

Peace Corps Iran Association Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019

PCIA was founded following a reunion in Portland, Oregon, in 2011. Membership is free and open to all who served in Iran or who support our mission. Since 2011 we have worked to identify and reconnect with all Peace Corps volunteers who served in Iran. We have so far identified 1494 of the 1748 volunteers who served from 1962 to 1976. Through the *KhabarNameh*, our online magazine, we share our stories and experiences, past and present. In addition, we have undertaken a number of programs to advocate for peace and better relations between the United States and Iran. This report contains specific information on each of those efforts.

PCIA has a volunteer Board of Directors, all of whom served in Iran. The eleven members of the Board are: Jeanette Gottlieb, President; Jackie Spurlock, Vice President; Ed Seiders, who will serve as treasurer beginning in July 2019; Carolyn Yale, Secretary; Douglas Schermer who served as treasurer from 2011 until June 2019; John Salamack; Kathleen MacLeod; John Holehan; John Krauskopf; Paul Barker; Skip Auld. Board members are elected to two-year terms and officers are elected annually. The Board communicates with members with *From the Field*, a monthly e-newsletter. The Board has three main committees: Legacy, Impact/Advocacy, and Communications/Conferences. As our report shows these committees often overlap and are intertwined.

In the past year the Board has been very active in advocating for peace and diplomacy between Iran and the US. We have also been planning our biennial conference to be held in San Diego, CA, in October of this year. A two-day retreat was held in Albany, NY, in March to plan for the upcoming year and review our policies and procedures. Monthly board meetings are held on Zoom, a video conferencing service.

San Diego Conference

The biennial conference of PCIA will be held in San Diego, CA, October 4-6, 2019. The conference is the culmination of two years of planning by a group of dedicated volunteers. Each conference is a combination of reunion and education. Sessions cover a range of topics that are of interest to our members including politics, the arts, and the interconnections between Americans and Iranians. Full details of the conference are on our web site, www.peacecorpsiran.org.

I encourage you to read the complete annual report to gain a more comprehensive view of the activities and accomplishments of Peace Corps Iran Association.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Gottlieb, President

Peace Corps Iran Association advances peace and understanding between Americans and Iranians through education, outreach and advocacy, and upholds the legacy of the Peace Corps in Iran.

PEACE CORPS IRAN ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019

By Douglas Schermer

To be a member of PCIA, one agrees to support the goals and objectives of PCIA and provide contact information for inclusion in the membership directory. There are no dues although donations are encouraged and appreciated.

As of August 2019, the PCIA “master list” contained 1868 names. This list includes those who served as volunteers or staff in Iran, spouses, friends of Iran, etc. Last year we added names and years of service provided by the National Peace Corps Association, most of which were duplicates of names we already had. According to the Peace Corps, there were 1748 who served as volunteers in Iran. The PCIA master list contains names of 1494 volunteers, 70 staff members, and 70 trainers. The master list also contains the names of 243 who are deceased. In addition, we have 91 members who served in countries other than Iran.

There is one group who served the Peace Corps in Iran that is not well represented in our list and that is the Iranian trainers, especially the Farsi trainers. Information about language trainers should be forwarded to Genna Wangsness (genna@peacecorpsiran.org) or Doug Schermer (doug@peacecorpsiran.org).

The master list currently has 555 people who have agreed to have their contact information included in the membership directory. It is anticipated the next directory will be published in September and emailed to members.

The master list, maintained by Doug Schermer and Genna Wangsness, is considered one of PCIA’s most valuable assets. We believe it is the most complete and accurate list of those who served in Iran in existence. But we know there are approximately 250 lost sheep yet to be found and many more for whom we have no contact information.

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IMPACT AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019

By Carolyn Yale

The **Impact Program** encompasses PCIA outreach to build understanding of Iran and support for nonviolent conflict resolution. The two components, advocacy and cultural outreach, are complementary. This year the National Peace Corps Association honored our Impact outreach with the **Ruppe Award**, which recognizes affiliates that have done outstanding Third Goal work. The award recognizes that the strengths of our Impact Program are its use of the full gamut of our communication tools and our efforts to offer members a variety of ways to be involved.

