

Life in the Peace Corps



Above: My home stay sisters playing with a toy elephant nose in Baling Sula. [Editor: That's Katie on the right.]

We asked Catherine “Katie” Rozofsky (BS, 2005) to share with us her life in Suriname as a Peace Corps volunteer. This is her story.

I spent the long, bumpy trip back to Paramaribo wondering what valuable information I could share about my Peace Corps experience here in Suriname. The lady next to me propped her baby’s head on my lap and I was wedged tightly against the wall of the government truck. I was staring out into the canopy of trees as I tried to remember what life was like at the University of Florida. I laughed to myself when I realized how drastically the rhythm of my daily life has changed since my days at UF now that I’m living in a village in the Amazon. Not too long ago, I was walking to my next lecture or around the halls of Shands Hospital, studying, working, watching football, practicing for the next swim meet, or dreaming about my next weekend at Camp Boggy Creek. Now, I regularly walk to a creek carrying my dishes on my head, asking my neighbor how her day is and what her pet monkey has been up to. Sometimes I’m dancing with the ladies at traditional celebrations

for the dead or listening to Saramaccan stories in the moonlight. Life can change so quickly.

I have always believed that you can make a difference wherever you are, that the connections you make with the people you meet on a daily basis are what really matter. I don’t think it is necessary to travel long distances to give back. Then why did I join the

river is beautiful, but the people living in the paradise along the river have their fair share of challenges. Kaja has generator-powered electricity for a few hours at night. This year, they worked with the previous Peace Corps volunteer and the Rotary Club to receive running water. People wash by bucket bath or at the river or creek. Many have no latrines. The nearest health center is only reachable by boat. A flood this year, followed by the dry weather, killed the vegetable crops. The most common question people ask me is, “Kajamai, ande gwamba i boi tide?” (What meat did you cook today?) Finding meat here is not easy so people sometimes respond, “Gwambahungi o kii mi,” literally “meat hunger will kill me.” During the dry season, many people eat white rice alone throughout the day so some of the....

...continued on page 3



Above: **Sisamai** holding her great-granddaughter.

Peace Corps? I guess I figured, “Why not? Why not me?” I craved to see the world from a new perspective. I wanted to actively do something to help people in most need of help. So here I am, living in a village in the rainforest. It is all very surreal really. At the same time, the reality of life here is sometimes difficult to swallow. In my village in Kaja Patie, I gained more perspective than I ever expected.

Suriname is a former Dutch colony with a diverse cultural influence. In the interior, many of the African and Amerindian traditions remain intact. Kaja Patie is a large Maroon village along the Suriname River. The scenery along the



Left: Children visiting my house in Kaja Patie.

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Here's a very cute future Gator: **Miss Lily Madden**, daughter of alumni **Lauren (O'Kelley) Madden** and **Mike Madden**. Mike and Lauren both received their BS degrees in 2003.

2007 BS graduates accepted to pharmacy school here at UF include: **Nicole Kitts, Megan Kloet, Livia Monteiro, Chandni Patel, Jillian Paxton**. 2006 BS graduates accepted to pharmacy school here at UF include: **Yadnaloy Acosta, Christopher DiTomaso, Mary Hall, Julie Nguyen, Sara Sugimoto, Nicolas Terranova, Yuleiny Cardoso** (BS, 2005) was also accepted to UF pharmacy.

Corry Taylor (BS, 2007) will be attending pharmacy school at the Univ. of Tennessee. **Satyajit Rana** (BS, 2006) was accepted to Palm Beach Atlantic University pharmacy school.

Alyssa (Whidden) Kendall (BS, 2000) is working for the USDA Agricultural Research Service in the Beltsville, Maryland Human Nutrition Research Center (Nutrient Requirements and Functions Laboratory). Her research will focus on dietary probiotics in a porcine model.

Rita Frank (BS, 1998) received the Tampa Dietetic Association 2006 Emerging Leader Award.

2007 BS graduates accepted to optometry schools include: **Pagona "Peggy" Kokolakis** (SUNY College of Optometry), **Boski Patel** (Nova SE Univ.), **Taisiya Rozenblyum** (Illinois College of Optometry).

Miharu "Alison" Sato-Sen (MS, 2001) is employed as a pediatric clinical RD at the University of Arizona's University Medical Center.

Jaclyn Kalva (BS, 2007) will be pursuing her MS in Food Science here in FSHN after completing a USDA internship this summer.

2007 BS graduates accepted to dental school here at UF include: **Mallory Hope, Juan Ojeda, Jr., Francis Roque**. Other 2007 BS graduates accepted to dental schools include: **Ajmal Ahmed** (Univ. of Pittsburgh), **Sasha Baston** (NYU), **Eric Frank** (Columbia Univ.), **Stephanie Fulger** (UNC Chapel Hill), **Michael Rodriguez** (Nova SE Univ.), **Justin Silvestre** (Univ. of Pennsylvania), **Christina Wiggins** (Nova SE Univ.), **Summer Young** (Nova SE Univ.). **Philip Hedger** (BS, 2005) was also accepted to dental school here at UF. The following 2006 BS graduates have been accepted to dental school here at UF: **Andrew Clark, Ivette Coro, Tiffany Hetmanek, Kyle Kromrey, Kristine Smith, Lisette Zuloaga** (BS, 2006) is in dental school in Peru.

