

# INGEAR

THE NEWSLETTER OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS



## LONG ISLAND GIVES BACK

BY BETTE BASS

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Long Island began over 20 years ago as a way to meet and reconnect with other former Peace Corps volunteers, and for the first few years was primarily social.



LI RPCV's At work on April 16th, 2011

Every year we would set aside a portion of our dues to contribute to a worthy cause. After awhile we decided that we wanted to do more. At that time, one of our members, Kathy Williams Ging, heard about Pedals through a RPCV friend who lived in New Jersey. In October of 2003, due to efforts by Kathy and Charles Bevington, we had our first collection in Hicksville, at a location that was supplied by Brian Richardson. We got to meet Dave and successfully collected 33 bikes.

At our annual business meeting later that fall, we decided to make this an annual group effort. After deciding to switch our collections to the spring, we had our next collection in April, 2005. It has become an important part of our group's activities every year since.

Over the years we've supplied 892 bikes and about 10 sewing machines (don't have an exact number for sewing machines), and enough money to cover the \$10 per bike cost, usually with an additional cash donation.

Many of us have been involved throughout this journey. Kathy Williams Ging, Linda Restaino Merola, Tom Montalbano, Charles Bevington and I (Bette Bass) have been coordinators through the years.

We've held collections in both Nassau and Suffolk counties, so that more people can be involved, and we can have a larger pool of potential bikes. We have used parking lots all over Long Island, including Hauppauge Middle School, the Massapequa Public Library, a bank in Huntington, a sailing association in Sayville, a Temple in Port Washington, and a bicycle shop in Rocky Point.



Bette Bass manning the collection table.

We have partnered with other organizations as well: Hauppauge Middle School, in Hauppauge NY, provided a space and held cookie sales and other fund raisers for two years. Linda Restaino Merola was instrumental in obtaining the space for us.

We collected so many bikes at our Huntington bank location that Linda and her husband Lou Merola stored about

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Getting a container of hundreds of bicycles into a new location is extremely difficult, very time consuming, and, really, no matter how much investigation I do on our potential new partner, it's a long shot. It is amazing however, at how often we are successful in finding a secular non-governmental institution with the capacity to bring in successive containers of bicycles. We never want to ship one container to a program; we always want to ship multiple containers over multiple years so that we can continue to supply them with the necessary parts and accessories to keep all of the bicycles functional.

While every container is a success in itself, for me personally it is the shipping of the second container to a new program that marks success. Nine times we've shipped one container and it did not work. Eight times we have shipped two or three containers before the program failed, while 12 times we have shipped four or more containers to a program with our two longest programs having received over forty-seven successful shipments. Sometimes it's hard to write a new article about Rivas after forty-seven shipments of bikes. What haven't we said? But it is still longstanding programs where the greatest social impact has been made.

Are we better to marshal our resources where it's the most cost-effective and we will have the most number of people impacted per dollar expended? Or do we also have a duty to the places that are the most expensive, most remote, where the need is the absolute greatest because it is such a high cost area in which to work? More expensive means fewer groups can mount the challenge to sustain funding of a program and, therefore, there is less development and much greater need.

My feeling is that Pedals for Progress needs to do both with some touches in the middle: Maintain healthy self-financing programs where shipping rates are the lowest (Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Vietnam, Ghana) and continue with the high-cost program in Uganda, which will always need substantial subsidy because of the great cost of transportation, double the lowest. Then we can focus on a few in the middle that almost break even (Albania, Moldova).

We help where we can, do as much as we can. We are a little drop in a big bucket, but it's our drop and although on a global perspective we are miniscule, the thousands we help every year are quite appreciative.

Dave



30 bikes at their house overnight since they didn't all fit on the Pedals truck. The Wet Pants Sailing Association Juniors, of Sayville, came out in force one year under Tom Montalbano's lead - this was probably our most scenic spot, right on the water in Sayville.

Last year, as part of their Mitzvah Sunday, we partnered with several Temples in Port Washington. Jerry and Nancy Federlein, both LIRPCV members, coordinated the Mitzvah Sunday.

This year, Rocky Point Cycle, in Rocky Point, supplied our space. They also accepted bikes before the collection date. Lyn Dobrin, of Lyn Dobrin Ink, another LIRPCV member, has handled all of our publicity, and we have had numerous newspaper articles, radio announcements, and this year, an appearance on an NBC cable news show with Chuck Scarborough.

Over the years, we have come to regard Pedals as our own. Some of us have purchased our own tools to process bikes. Many of us have made mini collections, driving around the area picking up bikes and donations as we go. Tim Ging, Larry Hohler, Linda and Lou Merola, Tom Montalbano, and Jerry and Nancy Federlein, Bill Reed and Mary Watros have done this almost every year. Jennifer Monahan and Michael Kretschmann have rented a small truck and brought 10 to 12 bikes and a few sewing machines a year from the East End. This has given us access to even more people and bikes.

I (Bette Bass) discovered a real talent for making sure people give their \$10 per bike. I enjoy explaining why it's so important for everyone to donate. My favorite activity is using the photos Pedals sends to show children who are donating a bike just why it's so important and how much difference it makes to other children. I feel that we're starting a new generation of caring, giving people.