Advocacy: Advocacy is directed toward moving our government toward diplomacy and peaceful relations between Iran and the United States. As attention to Iran intensified this year, PCIA responded by joining with other pro-peace organizations to share information and activist strategies aimed at gaining the support of Congressional representatives. Through the **Advocacy Bulletin** and action alerts we inform our members of opportunities to weigh in on actions pending in Congress and the administration. The Board has signed on to public statements originating with our coalition partners. Advocacy relies on an informal committee of active volunteers for information and advice, and in some cases direct contact with organizations in the Washington, DC, area.

Our Man in Tehran: Early in the year NPCA encouraged us to use the Frontline feature, *Our Man in Tehran*, in community meetings aimed at giving the public a more nuanced and personal look at life in Iran. We make copies of the DVD available to members, have a written guide for arranging meetings, provide a content guide, and have funds available to help cover meeting costs. We ask members to show a section of the DVD and then open discussion. Training in this outreach will be part of our conference in San Diego this fall. Several members have conducted very successful sessions, and others are in preparation. To date our experience suggests that there is a call for a series of presentations, taking in various sections of the four-hour DVD.

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Communications Report

Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019

By Jackie Spurlock, Communications Chair

The Communications chair oversees the following communication tools:

1. KhabarNameh

Name: *KhabarNameh* means, literally, “newsletter” in Persian. We transliterate it as one word, because it is one word in English and because our Iranian consultants have suggested this spelling, including the capitalized N in the middle.

Frequency: Three/year (February, June, and October)

Content: Focused on history of Peace Corps in Iran, PCIA-sponsored activities, Persian culture (including cuisine, film, books, exhibits, conferences, etc.), and current events. Includes several regular columns, including *In Memoriam*, by Genna Wangness, on members of the Iran Peace Corps community who have died.

Purpose: *KhabarNameh* is the premier PCIA publication, with content created by a variety of members. Members enjoy its high quality, engaging articles, color photos, and attractive, readable format. Every effort is made to be historically accurate, politically neutral, and representative of PCIA’s mission, purpose, and message.

Length: 15-20 pages. Articles are generally about 250 words.

Format & dissemination: PDF sent by email. Occasionally a print copy is mailed to those for whom we have no email address, accompanied by a letter asking them to provide an email address and/or to make a donation to cover mailing costs.

Measuring success: We are unable to measure the open rate or number of clicks within issues of *KN*. Our measure of its success is purely anecdotal. Our members tell us they enjoy it, and they respond to each issue enthusiastically, with comments, suggestions, and offers of help.

Who creates it: *KhabarNameh* editor (currently Joan Gaughan), under the guidance of the PCIA board, specifically the Communications committee. The editor coordinates and edits the work of various columnists, and is responsible for assembling content that is balanced, accurate, and well-written. The editor works closely with PCIA’s board liaison (currently John Holehan) and president (currently Jeanette Gottlieb). The board has decided that it is not necessary for the *KhabarNameh* editor to be a board member, as long as they are working closely together so that *KhabarNameh* represents the positions and direction of the organization.

2. From the Field

Peace Corps Iran Association advances peace and understanding between Americans and Iranians through education, outreach and advocacy, and upholds the legacy of the Peace Corps in Iran.

Name: *From the Field* comes from the Rumi quote at the top of each issue: “Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing, there is a field. I will meet you there.” Jalal ad-Din Rumi. The idea is that PCIA is operating in a field that is outside of the conflict between our two governments as to who is right and wrong. In that field we meet all those who, like us, find the conflict detrimental and irrelevant. This newsletter is sent from that field.

Frequency: Monthly, on the first weekend

Content: Focused on announcements of board news, PCIA business and activities, member news, letters to the editor, and Jackie’s blog, *Ja-ye Jackie*. Photo in the header changes each month. Photos may also be included in the body. As with *KhabarNameh*, *From the Field* must represent the positions and directions of PCIA.