The following 2007 BS graduates have been accepted to medical school here at UF: **Arjun Nanda, Trevor Smith, Kristen Dean** (BS, 2005) and **Ryan Telford** (BS, 2006) were also accepted to UF medical school. Other 2007 BS graduates accepted to medical schools include: **Alyssa Brown** (Univ. of South Florida), **Sherri Gampel** (Nova SE Univ.), **Natalie Hammond** (Univ. of Miami), **Sarah Irani** (Florida State Univ.), **Jason Mallow** (Univ. of Miami), and **Cindy Yuen** (Nova SE Univ.). **Dafina Wise** (BS, 2004) was accepted to the Wayne State School of Medicine. **Alesha (Robinson) Dunkley** (BS, 2004) was accepted to the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, Arizona. **Isaac Paff** (BS, 2004) was accepted to West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine.

Bethany "Grace" Bridgman (BS, 2006) was accepted into UF's accelerated nursing program.

Neha Patel (BS, 2006) completed her dietetic internship this past year and is now working for WIC here in Gainesville.

Gavin Goodall (BS, 2007) is teaching secondary science in Denver with the Teach for America program.

Alumni Updates



Saad Sebbana (BS, 1999; MS, 2001) finished the Country Music Marathon in Nashville, TN on April 28th this year.

Patrick Upchurch (BS, 2006) has been accepted into a PhD program in Cellular and Molecular Physiology at Johns Hopkins University.

Sandra Villacis (BS, 2005) successfully completed her dietetic internship and her registration exam, and is working as a Nutrition Educator for the Palm Beach Health Department here in Florida.

Alexandra Linares (BS, 2006) is pursuing a master's of public health here at UF, with a specialization in Biostatistics.

Did we leave you out, or is our information outdated? Please drop us a line (see box, top left).

Peace Corps, Continued from page 1



Kaja Patie children playing on my front porch.



Napping in a wheelbarrow.



The audience watching the school plays that the children created for the World AIDS Day event, "Da Mau. Feti AIDS." ("Give a hand. Fight AIDS.")

...signs of malnourishment that we learned about in nutrition class can be seen firsthand here. Yet, often when I talk with the people here, I am amazed by their strength and the richness of their spirit.

My task here is to live with the people of Kaja the way they live and to help them to help themselves. As a health volunteer, my focus is nutrition, water sanitation, and HIV/AIDS awareness.

Most recently, I have been traveling from village to village with a group of local health promoters. I am helping some women with a preschool they have started so that the other women in the village can be more productive in the gardens. I am looking into ways to support a chicken farm so that the village will have a stable source of protein and income. I am also working with my local counterpart on participating in World AIDS Day. So far,

this task is not easy and it has only just begun, but it is well worth the challenge.

I encourage you to appreciate the life you have in the U.S. and to live life to the fullest. You do not have to wait for graduation day or whatever step is next to start making a positive difference in the lives of others. Every day, you are surrounded by a world full of people waiting for your help.

I wish you the best.

Alumni Social at Experimental Biology

Once again, FSHN hosted an alumni social during the University Mixer at the Experimental Biology conference, which was held this year in Washington DC. Alumni and students were treated to Gator necklaces, key chains, national championship bumper stickers, FSHN pens, and even t-shirts.

We congratulate all the alumni, faculty, staff, and students who presented at the conference, and we hope everyone had a great time at the social. Look for us next year at EB in San Diego!



Several members of **Dr. Peggy Borum's** InvestiGators group (see page 4) presented their research at the conference. Front, L-R: **Kathleen "Katie" Relihan** (Microbiology Senior), **Sunina Nathoo** (Microbiology Senior), **Lauren Little** (BS, 2005; Nutritional Sciences PhD student), **Anuja Shah** (Biology Senior), **Mary Endreson** (Psychology Senior). Back, L-R: **John Pang** (Chemistry Senior), **David McDonald** (Chemistry Senior), **Sainel "Shane" Kanani** (Chemistry Senior), **Alysha Leonard** (BS, 2007).



L-R: **Dr. Bob Cousins** (Professor), **Dr. Jess Gregory** (Professor), **Dr. J. Bernadette Moore** (PhD, 2002).



L-R: **Louis Lichten** (BS, 2002; MS, 2004; PhD Candidate) looks on as **Lauren Little** (BS, 2005; current PhD student) talks about her research.

Alumni Award

Cristin Cuozzo, (BS, 2005), MS/DI student in FSHN, was recognized as the Outstanding Dietetics Student from an internship in Florida. She was chosen from among all students in Florida's eleven internship programs in recognition of her long history of scholarship and leadership. Congratulations to Cristin on all her accomplishments!



