

Volunteers Profiles

GISCorps Volunteers' Profiles

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Name: Sean Bohac

Organization: RECON EnvironmentalGISCorps mission/Year served: Hurricane Katrina Mississippi Mobile GIS Shop – Hancock County ICS/2005

Share your experience about the mission: The mission was one of the most dynamic, empowering GIS assignments I have ever had. We mustered in 7 days to Jackson, assembled data, equipment, drove to the disaster zone and set up a very functional lab supporting emergency personnel with paper maps and spatial analysis – very satisfying.

Anything else to share: I love the mix of tech and art in producing efficient analysis and clear maps.

Sean Bohac

Name: Joel Nelson

Organization: University of MinnesotaGISCorps mission/Year served: Katrina/2005

Anything else to share: Truly a life-changing experience, this was a wonderful opportunity for me to contribute some help to the Hurricane Katrina crisis, and learn from fellow GIS gurus along the way. The people I met, both from the area and fellow volunteers from all over the country, were top-notch in their respective GIS disciplines. I would gladly participate again.

Joel Nelson

Name: Jay S. Meehl, GISP

Organization: Hennepin County GIS Office, MN

GISCorps mission/Year served: Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFF) & UN Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) – Jakarta and Meulaboh, Indonesia/March 2005

Share your experience about the mission: I provided GIS support to the United Nations Joint Logistic Centre in Jakarta, Indonesia for a couple of days, creating data and logistic maps. Due to shifts in personnel I was sent to Meulaboh, one of the hardest hit areas along the coast of Sumatra, to temporarily support a Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC). During this period I filled map requests for various agencies, organized spatial libraries, provided hardware maintenance, and updated agency contact databases.

Anything else to share: I first became interested in applying GIS to humanitarian efforts while volunteering in Limbe, Cameroon in 2002. Following that, I returned to school and completed a Master's Degree in Geographic Information Science with an emphasis in Emergency and Humanitarian Relief Systems. However my true education came from the opportunities provided by GISCorps, where I really learned the important role GIS can play in relief efforts. Since then I have provided GIS support to the American Refugee Committee, a local chapter of the American Red Cross, and a Mercy Corps Office in the Republic of Georgia. Thanks GISCorps!

Jay Meehl

Name: Katy Carpenter

Organization: Tri-State Generation and Transmission

GISCorps mission/Year served: Katrina - 2005

Share your experience about the mission: Worked for 10 days in Wiggins Mississippi two weeks after hurricane Katrina. Helped FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers locate and prioritize those with the greatest need.

Katy Carpenter
Name: Yasser M. Ayad

Organization: Professor, Clarion University of PA

GISCorps mission/Year served: Marshall Islands Geospatial Web Application – with GSDI/2006

Share your experience about the mission: The mission was not completed since the recipient did not follow up on preliminary report.

Anything else to share: I've been working with GIS and GIS-related projects since the mid nineties for my graduate studies and research. Usually teaching the tools and concepts of geospatial technologies is my regular day-to-day activity, while maintaining a good contact by means of services and consultancy with local government and the public sectors. Volunteering is a part of my life-long mission, not only in the GIS world, helping others who either lack the experience or the funding to accomplish their goals is one of the most rewarding accomplishments one could make in their professional career and at a personal level too.

Yasser M. Ayad

Name: Michael Tuffly

Organization: ERIA Consultants, LLC

GISCorps mission/Year served: UNOSAT - Myanmar (Burma) Project/2008

Share your experience about the mission: It was a rewarding experience to assist other people in the time of need.

Michael Tuffly

Name: Carl Kinkade

Organization: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

GISCorps mission/Year served: Provide GIS Training in Afghanistan/2008

Share your experience about the mission: My mission was to provide GIS training for faculty and students from Kabul Polytechnic University and Kabul University in Kabul, Afghanistan. The mission went very well with the use of a translator. We also went through datasets available for Afghanistan and discussed applications and teaching methods with the faculty. They were very warm and appreciative of the course and hopefully we were successful in training the trainers who will be the ones to build their long term geospatial capacity as a country. They understood the importance of using geospatial technology and the importance of sharing this knowledge with the students.

