



**33RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF
RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS
OF SOUTH FLORIDA, INC.**

- 10:30 AM Registration
Fair Trade Market opens
Sales open for RPCV of WI – Madison’s
2018 International Calendar
- 11:20 AM Buffet Brunch is Served
- 12:15 PM Welcome Remarks – Jen Wos
Election of 2019-20 Directors - Greg Zell
- 12:30 PM Introduction of Speaker – Linda Whitmyre
Guest Speaker – Eileen Higgins
- 1:30 PM Adjourn – Jen Wos

- 1:40 PM Jen Wos to convene the 2017-18 Board of Directors of RPCVFS and hold the election of Officers/Executive Committee (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Controller and Secretary). New President will then preside and call for a motion to adjourn meeting.

Eileen Higgins – Eileen is a business owner, community advocate, and County Commissioner for Miami-Dade’s 5th District. As County Commissioner, Eileen has been an advocate for our local residents and small businesses. She has fought for transportation solutions, championed affordable housing, helped Flagler St. businesses suffering through endless construction recovery, and defended our environment and green space.

Early in her career, inspired by a work assignment that exposed her to Third World poverty, Eileen Higgins became committed to the causes of global poverty alleviation and community development. She worked with Mercy Corps; she traveled to Transylvania as a member of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council. Then, Higgins decided she wanted to make development work her life’s work. She left her position as global marketing director for Jose Cuervo and signed up for a three-year stint as the U.S. Peace Corps country director for Belize.

In Belize, what Higgins calls "a mini-melting pot of Central American and Caribbean cultures," two-thirds of the population is under the age of 25, with little to no job prospects. As a result, much of Higgins' team's development efforts are targeted at the country's youth. Volunteers support the efforts of emerging local 4-H clubs and after-school programs; assist teachers in rural villages with literacy efforts; and support government-sponsored HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns, targeted largely at young women.

The strategic and financial planning aspects of the job, Higgins says, are relatively similar to what she did in the corporate world. Much different, though, are the challenges of training a group of volunteers versus hired employees. "Our volunteers come from all sorts of backgrounds, ranging in age from 21 to 72. You really have to work hard to get to know them, to see where they need skills developed and where their skills are very strong, so that we can find good assignments for them," she says.

"The financial rewards are obviously not the same as working in the private sector, and the job – like any job – can be stressful," Higgins says. But, "this job comes with a different kind of payback. It's worth the effort." She mentions her experience in visiting a rural school assisted by one of her volunteers, a woman named Anna. "The students loved her. Teachers came up to me and said, "We wouldn't be where we are today without her."

It was, Higgins says, a reminder that "Peace Corps is needed and we make a difference."