



Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

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Carol Todd: Norwich's Peace Corps Preparatory Program



In the summer of 1986, **Carol Todd** (left) returned to Norwich from a national conference on volunteerism with an idea for her husband, President W. Russell Todd. She enthusiastically shared a presentation she had attended by Loret Miller Ruppe, director of the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was a program established by President John F. Kennedy to create opportunities for Americans to serve their country and the world. Rupp indicated the Peace Corps was developing an ROTC-like training program to recruit new volunteers. The timing was serendipitous.

President Todd had been searching for a way to expand volunteerism at Norwich beyond the tradition of national service. "There are two ways to prevent war," he said. "One is to make friends and the other is to be so strong that nobody wants to attack you. I see the Peace Corps program as being the first."

With Mrs. Todd's support and guidance, Norwich became the first college in the nation to offer the Peace Corps Preparatory Program (PCPP). Financed and administered by the university, the program launched in the fall of 1987 with fifteen participants.



Cadets could elect the PCPP training curriculum in lieu of the ROTC requirement and civilian students could also enroll. Courses included languages, community service, and the economics and politics of developing nations. Students were required to spend the summer between their junior and senior years as volunteers in Central or South America.

The Peace Corps was thrilled that Norwich's model could be replicated at other colleges and universities.

With the Peace Corps seeking to double the size of its volunteer force and reduce turnover, a student-loan forgiveness program was added in exchange for a Peace Corps service. Nursing and



PCPP student Tricia Featherstonhaugh helps homeowner prepare for winter, Fall '87

engineering students were specifically recruited to fill the high demand for trained leaders in those fields. **Patricia Featherstonhaugh '87** said, "I have never met anyone who had a bad time in the Peace Corps. Since I'm going to be a nurse and they are in such high demand, I wanted to experience more than one way of living."

At the turn of the millennium and new leadership priorities, Norwich's Peace Corps Preparatory Program phased out in the early 2000s. However, the dream of being the model for a national program was realized by the Peace Corps sponsoring a preparatory curriculum at about 50 partner schools.

President and Mrs. Todd's legacy lives on at Norwich as well. [The Todd Lecture Series](#) was created by Ellen and John Drew, the Todd's daughter and son-in-law, in recognition of their lifelong commitment to community and country. The series hosts the nation's foremost thought leaders from business, politics, arts, science, military and other arenas to engage the Norwich and Central Vermont communities.

Records documenting women's history and experience at Norwich are available through the University Archives. <https://archives.norwich.edu/>

In 1972, Vermont College merged with Norwich University. 2024 marks the **50th anniversary** of the first women to live on the Northfield campus and the first to join the NU Corps of Cadets—two years prior to the US Service Academies!

Attend a Women Kicking Glass Event.

- Saturday, May 18, 2024 [Women Kicking Glass So. California Gathering](#), Los Angeles, CA
- Sunday, June 23, 2024 - [Washington DC Women Kicking Glass Reception](#), Military Women's Memorial, Arlington, VA
- Friday, September 20, 2024 - [Women Kicking Glass Gala](#), Plumley Armory, Norwich