

Returning to Things We Care About

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We met in Paraguay in 1978. Kent worked in the Teacher Training Program in San Francisco, a compañía of Repatriación. Julie was a Home Extension Volunteer in General Delgado, Departamento de Itapúa. We returned to the U.S. in 1980 and were married.

In 1982, we returned to Paraguay as married volunteers and were assigned to Humaita, Departamento de Ñeembucú. Our oldest daughter, Malena, was born in Paraguay in 1983.

In 1987, after graduate school at SUNY/Buffalo, we moved to the Washington DC area and were invited to help in the formation of the Friends of Paraguay (FOP) group. FOP's goals were to bring together people who cared about Paraguay, support small development projects, and exchange information. While it may be hard to believe now, in 1987 computers were scarce, and information about Paraguay was even scarcer.

From 1996 – 1997, we were co-presidents of FOP. From that vantage point we were able to see how many people it takes to run a successful volunteer organization - to update the data base, write the articles for the newsletter and make sure it meets USPS regulations, balance the financial records, pick up the mail, organize the speaker series, review project proposals, and so on. A few FOP's early accomplishments were the Ñanduti newsletter, outside speaker events, support of rural health worker training, and collecting funds for development projects in honor of Andrea Ritz and Lida Burhans. These things were accomplished because RPCVs continued to care about Paraguay.

Enter 2006, and we are back at the helm as co-presidents of FOP. FOP has benefited from the growth of computer technology. Sharing information about Paraguay is now just a computer click and data base away with e-Ñanduti. One no longer needs to wait for the bi-annual newsletter. We are grateful to Janice and Paul Davis for maintaining the data base for years and to Pat Gregerson for the FOP website. Through the website, people can now renew their membership, RSVP for events, and check out news, photos, and other links.

FOP welcomes technology as it helps us exchange information quickly and cheaply. More importantly, it allows us to save precious financial resources to support development projects in Paraguay. However, we still need another key ingredient – volunteers. Volunteers are needed to write articles for e-Ñanduti, update the database, review requests for financial support, help organize events to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Peace Corps/Paraguay, contribute material to the FOP website, and renew memberships. If you want to return to something you care about, consider volunteering with FOP. Contact any board member and we will be happy to hear from you.