



Alumna Robin Picard: Peace Corps Volunteer



Last spring, **Robin Picard '82** delivered a powerful presentation on the Rindge campus describing her work in Ukraine as a Peace Corps volunteer. In her presentation entitled “Why Ukraine Matters: The Work of the Peace Corps,” Robin spoke of the history, the struggles, and her own political views and experiences during her time there.



Robin was stationed in Ukraine in a town called Hadiach in March 2013 for what was scheduled to be a 27-month volunteer post. However, Robin's stay was cut short when she was evacuated from the country in February 2014. When a rebellion broke out within the city of Maidan, Robin's Peace Corps group was instructed to go to their safe houses; they were asked to leave the country within a short period of time after that.

The attentive audience at Franklin Pierce listened to Robin describe how the Ukrainian people she met saw the world quite differently than she did. Most of the people she met in Ukraine did not understand what would “coerce” people from America to leave “paradise” and volunteer to help others. The Ukrainians appeared to have a hard time welcoming and trusting new people. Robin surmised that this social behavior evolved after years of suppression and the loss of loved ones. She related how saying hello to a stranger and smiling is a social oddity in the Ukrainian culture. With Robin's infectious smile and easygoing personality, she was undoubtedly a curiosity!

The work Robin focused on during her time in Ukraine was to educate, empower, and instill hope in the people. She taught them about leadership, individual activism, healthy lifestyles, healthcare, and computer skills. Robin spent time with local citizens to help arm them with knowledge and to encourage them to find the power within themselves to fight for a better tomorrow. Before she left, Robin also started a Skype program that connected senior citizens in Ukraine with senior citizens in Keene, N.H. Shortly after Robin came to Franklin Pierce to make her presentation, the Peace Corps found a new post for her in Mozambique. Robin Picard: another reason to be Pierce Proud!

~ By Courtney Rivard '14, communication intern