

Peace Corps volunteers work to create good will

United Press International
SINGBURI, Thailand—Buffeted by more than 20 years of turmoil and change, a tiny spark of the 1960s American idealism that launched the Peace Corps lives on in rural Thailand.

Quietly and without fanfare, young and old Americans continue to volunteer two years of their lives for the old-fashioned notion of helping others.

"I sometimes think if I can just create good will, I'm doing okay," said Reed J. Aeschliman, one of 178 Peace Corps volunteers serving in Thailand. He is the only volunteer in Singburi Province, a rice-growing area 75 miles north of Bangkok.

Aeschliman, 25, grew up on a farm near Wauseon, Ohio, and is putting his agriculture background to use as an adviser to 4-H clubs scattered throughout the province.

"I try to convince the people I work with that Americans and foreigners in general are not always right and they have to develop their own solutions to their own problems," he said.

"I'm not sure I'm always successful, but I try," he said.

The Peace Corps currently has about 5,200 volunteers

working in 64 countries and is hoping to increase public awareness of its work after years of near-obscure in the United States, Peace Corps Director Loret Ruppe said recently.

"The Peace Corps really had problems during the 1970s because it was coming out of a lot of misperceptions of the '60s," Ruppe said.

"It was growing, improving and learning from its mistakes

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but it had to overcome during the '70s the lack of public awareness due to the ramifications of Vietnam and misperceptions of everyone (in the Peace Corps) being a hippie.

"I feel our work has to be

done in America, where too many Americans do not realize the Peace Corps is alive and doing tremendous work all around the world."

Overseas, she said, people do not need to be reminded of the Peace Corps, which has more requests for volunteers than it can fill, especially for engineers and science and mathematics teachers.

There also is a constant demand for English language teachers that is much easier to fill than requests for technical skills, Ruppe said.

William Landis, of San Diego, Calif., teaches English at the Bunnak Phittayakhom in Chainat Province.

A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, Landis teaches English to all grades at the high school as well as maintaining a wide range of extracurricular programs in education and vocational studies.

"What I'm trying to do now is to make the community realize the school is not just for the students," he said. "I want them to realize the library and other facilities are for the community as a whole," he said.

Ruppe, appointed Peace Corps director by President Reagan in 1981, said the economic recession and the shortage of jobs for recent college graduates was a boon to recruitment of volunteers, especially those with technical skills.

"We do think economic conditions in some ways are helping us," she said. "It certainly is generating more interest. It helps us in the scarce skills. Engineers, for example, are not being snapped up by employers now due to the economic situation."

"We also get a lot of calls and applications from people who are unemployed but, unfortunately, do not have the skills that are needed by a volunteer."

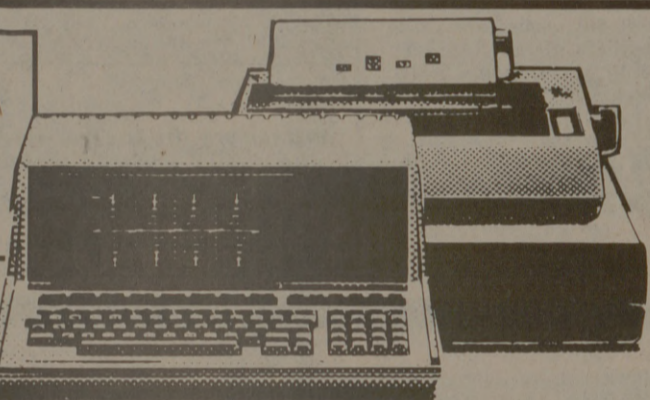
The volunteers who come to Thailand will not be faced with unemployment for two years, but are unlikely to become wealthy on their monthly stipend of about \$200.

However, like other Peace Corps volunteers, they are entitled to a readjustment allowance of \$175 for each month of service, which amounts to a tidy sum at the end of their two-year term.



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'Necessary' escape bill introduced
United Press International
AUSTIN — If potential escapees listen to a Texas lawmaker, their time on the streets will be brief.
The House approved the introduction of a bill late Wednesday that would require anyone who find it "necessary" to escape from prison to turn themselves in to authorities within 24 hours of their flight.
"If the conditions he's exposed to in prison require to escape, he must turn himself in within 24 hours to a necessity in an escape," said Hill Kemp, D-Manvel, the author.

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