Anything else to share: When I started using GIS in graduate school for community and regional planning, I immediately understood the importance of how effective it is to make informed decisions and to communicate with partners and the public. Since that day, I have been using GIS. I have always volunteered for activities which include boy scouts, coaching, and the US Peace Corps so the GISCorps was a very easy decision for me. It brought home two things that are important to me, GIS and public service. Over the last two years, I have traveled across Asia, Africa, Middle East, Central and South America teaching thousands of public health staff around the world about how to use GIS for public health. The hope is that at some point we can get past the stage of "why do we need GIS?" to where it is assumed that we

will use it and can then just talk about the best way to implement it and funding pots will always have a line item for it.....I know, keep dreaming.....

Carl Kinkade

Name: Tia morita

Organization: Booz Allen Hamilton

GISCorps mission/Year served: Wide Availability Response Project (WARP) – Caribbean with MapAction/2011

Share your experience about the mission: Working on this project has been a highly rewarding experience, and indeed will provide value and essential GIS data for emergency preparedness and response in the Caribbean region. Volunteering is not easy, and certainly requires careful planning of one's time, but it is well worth it.

Anything else to share: GIS is a powerful tool and a unique skill set that only a few across nations have. It is incumbent upon us skilled GIS users, creators and developers to put our unique trade to use to impart positive results for changing lives, policy and decision making for the better.

Tia morita

Name: Scott Ferguson

Organization: HeroDynamix

GISCorps mission/Year served: St. Louis County EOC, 2011

Share your experience about the mission: During the aftermath of the St. Louis tornados in April '11, I was happy to offer any assistance I could. After connecting with my local GIS user's group and URISA, I learned that the St. Louis Emergency Operations Center needed GIS expertise to help manage the disaster response efforts. Being able to employ GIS analysis in the efforts made it a rewarding experience. Validating and updating the road conditions in real-time using GIS software helped to manage the emergency response. In situations like this, it really makes more people aware of the value of GIS.

Anything else to share: Everyone uses GIS these days. Location and time have become more critical to everyone's daily life. I've been involved in GIS for 15 years and can see how it's evolved into a mainstream concept. I try to encourage companies to integrate it into their production workflow. GIS gives them better insight and analysis to their products and services. I'm passionate about GIS and passionate about helping people with GIS.

Scott Ferguson

Name: (Mary) German Whitley

Organization: Seasonal/On-call employee of Watershed Sciences, Inc.- Corvallis , OR Seasonal/On-call employee of Deer Creek GIS-Chico, CA

GISCorps mission/Year served: DPRK Project with iMMAP/WFP, 2010

Share your experience about the mission: I've really enjoyed my time working on the project. Since I work seasonally, it is nice to have some GIS work in the off-season to keep me on my toes and make contacts I might not make otherwise. And every project I work on, volunteer or otherwise, leads me to new discoveries within ArcMap that make my job easier and more efficient. It would be nice to have a video conference at some point during the project just to meet some of the other team members "face-to-face".

Anything else to share: I fell into GIS while working for the US Forest Service as a Hydrologist almost 15 years ago when most tasks were done via command line. I had an aptitude for it that has helped form my career ever since. GIS even led me to meeting my husband at a conference (double nerd alert!). Now that he is retired from the Forest Service, and I work part-time, we have more time to volunteer and travel.

German Whitley

Name: Kyung Kim

Organization: Geographic Services Inc.

GISCorps mission/Year served: Wide Availability Response Project (WARP) – Caribbean with MapAction/2011

Share your experience about the mission: My mission was to search for various spatial data for Belize (a small country neighboring Mexico) and collate them based on the project instructions. Everybody says easily that we need to be prepared always, but I found this is not really easy. Locating the sources is not so easy as I expected, first of all. The project work system and basic approach of the project are also quite something to learn, also. But, I feel good that I do something good and widen my GIS capability at the same time.

Anything else to share: Through my work I first encountered ArcExplorer many years ago, and got more interested to learn GIS in evening school. Now I am doing work with ArcGIS and some programming also. I always find myself like reading maps and learning about the earth and computers. Briefly I had lost my GIS job, and I thought volunteering in GIS would be a good way to keep in touch with GIS. Now I have my job back but I want to keep volunteering also!