Purpose: *From the Field* is the board’s communication tool with the membership. The president often submits a message, as do several of the committees, most notably Advocacy.

Length: Approximately 5-6 short articles of 1-2 paragraphs each, followed by three or four standard announcements that change very little, on the topics of Facebook, donations, AmazonSmile, and *KhabarNameh*. The mission statement, list of board members, and nonprofit info are included at the bottom.

Format & dissemination: Email newsletter, created and sent by means of MailChimp, a newsletter software product.

Measuring success: At present it is sent to 845 email addresses and typically has an open rate of 44% (372). The average open rate for organizations like ours is 17%. Approximately 30 people click on one of the links. The average number of clicks within newsletters from organizations like ours is 17. Because of these figures, as well as the positive comments we receive from readers, we are pleased with the effectiveness of MailChimp in reaching our members.

Who creates it: Communications chair (currently Jackie Spurlock) creates and sends it, in consultation with the president (currently Jeanette Gottlieb) and other board members who wish to contribute. Deadline for submissions to Jackie: first of every month.

3. *Advocacy Bulletin*

Name: Self-explanatory

Frequency: Monthly in the third week

Content: Covers matters having to do with Iran relations, opinions, analysis, and commentary. Pieces are written by members.

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Purpose: Keep readers informed with information and views perhaps not found in the mainstream media. Often suggests response actions. Provide commentary in line with PCIA's mission, values, and guiding principles. Provoke critical thinking by publishing pieces contrary to PCIA's position. Spark discussion and dialogue among readers through publishing letters to the editor. The board sees the *Advocacy Bulletin* as possibly PCIA's most important contribution to the urgent national conversation regarding Iran/U.S. relations and U.S. policy toward Iran.

Length: Currently about 10 pages, per the current editor, Paul Barker, but varies according to need, amount of material available, and current political situation.

Format & Dissemination: Email newsletter, created and sent by means of MailChimp, a newsletter software product. Opt-out; goes to all on the MailChimp subscriber list.

Measuring success: At present it is sent to 881 email addresses (36 more than *From the Field*) and typically has an open rate of 33%. The average open rate for organizations like ours is 17%. We have had a positive response to the *Advocacy Bulletin* from members. A recent effort to increase readership by sharing the current issue with several PCIA partners resulted in at least 10 new subscribers. We recommend continuing this effort.

Who creates it: The *Advocacy Bulletin* editor (currently Paul Barker) creates this newsletter, with oversight from the Impact chair (currently Carolyn Yale), and input from the Advocacy committee. Although Barker is now a member of the board, it has been determined that the editor does not have to be a board member, as long as they are working closely together so that the *Advocacy Bulletin* represents the voice and direction of the organization.

4. Website

Name: Peace Corps Iran Association (www.peacecorpsiran.org)

Frequency: Regularly updated

Content: All of PCIA's activities are represented on the website. The Advocacy tab reports on our advocacy activities. Other tabs hold the history of Peace Corps in Iran, both print and images; stories and writings about Iran by our members; and information about Iran and about travel to Iran. The website includes links to the membership form, to archives of our three newsletters, and to our Facebook group and page. Documents are archived on the website; however, we also strive to keep the website updated and constantly changing. We are proud of the attractive, contemporary design of our website.

Purpose: The website describes PCIA and presents our "face" to the world, in order to engage our audience, attract new members, and present a positive, vibrant face of our organization to the world.

Length: N.A.

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Format & dissemination: Currently we use a WordPress template called Enfold. The website is hosted on JustHost. However, this will change in late Fall 2019 as we migrate to the NPCA platform SilkStart. We expect to keep an attractive, informative format, but we also expect to find the website easier to maintain, with support available from NPCA. Doug Schermer will take the lead on the migration, with assistance from Jackie Spurlock, Jeanette Gottlieb, and others.