FSHN Achievements



Dr. Peggy Borum (Professor) was chosen as both the CALS Undergraduate Advisor of the Year *and* the UF Advisor of the Year for 2006-2007. She was honored in part for her dedication to the “InvestiGators,” a research honor society that helps student teams learn to

plan and conduct real-world research, and then to present that research at national conferences. See page 3 for a picture of some of the InvestiGators who got to present at Experimental Biology this year. Please join us in congratulating Dr. Borum on this outstanding accomplishment!



Dr. Gail Kauwell at EB with husband **Peter Johnson**.

Dr. Gail Kauwell (Professor) won the 2007 American Society for Nutrition’s Excellence in Nutrition Education Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to teaching nutrition. The award was presented at the 2007 Experimental Biology (EB) conference in Washington DC. Dr. Kauwell also received the American Dietetic Association (ADA) 2007 Excellence in Dietetic Education Award, celebrating her creativity,

innovation, and leadership in education. Dr. Kauwell is a Past-President of ADA and a current ADA Delegate.



Above, L-R: **Trevor Smith**, **Robert Regenhardt**, **Justin Silvestre**. Photo: *Sally Lanigan (IFAS)*.



Above:
Tolulope Adebajo.

For the first time in history, FSHN Nutritional Sciences students swept *all four* of the prestigious College of Agricultural and Life Sciences’ undergraduate awards! **Trevor Smith**, who starts medical school here at UF this fall, won the J. Wayne Reitz Medal of Excellence Outstanding Senior Award. **Robert Regenhardt**, who also starts medical school at UF this fall as part of the Junior Honors Medical Program, won the E. T. York, Jr. Medal of Excellence Outstanding Junior Award. (Another Nutritional Sciences junior, **Michael Silverstein**, was one of the three finalists for the York Award and was also recognized by CALS as an outstanding student.) The Larry J. Connor Medal of Excellence went to **Justin Silvestre**, who will attend dental school at the University of Pennsylvania. And **Tolulope Adebajo** was recognized with the CALS Alumni & Friends Leadership Award; she plans to complete a combined MD/MPH program.

Congratulations to the FSHN College Bowl Team, who made a very respectable showing at the 2007 competition in Athens, Georgia. The team, shown below at the Georgia Social following the competition, also got to watch the Gator basketball team beat UCLA in the Final Four!



Front, L-R: **Thelma Calix-Lara** (MS Student), **Mike Eisenmenger** (PhD Student), **Dr. Ron Schmidt** (Professor and Coach), **Renee Applebaum** (BS, 2007), **Jorge Cardona** (MS Student), **Janna Underhill** (Assistant Coach). Back, L-R: **Milena Ramirez-Rodriguez** (PhD Student), **Diana Seminario** (MS Student), **Yun-Pai “Paul” Lai** (BS, 2007), **Yael Spektor** (Food Science Senior).

This past year, FSHN students (all Nutritional Sciences unless otherwise noted) held numerous leadership positions in UF campus organizations:

- Pre-Dental Society: President: **Benjamin Song** (BS, 2006); Communications VP: **Kevin Dunphy** (BS, 2007); Secretary: **Pamela Shelling** (Junior); Public Relations: **Jared Weiner** (BS, 2006); Social/Services: **Danielle Case** (BS, 2007).
- American Student Dental Association: Treasurer: **Mallory Hope** (BS, 2007); Secretary: **Eric Frank** (BS, 2007).
- Pre-Pharmacy Society: President: **Heather Petrie** (BS, 2007); VP: **Christina Carracedo** (Junior).
- Pre-professional Service Organization: Membership VP: **Aylin Okular** (Junior); Programming VP: **Kaitlin Kobaitri** (Junior); Secretary: **Jenna Rhoades** (Junior); Journal Editor: **Nicole Martino** (Junior).
- Pre-optometry Pupils: President: **Boski Patel** (BS, 2007); Treasurer: **Pagona Kokolakis** (BS, 2007).
- Pre-Med American Medical Student Association: Secretary: **Sanjay Bridgelall** (BS, 2007); Executive Liaison: **Emily Appleton** (BS, 2007).
- Minority Association for Pre-health Students: Historian/Archivist: **Rosalee Holmes** (Dietetics Sophomore).
- Health Education Asian Leaders: President: **Danlu Wang** (Junior).
- Heal the World: Public Relations Chair: **Andrew Migliaccio** (Sophomore); Historian: **Joanna Meadors** (Junior); Events Chair: **Natalie Yin** (Sophomore).
- Student Government Cabinets: Community Involvement: **Joanna Meadors** (Junior); Health: **Tolulope Adebajo** (BS, 2007); Housing Affairs: **Farah Gulaid** (Junior); Multicultural Affairs: **Huy Huynh** (BS, 2007).

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