

SERVING THROUGH THE PEACE CORPS

Brian Young of Glenwood felt a need to help the less fortunate upon graduation from college. He thus joined the Peace Corps to see where he could serve. Young explained the Peace Corps was formed in 1961 with the stated purpose to promote world peace and friendship. The Peace Corps makes available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve, under conditions of hardship if necessary, to help the peoples of such countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower. It is an independent federal agency. According to Young nearly 190 thousand volunteers have served in the Peace Corps in 139 different countries. Currently there are about 8 thousand volunteers working on two year assignments in about 70 countries. Young noted that 95% of the volunteers are young adults less than age 50 and the current director has a goal of increasing the number of older volunteers by 10%.

Young explained he was assigned by mutual agreement to go to the Republic of Honduras in Central America to help a small village remotely located in the mountains to improve their living conditions. The village of 80 families was located in a national park area, and village families cultivated coffee trees for a cash crop on 2 to 3 acre family plots. Young noted his main mission was environmental education. The village was located three hours by truck and horseback from the nearest city where they sold the coffee beans and purchased supplies. There was no electricity or phone service in the village. Young observed that a big problem for the village was nutrient depletion on the coffee tree plots. The government is discouraging the expansion of coffee production in the national park area so the village needs to learn better how to sustain production on their current coffee tree land. Young explained that considerable effort was made to determine projects that would benefit the village and improve their living conditions. Previous Peace Corps workers in the village began this process. Large projects such a hydro power plant for electricity can be sought through grant applications. Smaller projects often just need a local leader to organize and follow through.