Kyung Kim

Name: Nathan Pugh

Organization: USDA-Farm Service Agency-Aerial Photography Field Office

GISCorps mission/Year served: Wide Availability Response Project (WARP) – Caribbean with MapAction/2011

Share your experience about the mission: To improve operational disaster-preparedness by establishing a swiftly available repository of basic GIS data to support rapid response humanitarian missions from within or outside of a country in the event of a disaster in the Latin American & Caribbean Region. The purpose is not necessarily to provide online viewing of the data. It is primarily to allow a swift start to the creation of situation maps of the circumstances of a disaster, through the combination of the basic WARP datasets and field reports in a desktop environment, and the swift distribution of those map products in hard copy to field personnel, and as PDFs, JPEGs and KMLs to national and international humanitarian/ emergency/aid/funding agencies.

Anything else to share: There are not many volunteer possibilities to assist humanitarian organizations from home so I am very happy to have this opportunity. It has been difficult to find quality spatial data for St. Lucia. Most data available is not free and often is out of date or not accurate enough for disaster response purposes. This however makes it even more rewarding when making contacts and receiving data from those who are willing contribute and share an appreciation for organizations like GISCorps and MapAction. It has been a gratifying experience, one I hope to continue.

Nathan Pugh

Name: Rob George

Organization: Rite Aid Corporation

GISCorps mission/Year served: Identity Inc., Montgomery County, MD/2011

Share your experience about the mission: It has been a pleasure working with Identity, Inc looking to see if wealth flight has created an unfair advantage to children within the Montgomery County school system. It is always exciting to put data on a map and hear people say "Wow." There has been quite a bit of wow's coming from the group I am working with.

Anything else to share: I have been doing some sort of geographic research for the past 20 years. I am currently the Director of Market Research for Rite Aid Corporation. We use geography to locate our stores, place product in our stores and market to people around our stores. I signed up to be a part of GISCorps after Hurricane Katrina and this is the first project I have been a part of. I am extremely excited to use my skill set to hopefully better other's lives.

Name: Hiroyuki Iseki, Ph.D.

Organization: Assistant Professor, University of Maryland

GISCorps mission/Year served: Earthquake/Tsunami relief mission with Crisis Commons – Japan/2011

Share your experience about the mission: It was an invaluable opportunity to use my expertise, knowledge, and professional connections in the efforts to provide assistance to people who suffer from the earthquake/tsunami disasters in my own county, Japan. It was amazing to see so many people volunteer for helping international organizations'

operations in Japan, and I was lucky to be part of it. In addition, it was a good experience for me to learn more about advanced technologies that enhance capacity of GISs by working with other GISCorps volunteers, who have technical skills and knowledge as well as a good heart.

Anything else to share: I use GISs to process, analyze, and visualize data for my research in urban planning and policy analysis with a focus on transportation, land use, and environment. I also teach courses on applications of GISs to planning, with an emphasis on how spatial thinking and analysis could help us understand built environment, people's living conditions, and related urban planning/policy issues. GISs have become such an important, useful tool in the field of planning. And I hope people in the field will always seek the use of GISs beyond simple data mapping/visualization.

Hiroyuki Iseki

Name: Jasmine Ward

Organization: Ward Computer Services Inc.

GISCorps mission/Year served: DPRK Project with iMMAP/WFP, 2010

Share your experience about the mission: The digitization project was both challenging and interesting. I was able to grow professionally by utilizing new skills in completing the scope of the project. I also felt fulfilled knowing that the work was being used for a humanitarian purpose. The coordinators and team leaders of the project were very knowledgeable of GIS and demonstrated professionalism and organization in the execution of the project. I was impressed with the collaboration tools that were used to coordinate the project effort.

Anything else to share: I became interested in GIS through a high school internship/mentorship with the NASA Langley Research Center GIS team. I was able to learn GIS application principles and GIS problem solving skills through interesting real-world projects. That internship experience fostered my enthusiasm for GIS and gave me the eye for identifying emerging applications of GIS.

