PRESS RELEASE

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) – Honduras Reunion in Puerto Rico

** A reunion of 52 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from Honduras that was recently held in Luquillo, Puerto Rico became a deeply emotional experience, marked by heartfelt hugs, shared memories, and the joy of seeing each other again after many years. This meeting was supported by local and private organizations, which helped to boost the local economy and highlight the importance of responsible tourism.

May 12, 2026 - Luquillo, PR

Men and women who once served in the Peace Corps - Honduras between the years 1967 to 1985, in areas such as health, education, agriculture, and the environment met in Luquillo, PR, from April 30 to May 4, 2026, carrying with them a shared history that not only left them with fond memories but also transformed their lives forever. In each conversation, they relived a period of youth, service, and learning in a developing country that taught them wisdom, solidarity, and the profound value of friendship.

The presence of this group in Puerto Rico also represented a valuable contribution to the local economy (estimated to be about $350,000), boosting sectors linked to tourism, hospitality, gastronomy, and services. The visit of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) strengthened Luquillo's appeal as a destination for international gatherings with a human and cultural focus. During their stay, they toured important tourist and natural sites in eastern Puerto Rico, including El Yunque National Forest, one of the Caribbean's most emblematic ecological treasures, Luquillo beaches, Coffee Haciendas, and a Cacao Plantation thus reaffirming the special bond that has historically united these volunteers with environmental protection and a love for nature. In addition, many of the reunion participants visited Old San Juan and other historic sites in the metropolitan area and around the island.

One of the most significant moments of the gathering was the planting of commemorative trees, in honor of the Peace Corps 65th anniversary, in emblematic locations such as El Yunque National Forest and the gardens of the Fairfield by Marriott, Luquillo Beach - gestures laden with symbolism and hope. This action represented growth, a green footprint, and a commitment to future generations, as a way of laying new foundations in the name of friendship, remembrance, and environmental conservation. For the participants, planting a tree was also planting a message: that service takes root, that nature unites people, and that the experiences they had in Honduras continue to blossom in their hearts with the same strength with which they once changed their lives.

PUERTO RICO IN PEACE CORPS HISTORY

According to Jerry Bauer, coordinator of the reunion and a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer - Honduras, volunteers from this organization were trained in Puerto Rico in the 1960s at the Río Abajo State Forest and in Ponce, as well as at the USFS International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF-USFS) in the 1970s, and several at the Caribbean National Forest in the 1980s.

“Thanks to the vision, leadership and support from former PR Governor Luis Muñoz Marín, Puerto Rico was one of the first Peace Corps training sites outside the continental United States. Four of the participants in the Luquillo reunion received training in Puerto Rico in the 1960s,” Bauer said.

In addition, hundreds of Puerto Ricans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide. Both the International Institute of Tropical Forestry and the Caribbean National Forest (now the EYNF) have played a significant role with the Peace Corps by providing technical assistance and training to volunteers since the 1960s.

RPCV Honduras representative and former Peace Corps Honduras Director and retired U.S. Ambassador Honorable Frank Almaguer explained that this intergenerational activity maintains the spirit of solidarity and respect among cultures, as well as promoting global peace and collaboration.

EXPRESSIONS OF JOY AND GRATITUDE FROM PARTICIPANTS

"We are very honored to be part of this Peace Corps alumni reunion and to share a special moment like the planting of a native tree in our gardens. We share with you the ideal of peace and unity among nations," said Denise Santos, General Manager, Fairfield by Marriott, Luquillo Beach.

According to Margo Pfleger from Florida, "The tree planting was brilliant, so symbolic and forward-thinking defining The Peace Corps legacy. Thank you for everything and thank you for choosing Puerto Rico. Many Peace Corps alumni had never been to Puerto Rico, and it was wonderful to be in a Spanish-speaking place."

For his part, Jerry Touval, who traveled from Virginia, expressed that: "It was wonderful to see everyone, as always at these events. The organization was impeccable, and everything worked perfectly. We visited Fajardo, El Yunque, and Viejo San Juan; this was my first visit.".

Cheri Damschroder, who resides in New Mexico, expressed that a "highlight was the visit to the Ancestral Chocolat store and restaurant and the Cacao Hacienda. They offered us a very professional and informative tour, followed by a wonderful tasting," she recalled.

According to Don Pendleton from California, "I did get a chance to explore the island a tab bit before the reunion. Just about everywhere I went I was greeted with pleasant smiles and warm greetings. My suitcase left the island heavily packed with coffee and cacoa products. Birdwise, I was able to view 28 new species for me, twelve of these were island endemics. Yes, I was able to get a nice viewing of 6 flamingos at the Roosevelt Roads area. I plan on returning to the Isla del Encanto! Many thanks for hosting the reunion.

Jerry Bauer, a long-time resident of Luquillo and a RPCV - Honduras, coordinator of this gathering, expressed that all of this was made possible thanks to the support of organizations and private companies, including Luquillo Sunrise Beach Inn, the Fairfield by Marriott Luquillo Beach Hotel, Para La Naturaleza (an environmental non-profit organization), Destination Puerto Rico, El Yunque National Forest and Global Communication Resources, who provided media coverage of the reunion.

For more information or interviews contact:
Global Communication Resources
Email: adelayde.rivas@gmail.com, +1 346-306-9748