

## **From Boulder to Paraguay: Ava-Rae Resnik Shares the Power of Peace Corps Service**

Volunteering in the Peace Corps is an excellent way to build community, explore different cultures and exercise environmental activism, according to Ava-Rae Resnik, who spoke at the Life in the Peace Corps event on Feb. 24.

Resnik, a Community Environmental Promoter for the Peace Corps, addressed around 30 University of Colorado Boulder students at the Center for Community. She is originally from Boulder, Colorado and graduated from Tulane University with a bachelor's in health and wellness with minors in biomedical engineering and environmental studies. Originally unsure of what her path would be post-graduation, she applied for Peace Corps on a whim.

"I needed a break from academia, and I wasn't ready to sit in a cubicle," Resnik explained. "I was really craving an experience."

Her experiences as an environmental volunteer in rural Paraguay allowed her to learn about a new culture and teach a community about her own. For example, Resnik taught her students how to bake banana bread. On the other hand, she learned that Paraguayans are very particular about the way they clean.

"A woman took the broom from my hand and was like, 'you are doing it wrong,'" Resnik said.

Resnik recalled her birthday as one of her best memories while in Paraguay. She was very stressed out that day because birthdays are very significant in Paraguay and she only had one small apartment to host a party for everyone in the community. Additionally, there was heavy rain causing intermittent power. Her friends later agreed to host, and she ended up just having a small dinner and relaxing with her friends.

"It was just very wholesome, like, wow, they really accept me as a community member," Resnik said.

During her time in Paraguay, Resnik was also able to jump start environmental projects to assist the community such as planting trees, starting a compost bin and start a garden at her school. This was one of her biggest goals while on service, Resnik explained, to assist the Paraguayans in achieving their environmental goals.

Resnik emphasized to prospective Peace Corps volunteers that the experience will allow them to step outside of their comfort zone and gain unique experiences.

Pamala Civins, organiser of the Life at the Peace Corps event, said she enjoys bringing in people like Resnik to speak because it can provide a fresh perspective to college students.

Civins graduated from CU Boulder in 1986 and was a Peace Corps volunteer herself from 1991-1994 in Nepal. Her role is to host and organize events around CU Boulder to share more about the Peace Corps.

“After my experience in the Peace Corps, I am not afraid to try anything,” Civins said.

Source: Pamala Civins, CU Boulder’s Peace Corps Strategic Campus Recruiter,  
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