



PEACE CORPS ALBANIA

DESCRIPTION OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Lauren Dukes — Albania

After a competitive application process stressing applicant skills, adaptability, and cross-cultural sensitivity, Lauren Dukes was selected to serve in Albania. She began Peace Corps training on March 16, 2011, in Elbasan, Albania, and completed a ten-week program. The training program included:

- **TECHNICAL: English Education Project** training consisted of approximately **63 hours** of training plus additional self-directed activities carried out in training communities, and a two-week practicum. The practical part consisted of teaching lessons and observing others teach. Methodologically, the training offered a subset of standard TEFL certificate training with a heavy emphasis on the specifics of teaching English in Albanian secondary schools and universities (large classrooms, few resources, dated textbooks) and other requirements of the English Education project in Albania (team teaching, community projects).
- **LANGUAGE:** Study of the Albanian language with emphasis on basic social communication using a community-based approach (**151 hours**).
- **CROSS-CULTURAL:** Instruction in communication skills and role as a facilitator in development. Exposure to community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, non-formal and adult education strategies and political structures (**22 hours**).
- **HEALTH:** Basic medical training and information. Preventive medicine, nutrition and mental health (**14 hours**).
- **SAFETY:** Strategies to reduce risks at home work and during travel (**12 hours**).

Lauren Dukes successfully completed training and was sworn in as a Peace Corps Volunteer on May 26, 2011. She was assigned to be a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Volunteer in Orikum, Albania.

ASSIGNMENT

Lauren's assignment included teaching at Hasan Pulo High School in Orikum. The High School in Orikum serves students from the three surrounding villages of Tragjas, Dukat, and Radhimë besides the students from Orikum city. There are 11 teachers and approximately 200 students. During her second year, Lauren also taught classes at the 9-Year school, Balil Pelari which has 16 teachers and approximately 500 students.

Year One (2011-2012)

Lauren worked directly with her Albanian counterpart to design innovative lesson plans that involved all the students and made them relatable to daily life and current events. She also introduced games into the lessons in order to improve participation and facilitate learning in a fun way. Lauren increased listening

and comprehension skills through the increased use of spoken English in the classroom. She assisted her counterpart in the grading of tests, essays, homework assignments, and projects. Lauren also created a grouping system within the classes in order to provide a simpler way to give students assignments within their capabilities and at their language level. She developed a class notebook organization system in order to facilitate more frequent note taking and increase quality.

Lauren taught a total of 20 teaching hours at the high school alongside her Albanian counterpart.

High School Classes Taught 2011-2012

Grade Level	Number of Classes	Number of Lessons per Class per Week	Number of Students Taught
10 th	2	3	63
11 th	2	3	64
12 th	2	4	54

Year Two (2012-2013)

In her second year, Lauren continued to implement her projects and structure from the previous year. Lauren developed the rubric for the annual group project in the high school in order to give it a clearer definition, set deadlines, and stricter policies regarding plagiarism, citing, and individual work. She also began work in the 9-Year school co-teaching with one of the English teachers. She implemented the class notebook organization system within the classes in the 9-Year school. Lauren improved listening and pronunciation skills by reading the texts in the lessons aloud in her native accent.

Lauren taught a total of 20 teaching hours at the high school alongside her Albanian counterpart.

High School Classes Taught 2012-2013

Grade Level	Number of Classes	Number of Lessons per Class per Week	Number of Students Taught
10 th	3	3	82
11 th	2	3	65
12 th	2	4	59

The 9-Year School serves grades 1-5 in the lower school and grades 6-9 in the upper school. Lauren worked only in the upper school which has 16 teachers and around 240 students. All the students study English as their second language.

Lauren taught a total of 8 teaching hours at the 9-Year school alongside her Albanian counterpart.

9-Year School Classes Taught 2012-2013

Grade Level	Number of Classes	Number of Lessons per Class per Week	Number of Students Taught
6 th	2	2	72
7 th	2	2	55

ACHIEVEMENTS

Main assignment

Over the course of her two years in Orikum, Lauren taught seven different English courses to a wide range of students and community members. The courses varied in duration, frequency, and level, but they all had a focus on improved communication skills and incorporated critical thinking. Lessons were taught informally using a variety of methods and mediums such as songs, images, articles, and games. By teaching to a varied student demographic Lauren was able to build more relationships within her community, allowing her to integrate more successfully and to create more work and partnership opportunities.

In the spring of 2012, together with the local municipality, Lauren organized a contest within the high school and the 9-year school and challenged students to design their dream school. Essays and models were submitted and the winning entries were voted on by the other students. The purpose of the competition was to motivate students to identify issues in their educational environment and promote forward thinking and problem solving.

