I. Introduction:
Looking around this classroom tonight, I am going to take a wild guess and say that you all have busy schedules like mine. I work a 40+ hour a week job as a bookkeeper, I have two middle schoolers who are both involved in extracurricular activities, my husband and I own a general contracting business, and I am trying to finish my accounting degree so that I can sit for the CPA exam. Oh, did I mention that I serve on the board of directors for the Tacoma Performing Dance Company and volunteer at the local food bank? There is a reason I go to school at night – I don’t have any other time! Because my time is so precious to me, I begrudge spending it on “unworthy” pursuits. For example, I enjoy my job, but at the end of the day it’s just not that fulfilling – I mean, what do I have to show for all my hard work but a paycheck? It’s great when I have to pay the bills, but otherwise the money itself is not all that satisfying to me. I know that I am not the only one who feels this way. CNN.com reports that only 50.7 percent of Americans are satisfied with their jobs. For my part, I would feel satisfied if the work I do was making a real change in the world. Thesis: Therefore, I have decided that when I retire, I want to volunteer with the Peace Corps in order to use my skills to make a meaningful difference in people’s lives. Mapping Statement: Tonight I’d like to share with you what I have learned about the Peace Corps organization, what the job expectations are, and some benefits of volunteering.

II. Body:
A. About the Peace Corps Organization
1. The Peace Corps was officially formed by Congress on September 21, 1961 under the Peace Corps act. This followed an October 1960 speech by President John F. Kennedy at the University of Michigan where he challenged students to serve their country and others. He issued an Executive Order to form the Peace Corps on March 1, 1961. Since that time, more than 182,000 volunteers have served in over 136 countries around the world.
2. The Peace Corps mission is threefold: to meet the needs of interested countries for skilled workers, to share a better understanding of other cultures with fellow Americans, and to foster a better understanding of Americans to other cultures.
3. Peace Corps volunteers serve in a variety of disciplines. According to statistics published on the Peace Corps web site, while the traditional area of education remains strong with 34% of volunteers, another traditional area - agriculture has fallen to 6% of total volunteers. Changing global priorities such as health and HIV prevention and business development are now using 20% and 16% of volunteers respectively.
4. The geographic location in which volunteers serve depends upon their qualifications for ongoing projects. For example, in Africa the current need for skilled workers is in HIV prevention and business development for women. In the former Soviet Union countries, there is a great need for economists and business consultants to help the centrally planned economies move to a market driven system.

**Transition:** With this diverse group of assignments and volunteers, the Peace Corps has developed an effective system to match skills and opportunities through their application and training process. With my education and background, I would expect to be working in business development.

**B. Job Expectations / Requirements**

1. A volunteer selected as a business development consultant needs to have at least a bachelor’s degree in business with an emphasis in economics, finance or accounting. In addition, the applicant should have at least five years of “on the job” experience in one of these areas.

2. The Peace Corps believes that a well integrated volunteer is the most successful, therefore there is intensive training program required before a volunteer is placed on an assignment. Upon accepting an invitation to work in a host country, a volunteer begins a training curriculum that includes language immersion, in-depth cross cultural training, and health and safety guidelines. Once the volunteer arrives in the host country, they will serve 8-12 weeks with another Peace Corps volunteer before receiving their individual assignment in order to further acclimate them to the culture.

3. A Peace Corps volunteer commits to a 27 month term of service overseas.

4. As a business development consultant, a volunteer could be working on a variety of projects including increasing family income, training and advising entrepreneurs in free market opportunities, or helping women and minority groups increase their participation in the marketplace. Generally a business consultant’s assignment will begin in a classroom environment in order to build relationships. That experience will serve as a springboard to other projects.

**Transition:** The jobs that Peace Corps volunteers do are demanding and challenging. The Peace Corps realizes this and offers a robust compensation package as well as providing a support infrastructure “in country” that minimizes the risk to volunteers.

**C. Benefits / Risks**

1. There are tangible benefits to service in the Peace Corps. While in service, volunteers make a living wage comparable to the community they are serving, and their medical and dental
needs are covered. Volunteers accrue two days of vacation per month that they can save up and use to travel to nearby countries. Upon the end of a volunteer’s service they receive a “readjustment” benefit. Currently it is about $6000.

2. In order to minimize risk to their volunteers, the Peace Corps places a high priority on safety. Prior to initiating any projects, the host community is assessed for things such as: secure living and working sites; access to basic services such as medical, banking and postal; the means of transportation and communication; and the proximity to other volunteers. Further, volunteer’s movements are monitored in order to facilitate communication and evacuation in the event of an emergency.

3. The intangible benefits of serving in the Peace Corps may be the most valuable – the satisfaction that comes with representing your country well while serving the needs of others.

Transition: (Pause) There is a tee shirt that I see occasionally – “He who dies with the most toys wins”. I feel that sentiment wraps up everything that is wrong with contemporary American society.

III. Conclusion:
The Peace Corps’ mission of sharing a better understanding of other cultures to our own communities while representing the best of American ideals to those other cultures lines up much better with my personal values. As a Peace Corps volunteer, I would be given the training and support in order to use my skills in a way that would make a meaningful difference in people’s lives. Although there may be some risks, I would be compensated – and not just in salary and travel. I would have the satisfaction of knowing that I made a positive impact on the world. At the end of the day, I would rather be judged by the lives I have touched than on the wealth of my toy box.

Works Cited