Measuring success: Anecdotal. We average 800 visitors per month with peaks over 1000 per month in the lead-up to conferences. We receive an average of four requests for information through the “contact us” link on the website. At this time, the statistics we have for evaluating the website show that it has viewed by people in over 110 countries with the U.S., Canada, UK, Germany, and India being in the top five. We expect the new SilkStart platform will help with some of these metrics.

Who creates it: PCIA’s webmaster (currently Doug Schermer)

5. Facebook Group

Name: Peace Corps Iran Association

Frequency: New postings 5-6 times/week

Content: Articles, photos, questions, comments, and discussion about Peace Corps in Iran or Iran itself.

Purpose: To engage members in discussion; share opinions; get to know each other; become more knowledgeable about Iran, Iran issues, and Persian culture; learn more about PCIA; promote PCIA activities; reminisce; and have fun together. There is also some posting of Peace Corps and NPCA news and announcements.

Length: N.A. There are currently 343 members. When somebody requests to join the group, they receive this message back: “Thank you for your interest in PCIA, a group of Returned Peace Corps volunteers & staff who served in Iran and friends who support our mission. Please share something about your interest in PCIA.” They are accepted or not accepted for membership based on their response.

Format & dissemination: Facebook groups are closed to the public and open only to members, who must apply and be accepted by the group’s administrator (currently Jackie Spurlock).

Measuring success: We are successful if new members join the group regularly, number of group members rises steadily, and if group members engage with each other, post regularly and respond to each others’ posts. At this time, all of this is occurring.

Who creates it: The group’s administrator (currently Jackie Sprlock) oversees it, posting several times per week, monitoring it for appropriate content, commenting in order to keep conversations moving, and accepting almost everybody who applies to join (occasionally there are commercial or other

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inappropriate applicants. These are denied entry). That said, any group member can post in it. Its strength is in the number of different people posting and commenting, the more the better!

6. Facebook Page

Name: Peace Corps Iran Association

Frequency: New postings 1-2 times/week

Content: Articles, photos, and discussion about Iran, usually less provocative and controversial than those posted in the Facebook Group

Purpose: To engage readers and get them talking about Iran; to present them with surprising or humanizing views of Iran; to create visibility for PCIA and further our purpose and goals for better understanding about Iran and its people. *From the Field* describes the page's purpose thus: "The purpose of the Facebook Page is to engage our visitors to consider Iran with a more complete and nuanced view, in the spirit of Peace Corps' Third Goal."

Length: N.A.

Format & dissemination: Facebook pages are open to the public. The page can be viewed by anyone going directly to it. Once at the page, the viewer can "like" it. They will then receive all the postings in their own "newsfeed".

Measuring success: Page analytics are sent to the administrator (currently Jackie Spurlock) weekly. These indicate that engagement could be boosted by investing a little money to have the page sent to likely interested Facebook accounts. Adding ads to the page could also boost engagement. We don't necessarily recommend this be done at this time. There are currently 246 people who have "liked" the page, which means they are following it.

Who creates it: The page's administrator (currently Jackie Spurlock) oversees it, posts in it regularly, monitors it for appropriate content, and comments as necessary. Anyone can post to it (whether or not they are a PCIA member).

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FINANCIAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019

By Douglas Schermer, Treasurer

The PCIA Mission Statement serves to guide our activities as an organization. While other portions of this annual report will provide more detail about these activities, we know that financial support is essential in realizing our goals and hopes. One of our first achievements after incorporation in Oregon was to secure nonprofit 501 (C) 3 status with the IRS.

DONATIONS NOT DUES

PCIA has followed a “no dues” policy and relies on donations from members to sustain its operations. We initiated a special end of year appeal at Thanksgiving 2018 that resulted in generous donations in excess of \$10,000. We accept donations by check, PayPal, through the NPCA membership site, and with Amazon Smile. Scroll down to the bottom panel at www.peacecorpsiran.org to find a donation button for PayPal and a button to set up PCIA as a recipient of Amazon Smile donations.

