

# What Are You Waiting for? Join the Peace Corps!

by Rachel Gutner

A 27-year-old man, dressed in casual clothing with bright blue eyes and long, blonde hair slicked back into a pony tail walks into a classroom of budding journalists. He could have been a teacher, a lawyer, or even a doctor. When he begins his presentation, the class discovers that he has spent the last two years in a tiny village in Peru. Jordan Mallah, who grew up in Malverne, has spent the last year and seven months teaching the natives of La Grama, Peru how to grow their own vegetables, brush their teeth, and wash their hands. Mallah is a member of the Peace Corps.

Mallah, like many people, dreamed of giving aid to people less fortunate and giving up time in his life to see these less fortunate people become enriched with a healthier lifestyle.

The Peace Corps is an organization that was created on March 1, 1961 to endorse world peace and friendship among nations throughout the world, according to [www.peacecorps.org](http://www.peacecorps.org). Volunteers are sent to

tainly get used to," laughed Mallah, who has since travelled by himself all over the world.

When he was 18, he went to work on a project in Uganda, Africa where poverty is one of the main concerns.

"Americans don't realize anything about the poverty that many other countries across the world experience," said Mallah. "When I saw the children in Africa, I wanted to help."

Mallah attended Valley Stream North High School and graduated in 1996. He then went on to James Madison University in Virginia, graduating in 1999 with a degree in Computer Information Systems.

Mallah decided to join the Peace Corps because he believed that the only way he could give thanks for all of the blessings he had growing up in America was by helping others.

Peace Corps volunteers all over the world are trained in business development, agriculture, environment, health and AIDS, and information technology. Each duty requires different skills, as well as working with many different types of people throughout the community.

Mallah's job is mainly focused on health education and teaching the members of the community about organic gardening.

"I teach [the community members] how to grow, prepare, and eat the vegetables so that they can change their poor diet habits," Mallah explained. "This is very important for them because most of the community is chronically malnourished and they need to learn how to eat a more balanced diet. Their culture is focused on the eating of guinea pigs and rice; therefore, the people need to learn better eating habits."

At first, adjusting to the community was difficult for Mallah.

"It was extremely challenging at the beginning of my stay in Peru," ex-



Courtesy of Jordan Mallah  
Mallah relaxes with his Peruvian "grandmother" near their home in La Grama, Peru.

Mallah explained that most of the people in his village don't have access to toothbrushes and toothpaste which means that they have a great deal of trouble taking care of their teeth. He also said that there aren't even any dentists available to help take care of the poor dental hygiene that exists within the community.

Growing up in the United States and living in Peru for almost two years has proven to Mallah that there are major distinctions between the cultures.

When Mallah first arrived in Peru, he was astounded by the lifestyle of the people. He said it took him at least one month just to adjust to the new way of life.

"When I come back to the United States, I am equally shocked by the differentiation between the cultures," said Mallah. "In America, we live in such a destructive way towards the earth, while in Peru they conserve all of their resources. After a month, my garbage can is barely filled."

"There is one difference between the U.S. and Peru that I have found to be completely different," explained Mallah. "The Peruvian people have no sense of time. They are always patient and are never in a rush to do anything. There is always time for communicating, preparing food, and performing other daily tasks."

"They have a different perception of time than [the Americans] do," continued Mallah. "Their entire lifestyle is completely more laid back than [the American lifestyle]."

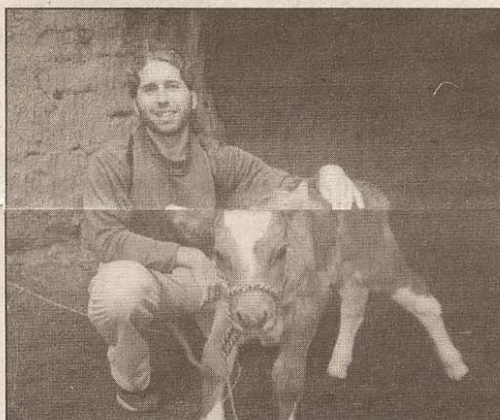
Mallah feels that living in Peru and volunteering for the Peace Corps has changed him. He said that he has become more patient and now appreciates how blessed Americans truly are.

"The goals that I have always had inside me, such as my desire to help other people and live in other cultures, have been strengthened by this experience," said Mallah. "It has enabled me to meet a lot of other like-minded Americans from different

parts of the country who want to work to make change in the world. It has also enabled me to gain a better perspective on what friendship really is."

When Mallah finishes his term in the Peace Corps, he plans to travel around South America, finishing the book he is writing. He eventually wants to return to New York and open a yoga studio since he is also a yoga teacher.

"I do miss living in the United States because I miss my family," said Mallah. "It's a big sacrifice to make, but, by seeing the differences that I am making, it's worth everything."



Courtesy of Jordan Mallah  
Jordan Mallah with a calf in front of his best friend's home in La Grama.

many different countries in order to promote peace by giving aid to the people in several different ways.

In order to become a volunteer for the Peace Corps, one must undergo an application process and write several essays. The applicant is interviewed and then experiences intensive medical checks.

Peace Corps volunteers are given a living allowance as well as medical and dental care during the period of their service. They also receive free transportation whenever they are being transported to and from the country. After the volunteers complete their service, they are given \$6,000 to spend as needed, according to [www.peacecorps.org](http://www.peacecorps.org).

Mallah's journey to the Peace Corps actually began almost 20 years ago.

At the age of eight, Mallah went with his parents and other members of his synagogue to Manhattan to feed the homeless. This experience left a lasting impression on Mallah.

In high school, he wrote an award-winning essay on world peace that sent him on a journey to Paris, France.

"Traveling alone in Paris, I thought to myself, 'this is something I could cer-



Courtesy of Jordan Mallah  
Mallah shows his freshly-harvested organic lettuce in his bio-intensive organic community garden.