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RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

By Jonathan Pearson

BULGARIA
Many kids like to wear nail polish. For those concerned about the harmful chemicals associated by the product, how about the world's first edible, organic nail polish? Inspired by their children, Bulgaria RPCVs and husband and wife team Audrey Amara and Josh Kroot (2004-2006) have created Kid Licks, nail polish that is derived from a recipe made from organic fruits, vegetables and plants. Currently, the nail polish is being sold in small quantities in the Los Angeles area, but the response is leading to plans for expansion. Audrey says the couple wants to use their product to promote healthier beauty practices and give kids a way to use nail polish without adult supervision. More can be found at http://kidlicks.com

COLOMBIA
A practicing lawyer since 1987, Janet B. Beck (1968-1971) has spent the entirety of her professional career fighting for oppressed groups in society, including women, LGBT and transgender clients and victims of human trafficking. She is being recognized for her fight against injustice and has been named the winner of the 2015 WGRC Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award by the Women’s Gender and Resource Center in the clinical faculty category. Since 2009 Beck has worked as a professor at the University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic. At the Immigration Clinic, Beck, along with her colleagues and students, represent poverty-stricken clients that would otherwise not have legal representation.

BURKINA FASO/HONDURAS
Heather Joy Thompson (1999-2001) was recently featured on the TV segment, “Oprah: Where Are They Now?” Eight years prior Thompson had been a guest on the show when Sean “P. Diddy” Combs chose her to be his personal assistant after a nationwide competition on YouTube for the position. At the time of the show Thompson cited her experience in the Peace Corps as one of the reasons she was uniquely qualified for the job. After working for Diddy for a year Thompson received a call from the State Department, inviting her to become a U.S. diplomat. She has since served in South Africa and is currently preparing for a post at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. Quoted in an article on the Huffington Post, Winfrey said, “In the brief history of Where Are They Now? Heather Joy Thompson’s update is one of the most impressive we’ve seen.”

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Glen Burnie (MD) High School English as a Second Language teacher Tema Encarnación (2000-2001) was named a 2015 Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Fellow. She is one of only 35 teachers in the United States and Canada selected for the award, and will participate in a two-week geographic learning expedition aboard the National Geographic Explorer to Iceland and Greenland. Encarnación grew up in Annapolis, and graduated from Annapolis High School in 1996. She received her bachelor’s degree from George Washington University, and her master’s from Notre Dame of Maryland.

Twelve residents of Racine, Wisconsin were honored for their volunteer work at a ceremony in April. Among them was Laurence Gregg (1963-65), who received the Senior Award for extensive volunteer work throughout his life and especially after retirement. He retired from a 35-year teaching career in 1999. Since then Gregg has spent lots of time volunteering, including working with the Racine Theatre Guild, Our Savior’s Lutheran Church food pantry, and the Choral Arts Society.

EL SALVADOR
University of Arizona graduate student Robert Alvarez is among two dozen American and European students to be named a 2015 Humanity in Action Diplomacy and Diversity Fellow. Recruited from a pool of 421 applicants representing more than 180 universities around the world, Alvarez will participate in a program that helps