As individuals, Pedals has really struck an emotional chord with each of us. We all, whether we returned 45 years ago or last week, know that transportation is one of the keys to having a better life all over the globe. Most of us were in rural areas where there are very few cars, and buses are a sometime thing. The time and effort put into just getting from one place to another takes a toll on the whole family. The addition of sewing machines to our collections was very welcome - providing someone the means to earn a living is a wonderful gift.

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Long Island is already planning for our next collection in April, 2012.

Happy 20th anniversary to Pedals for Progress, as we celebrate Peace Corps 50th Anniversary as well!!

[www.p4p.org](http://www.p4p.org)

## MISSION STATEMENT

TO DELIVER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AID BY  
RECYCLING BICYCLES AND SEWING  
MACHINES IN THE U.S. AND SHIPPING THEM TO  
THE PEOPLE OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD



Sewing Machine Collection April 16th, 2011  
Martha & Mark Hall - Vernon



High Bridge Collection April 2nd, 2011  
L to R, Michael Sabio, Jason Drew and  
David Schweidenback.

## ALBANIAN PROGRAM IS A SUCCESS

Nina Këruti

This spring we are beginning shipments with PASS/Albania #2. We are so pleased for the success of the program in Tirane. PASS received one container of bikes from Pedals for Progress in July 2010. The purpose for receiving bikes was related to two goals:

- Creation of job opportunities for Roma Families through bike service.
- Establishment of the first public bike service in Tirana.

15- 20 bikes per station. Another part of the project was the creation of bike services, which results in the employment of 4 youths working to maintain the bikes.

What is positive and what we have achieved through the use of bikes is creating a community and a bicycle movement in Tirane. Improvements have been done in the infrastructure and many activities are organized in raising awareness for the use of bikes.



### COUNTRY FACTS: ALBANIA

POPULATION: **3.1 MILLION**

GDP PER CAPITAL: **\$4,400 PER YEAR**

LITERACY RATE: **87%**

The first container held 463 used bikes, 242 bundled bicycle parts, and 30 used sewing machines. Since arriving in Tirane last July, PASS has achieved the following:

- 150 bikes were sold to the public at modest cost for operational income;
- 100 bikes were donated to Roma Children schools for social activities developed under the project;
- Public Bike Service has adopted 70 bicycles for general public use. The old Amsterdam Yellow Bike Project model was always effective when someone was responsible for maintenance.
- 50 bicycles are frequently used for bike tours.
- There are 30 bicycles that are designated for bike messengers.



You can donate to Pedals for Progress immediately! Please visit [www.p4p.org](http://www.p4p.org) and click "DONATE NOW"

In Tirana, PASS opened four First Bike Services, which translates into the creation of 8 jobs with a range of



## PEDALS FOR PROGRESS NOW IN VIETNAM

Most recently, P4P's readers have been kept abreast of our endeavors in locations such as Albania, Moldova, Uganda, and Ghana. We are now extremely pleased to announce that a new partner has joined P4P. Located in southwestern Vietnam, the Vinh Long Union of Friendship Organizations (VLUFO) collaborates with us to provide bicycles to the children in the Mekong Delta River region. An active participant funder of VLUFO, the Dariu Foundation (TDF) of Switzerland, has supplied the grant that is funding these initial shipments.



At the moment, there are three branches of the VLUFO. The first two, Vung Liem and Tra On belong to the Vinh Long province. The third site, Tan Phu, belongs to the Dong Nai province. The bikes are to be distributed to school children in these regions on a scholarship basis and will be based, in part, on the distance from their homes to the school. Fifty percent of the bikes granted are earmarked for female and secondary school students.

While elementary school tuition in the region is free and the small amount charged for attending junior high is small, it is the cost of textbooks, notebooks, pens, and uniforms that is usually high. If the students cannot acquire these basic requirements, they can't attend school. A majority of families are affected by financial inconsistency during the school season because they earn their meager living from farming. The threat of flooding, exacerbated by climate change, and a high rate of emigration from the region affect families' ability to earn a living and maintain strong com-

munities. The children in this region are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school. The VLUFO hopes to reduce the financial burdens associated with educating the children of these families and offer the parents greater ease of access to economic opportunities in towns and cities. Before partnering with P4P, the VLUFO purchased the bicycles that they distribute. This has proven to be an expensive and, hence, short-lived option. The bicycles provided by P4P are the key to preventing a financial crisis for the Organizations while ensuring that they provide reliable transportation to families in need. The desired result is that the children stay in school and the parents spend more time on job and income generation.

### COUNTRY FACTS: VIETNAM

POPULATION: **81 MILLION**

GDP PER CAPITAL: **\$2,300 PER YEAR**

LITERACY RATE: **94%**



The first shipment of 570 bikes is scheduled for the May 21st 2011 loading that will be bound for Vietnam. The Vinh Long Union of Friendship Organizations (VLUFO) plans to start distribution of P4P bikes in July. Though this will be the farthest location we ship to, Vietnam by far will be the cheapest place P4P has ever shipped bicycles.



