢ each pound for "mediano" (medium)
48¢ each pound for "fino" (fine)

With Puno, as with all areas, getting the Indians to wash the wool properly has been a problem. There are also many knitters in the area and Peace Corps girls have been working on designing new knitted products.

Huancavelica, Peru: Karen Bunde was at first teaching silversmithing at the Centro Artesanal but then came the three months' vacation and unproductive period. These people are paid to attend classes at the Centro and cannot afford to be unproductive for the three months, so Karen helped them to form a spinning co-op, which now is a full-time enterprise. It began with two girls and has increased in a five-month period to ten girls. The raw alpaca cost about 36-44¢ per pound. Spinners receive \$1.20 per pound (40¢ is put into savings); for skeining and washing one receives 15¢ salary. The sale price for finished yarn is \$2.00 per pound for colors and \$3.20 per pound for white. Sales have tripled, but the people still do not realize that they are a working co-op. They have no conception of what a co-op means.

Ayacucho, Peru: Roger Lintault has designed and built a 4 harness loom in Ayacucho out of locally available materials for \$26. Making of wire needles is also included in the plans. He is working with the Centro Artesanal to help them build similar looms. Roger's newest additional project, however, is the designing and building of a kiln using petro for firing. It would be a real boon to the potters for which the area is so well known.

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Joan Lintault has been experimenting with chemical and natural dyes. The natural dyes are very difficult and costly. The chemical dyes are apparently better for use by the Indians.

Joan has written up a set of instructions for use of the dyes. Dyes are available in yellow, red and blue only. Colors must be mixed. She has been instructing some women in their use. Also, Joan has been doing some experimenting with different ways of dyeing to achieve patterns; among them are

point-resist dyeing, twist dyeing, line tie-dyeing, spiderweb tie-dyeing, knot dyeing, warp dyeing, and iron buffing.

Arequipa, Peru: Ralph Applebaum, an industrial designer, is working with carpenters and woodworkers. Through an exchange of ideas about design and products and the hiring of three new workers, Ralph has brought about increased and improved production and design of items such as cigarette boxes, trays and lamps.

Pasto, Colombia: The artisans of this community have for years produced stools, tables and boxes, using their own unique finishing technique. The art, however, was dwindling. Volunteer Steve Weingrad has revived the idea and 27 are now at work regularly in the woodworking co-op producing such things as trays, chairs and coffee tables.

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Charlotte Purrington has been working with weaving and dyeing also. However, she has been teaching in the barriada and in a different manner. Most designing is done with color and size of yarn. Also, Charlotte has been working with some weavers in prison. She brings in the yarns and they have their looms there to weave. Then she buys the cloth from them by paying them for their work. It is a good system because the men then can still supply support for their families.

Charlotte and Marilyn Deshler have been working together with a group of women in knitting. They have been using heavy, hand-spun yarns for the sweaters. It takes about three days to finish a sweater by hand knitting in this thick wool. They are selling fairly cheap now, but, with demand, price will go up.

SKILL REQUIREMENTS

The most important requirement for this program is the desire on the part of the Volunteer to work effectively in the Latin culture. Each Volunteer should have some developed skill in the field of art or handicrafts, which will enable him to communicate and integrate into the communities where he is to serve. For all Volunteers, qualities of initiative and indications of an outgoing personality are highly desirable.

Candidates for the arts and crafts program should submit Peace Corps Questionnaires as soon as possible. Questionnaires can be obtained at Post Offices, during "Peace Corps Visits" to schools, or by writing: Peace Corps, Washington, D.C. 20525.