Lauren worked with a small group of students to create a youth group focused on discussing environmental issues and gender issues in their community and country. Meetings were held at the school and activities included a hike to a twelfth century church located outside Orikum, a walk around the city to identify areas of natural beauty and areas of pollution, and participation in a national youth leadership conference organized by Peace Corps Volunteers. Two of the group members also traveled to Tirana to participate in the flashmob event that took place on Earth Day in 2012.

Five students from the high school participated in the annual Write On! Albania creative writing contest in the spring of 2013 and Lauren held weekly practice sessions leading up to the day of the competition. During practice sessions, Lauren helped the students develop their creativity, expand their descriptive vocabulary, and enlarge their imagination. Because the competition focuses on creativity and not composition, students were free to improve their story telling skills in a stress-free environment.

Secondary Projects

In partnership with World Vision, Lauren participated in several summer camps in 2011 and 2012 for at-risk children from various villages outside of Vlorë. She worked as a counselor and an instructor and taught life skills lessons on healthy eating, ways of handling anger, learning to identify communities based on relationships, and learning to define rights and responsibilities.

Lauren assisted and participated in many different projects and activities during her two-year service including the 2nd and 3rd Annual Folk Games Fun Run - 5th and 6th Annual Folk Games in Shkodra in March of 2012 and 2013, the Paralympics sponsored by Vodafone in June 2012, the Peace Football Festival in September of 2012 in Koplik, and a flashmob organized by Peace Corps Volunteers in partnership with Green Line Albania as part of an environmental awareness campaign. The flashmob took place in Tirana on Earth Day and was conceptualized as a way to highlight Green Line Albania's Clean Albania in One Day event.

In April of 2012, Lauren worked with the Office of Tourism in the local municipality to create an updated guidebook to Orikum. Lauren was responsible for the design and layout of the entire book and also assisted with the English translations. Her work was recognized by the mayor of Orikum who awarded her a certificate of appreciation.

After identifying a desire among the girls in Orikum to have a soccer team, Lauren worked with a male counterpart from her community to create the first girls' soccer team in Orikum. Lauren and her

counterpart held practices four times a week beginning in September of 2012. The girls were taught technique, discipline, teamwork, exercise, and the importance of a healthy diet.

In fact, throughout her service, Lauren used a shared passion for soccer to forge bonds with Albanians across both genders. While living with her host family, she played soccer with her host brother, his friends, and her host father on a regular basis. In Orikum, she played with local boys which created more relationships within the community and also gave her a status of respect among her male students whose favorite question in English then became, "What is your favorite team?" or the comparative, "Do you like Barcelona or Real Madrid?" She was even approached by several young boys to create a boys team after they had seen her run practices with the girls' team.

Specialized Training

In November of 2011, Lauren attended the Albanian English Language Teacher's Association's (ELTA) regional teacher's conference located in Lezhë. The focus of the conference was on utilizing English textbooks to their full advantage and applying modern techniques and methodology in Albanian classrooms.

Lauren achieved a rating of "Advanced Low" in Albanian language proficiency interview.

Leadership

Lauren served on the Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) Grant Committee from August 2012 to April 2013. She attended quarterly meetings and assessed proposals according to a set of guidelines along with the other committee members.

Lauren delivered a session with her Albanian counterpart during Pre-Service Training (PST) in April 2012 that discussed the various styles of co-teaching and demonstrated each style with her Albanian counterpart. This was the first time that a counterpart has been able to participate in a training session.

During her group's Language Refresher conference in October of 2011, Lauren delivered a session on Albanian sentence structure.

In May 2012, Lauren participated as an instructor in a teacher training conference held by Smart Center in Vlorë and gave a session on motivation within the classroom.

Based on request, Lauren contributed articles to the Peace Corps Cultural Manual, the Gender and Development organization, the Gender and Equality newsletter, and also preparatory materials for incoming groups of trainees.

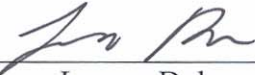
CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that in accordance with Executive Order No. 11103 of April 10, 1963, Lauren Dukes served satisfactorily as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Her service ended on April 24th, 2013.

Pursuant to section 5(f) of the Peace Corps Act, 22 USC 2504(f), as amended, any former Volunteer employed by the United States Government following his Peace Corps Volunteer service is entitled to have any period of satisfactory Peace Corps Volunteer service credited for purposes of retirement, seniority, reduction in force, leave, and other privileges based on length of Government service. That service shall not be credited toward completion of the probationary or trial period or completion of any service requirement for career appointment.


This is to certify that in accordance with Executive Order 11103 of April 10, 1963; Lauren Dukes is eligible to be appointed as a career-conditional employee in the competitive civil service on a non-competitive basis. This benefit under the Executive Order extends for a period of one year after termination of Volunteer service, except that the employing agency may extend the period for up to three

years for a former Volunteer who enters military service, pursues studies at a recognized institution of higher learning, or engages in other activities that, in the view of the appointing agency, warrant extension of the period.



Lauren Dukes
Peace Corps Volunteer

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Group



Earl Wall
Country Director