

Rebecca Bergee '14

I am a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) currently serving in Ghana, West Africa. I began my training in June of 2015 in-country and was sworn in as a volunteer in August.

Service is the ultimate paradox, where you will always receive more than you give. I could not be more grateful for this experience and the opportunity to share it.

The Peace Corps has three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans

I am a junior high school mathematics teacher in Kokofu-Mensase, Ashanti Region. As an education volunteer, I achieve the first goal by building the capacity of the school and students. Initially, I was intimidated by teaching and thought of all secondary projects as impossible. I set my standards low to feel successful and told myself that teaching would be enough.

Sure enough, teaching makes up the most of my service. I impact the lives of my students and motivate them towards possibilities they never imagined. I feel helpful in a



minimalist way. As I've grown as a volunteer, I have embraced the first goal through

secondary projects. Currently, I am in the process of establishing a computer lab, holding health discussions, and building sports equipment from recyclables. These smaller projects will allow more resources for my students as well as enrich critical thinking. I may rise with the sun every morning, but school only lasts for about half of my day. The rest of my time is dedicated to goals two and three.



Upon arrival to Ghana, a small group of friends and I explored Accra to complete a few tasks. On our way, we made friends with a gentleman along the coast. He told us that he was on his way to a meeting but offered to guide us around the city. Rather than brushing us off to keep his previous engagement, he proceeded to take us around the city for a total of three hours. He explained to us that his time was our time. Part of Ghanaian culture is to welcome visitors with open arms. The number one thing I will always highlight about Ghana is the hospitality. As for the other end of the spectrum, I expose Ghanaians to our culture back home through daily interactions at school and within my village. Living here, I have had my share of culture shock but undoubtedly have learned how to be unselfish in every aspect of life.

I am proud to be a graduate of Pitt-Greensburg for its commitment to service. I would have never continued my journey of volunteering without the exposure I had at school. My wise friend Brian Root once told me the best way to be remembered is to tell a story. So I will leave you with my favorite moment in service so far.

In my first few months, I made friends with the kids in my community. Once school began, a trail of kindergarteners followed me like ducklings up the path daily since the schools are attached. One



particular day, I passed my little friend Ata's house and saw his mother struggling to get him to attend school that day. He was crying and upset, so I walked up to him to ask what was wrong. Ata continued to cry, and I told the mother that I'd take him to kindergarten. I scooped him up with one arm while the other had five kids latched on, trying to hold my hand. As we walked to school, he calmed down and rested his head on my shoulder. Upon arrival, I set him down and told him I'd walk him home later. Like all kids, he enjoyed free time and forgot all his troubles by noon. When the day ended, he ran up to me with a big smile on his face, and I walked him home.

Yes, you may be thinking that my best moment came from Ata, and I do view him as my own child now. However, the most rewarding part of this simple task was the praise and thanks I received from his mom. This one experience allowed me to bond with an entire family. Now every time I leave or return to my village, I stop by their home and spend time with Ata and his siblings. The entire family is welcoming, and I worry that I will experience heartbreak when my service comes to an end. All I can say is that any form of service will change your life for the best. Don't second guess any selfless act. It truly enriches your spirit.

Thank you to everyone that helped make this possible.