Going forward, we hope to encourage members with a 401(k) to use the **Qualified Charitable Donation** option. This option means a donation flows directly from the 401(k) account to PCIA and the donor may be able to avoid income tax liabilities. One should check with holder of the 401(k) account to confirm how this works.

As a nonprofit, Tax ID 45-4989757, donations to PCIA are tax deductible.

INCOME COMMENTS

Income totaled \$ 21,581.64 including donations from members throughout the year and conference registrations received in June. A review of the financial statement itemizes income from PayPal, Amazon Smile, grants, and donations through the NPCA joint dues program. (Note: PCIA uses a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year.) We also received a grant from the National Peace Corps Association in the amount of \$500 to support our impact activities related to the *Our Man in Tehran* community meetings. NPCA also gave us \$500 as part of the Ruppe Award for outstanding affiliates.

EXPENSE COMMENTS

As can be expected, the largest area of expense involved pre-payments to Wyndham San Diego Bayside Hotel for the conference totaling \$12,500 during this fiscal year. Total costs for the conference will not be known until October 2019. That said, it is anticipated that those costs will exceed the amount of income from registration fees.

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Sustaining the Organization: We refer to it as the “keeping the lights on” budget which includes insurance, ZOOM video conferencing, web hosting and security services, postage, supplies, etc. for an average of \$2,000. These costs are low for an organization of our size and activity. This is because we make extensive use of technology for communication. For example, the ***KhabarNameh***, the ***From the Field***, and the ***Advocacy Bulletin*** newsletters are distributed by email and MailChimp at no cost to non-profits.

Financial Statement: On the next page you will find the financial statement summarizing income and expenses for the 2018 – 2019 fiscal year.

**PEACE CORPS IRAN ASSOCIATION
2018 - 2019 FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT**

INCOME - EXPENSE SUMMARY

INCOME	\$ 21,581.64
EXPENSE	\$ 16,223.30
NET GAIN (LOSS)	\$ 5,358.34

INCOME - EXPENSE - BEGINNING - ENDING BALANCES

JULY 1 2018 BALANCES

ONPOINT CHECKING	\$ 16,907.46
PAYPAL	\$ 6,263.53
ONPOINT SAVING	\$ 5.00
TOTAL	\$ 23,175.99

INCOME DETAILS

OTHER	\$ 25.00
AMAZON SMILE	\$ 102.47
CASH DONATIONS	\$ 10.00
CHECK DONATIONS	\$ 10,987.00
GENERAL PROGRAM - MISC	\$ 175.00
DONATIONS MADE VIA NPCA	\$ 695.00
PAYPAL DONATIONS	\$ 1,140.00
CONF - SAN DIEGO DONATIONS	\$ 500.00
CONF - REGISTRATIOON EVENTBRITE	\$ 7,447.17
IMPACT - NPCA ERDBRINK GRANT	\$ 500.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 21,581.64

EXPENSE DETAILS

UNCATEGORIZED	\$ 25.00
INSURANCE	\$ 1,086.00
HISTORIAN EXPENSES	\$ 329.46
OREGON CORPORATION FEES	\$ 70.00
PAYPAL FEES	\$ 28.08
POSTAGE	\$ 371.10
MISC SUPPLIES	\$ 94.92
WEB HOSTING	\$ 526.57
ZOOM CONFERENCE SERVICES	\$ 149.90
CONF - POSTCARDS POSTAGE	\$ -
CONF - PRINT POSTCARDS	\$ -
CONF - HOTEL EXPENSE	\$ 12,500.00
IMPACT - CULTURAL DIPLOMACY	\$ 1,042.27
IMPACT - ERDBRINK PROJECT	\$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 16,223.30

JUNE 30 2019 BALANCES

ONPOINT CHECKING	\$ 21,830.35
PAYPAL	\$ 6,698.98
ONPOINT SAVING	\$ 5.00
TOTAL	\$ 28,534.33