## ONE WOMAN & A SEWING MACHINE

It is often the case that the hardest and most expensive places to reach are where the greatest need exists. P4P works to surmount obstacles—both physical and financial—that stand in the way of isolated regions realizing economic success. Since 2006, we have measured our success in helping Ugandans develop economic independence by noting the increased demand for the delivery of bicycles. Now, through our existing partnership with the Entrepreneurship Institute of Applied and Appropriate Technology (EIAAT <<http://eiaat.blogspot.com/>>), which receives and distributes our shipments, we have included sewing machines along with the bicycles and extended more opportunities to more Ugandans.

Of course, this is not as simple as it sounds. Uganda is among the most expensive places to ship. Getting from here through the Suez Canal to Mombasa Kenya is relatively reasonable, but our vessel, the Maersk Alabama, was recently attacked again by pirates. Trucking containers inland across thousands of miles from Mombasa Kenya to Kampala Uganda on bad roads is much more expensive than maneuvering within pirate infested shipping lanes. We funded the most recent shipment with grants from the Helen & William Mazer Foundation and the Clif Bar Family Foundation.

The courageous hard working Jane Kigoye is just one example of how the inclusion of sewing machines in these shipments has begun to change lives for the better. Jane

had no employment and worked as best she could in her garden for food. Sometimes she could find beans, nuts, and other cereals and she improvised as best she could. Her husband's job as a motor vehicle mechanic did not bring in enough money to keep their four children from hunger. Jane did have some knowledge about basic tailoring; all she needed was a reliable sewing machine. As is often the case, necessity breeds innovation and she managed to search out and hire a manual sewing machine and a small

shop to operate from. When she made some money, she made some inquiries in Kampala about the cost of sewing machines. From there she was directed to the EIAAT by one of the agents who buys bicycles from them. She went to the institute and, after looking at the various electric sewing machines, selected one. They told her that it cost \$85 but, after some bargaining, they settled on \$80. She only had \$40, so she left that as a deposit and had to leave the sewing machine behind, promising to pay \$10 from what she made from the tailoring every week.

During this time she was mastering the art of tailoring and the income she was making was used partly for home provisions and partly for her weekly payments on the sewing machine. As her business grew, she was no longer digging in

the garden and she was able to hire casual labor to take the manual chores over. All her efforts were on growing her tailoring business and creating a stable life for her children.



Jane in her workshop.

This may all sound rather charmed, but it was not an easy path that led to full stomachs and financial security. A major setback occurred after only two weeks of payments.

She arrived at the EIAAT almost in tears telling them that the sewing machine she had hired was taken away from her and she did not know what to do. Inevitably, if she lost her tailoring shop, somebody would readily move in and take over her customers. Getting a new place is very expensive. She would need to be able to pay for three to four months' rent at once, plus the fee for the house "blocker" who finds the place for her. She would also have to furnish the new place and develop new clients.

Besides the problem of not being able to raise this amount for a new place, losing customers meant that she could not pay the \$10 installments on the machine she had reserved. She pleaded that the EIAAT allow her take the sewing machine with the balance of \$20 left on it and promised to pay the money in the next two weeks without fail. They took a risk based on her character and past performance and they did sympathize with her dire predicament. After all, wasn't this just the kind of problem that P4P and the EIAAT try to address and resolve? She had made the biggest part of the payment and this woman had a family and children to look after. Jane resolutely departed with the sewing machine leaving a signed receipt for the balance due.

The very next week, she brought \$15 instead of \$10. She told them that she had won a small primary school uniform contract and that if this new machine had not been available to her, she did not know what she was going to tell the principal of the primary school. The improved speed of an

electric sewing machine had allowed her to work faster and complete and deliver the uniforms in time. She would have cleared the full balance due of \$20 but she had to go and buy more materials for the next consignment of uniforms. She thanked the EIAAT for saving her business and livelihood.

Not only did she pay the final balance as promised, she brought a deposit of \$40 for another sewing machine. She requested that she be allowed to take the machine immediately and promised to pay the balance in brief two weeks. This second machine was intended for a hired worker. She informed the EIAAT that she was increasing her output and actively expanding the business.

Now the proud owner of four sewing machines and a steady clientele, Jane is no longer dependent on her husband's poor income. Not only is she the major contributor to the home expenses, she is also able to meet additional and integral expenses such as school fees for her children. Through the opportunities afforded her by the partnership of P4P and EIAAT, Jane Kigoye has her present and future in her control.

#### COUNTRY FACTS: UGANDA

POPULATION: **25 MILLION**

GDP PER CAPITAL: **\$1,200 PER YEAR**

LITERACY RATE: **70%**

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This bike shop located in Koforidua, Ghana, supplies employment for two mechanics and services this community with bikes sales and repair facilities. It is one of the many small bike shops supplied by our Ghanaian partner WeBikes. WeBikes distributes P4P bikes to many small entrepreneurs throughout the south and eastern parts of Ghana. WeBikes has imported 4,800 bikes and 120 sewing machines since 2006. P4P is planning our next shipment to WeBikes in June of 2011.



For more information visit [www.p4p.org](http://www.p4p.org).



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