Jasmine Ward

Name: Dr. Terance L. Winemiller Ph.D., GISP

Organization: Associate Professor, Auburn University at Montgomery

GISCorps mission/Year served: Mission with JAXA – Japan/2011

Share your experience about the mission: The GISCorps mission was to analyze satellite imagery to help guide the emergency response efforts for the coastal communities that were either directly impacted by the March, 2011 tsunami inundation or, at the time, had not reported their condition. After I was selected to participate, I received geographic coordinates for three cities located on the northern coast of Japan and access to public and restricted areas on the USGS EROS Hazards Data Distribution System. Our specific assignment was to search for pre- and post disaster coverage of the three areas of interest, Miyagi-Kamaishi, Iwate-Miyako, and Iwate-Miyakoshi. Original data were processed and enhanced in ENVI 4.8. Final maps were produced in ArcMap 10.0., by creating multiple data frames for small scale pre-disaster and post-disaster scenes as well as large scale insets to illustrate highly impacted zones in the area of interest. Our finished maps were uploaded to the USGS server for distribution. Involvement in this project provided an invaluable opportunity for students enrolled in our GIS program to gain real-world experience in a disaster situation where GIS project design, development, and operations require deployment of high-quality output in an extraordinarily short period of time.

Anything else to share: I became interested in GIS as a graduate student at Louisiana State University. Today, I use GIS in my research and teach undergraduate and graduate courses in GIS at Auburn University at Montgomery. There is nothing more gratifying than to use the expertise I have in remote sensing and GIS to help others in times of need. The GISCorps provides a way to hopefully improve quality of life on a global basis.

Terry Winemiller

Name: Guy Maurice

Organization: RENECO wild conservation

GISCorps mission/Year served: Geo-Referencing & Cleansing Election Database – Chad/2010

Share your experience about the mission: This project was commissioned by Information Management and Mine Action Programs (iMMAP) who is assisting the Chadian Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) in Chad. The goals of this project were to geo-reference +/-10,000 polling stations for the entire country and then add attribute data such as type of polling station, mobile network operator available, accessibility, and time to reach from the sub-district center to that dataset. This dataset should have been used for the preparation of the upcoming legislative elections due in September 2010. Unfortunately the mission has been postponed/cancelled as the work as the data were not efficient. I believe iMap is still waiting for a commitment from the CENI to provide better data for spatial referencing and/or support to spatially locate the polling stations. The CENI by the time was quite busy with the election census and the communication was barely possible between the CENI and iMMAP. Indeed, we needed better quality data as for spatial reference. With the data received we could hardly reference by manually linking one by one about 50% (max. 5 000 out of ~10 000) of the polling stations. 10% (about 900 polling stations) only could be automatically linked based on the village name and the rest still needed to be manually linked (about 9 000). About 1 500 polling stations had no village linked to it, which made them impossible to map. I must confess I was a bit frustrated not having the possibility to end this mission nevertheless that was a great experience in the end as I have been involved in my first volunteer mission, I have been in contact with several NGO and I had the opportunity to give my expertise on geographical data.

Guy Maurice

Name: Takeo Shibata

GISCorps mission/Year served: Mission with FLOSSK – Albania/2010

Share your experience about the mission: Our mission was to create the base map of Albanian flooded area and share the information using Open Street Map. By this mission, I had the opportunity to explore and use a lot of interesting GIS.- Using JSOM and QGIS, I geo-reference the roads and structure.- GIS Data mining/transformation by GDAL/OGR standard tool/command- Using the GIS data, express the map by Mapserver platform and OpenLayers technology - Configuring and Administrating GIS Database using PostGIS
This project was remote basis and utilizing various communication tools, I have the opportunity to share the data and information with other professionals around the world. This was very variable experience and I hope I can get involved in another project soon!

Anything else to share: I am interested in two things in GIS. One is the application of GIS to the logistics and smart navigation. One example is to find the best route combinations for multiple stops by multiple cars/trucks with the feedback of traffic information. The other one is to create useful maps for the disaster response, nature conservation, agriculture or scientific usage using the remote sensing data.

Takeo Shibata

Name: Shondra Helen Hogan, GISP

Organization: Columbus Consolidated Government

GISCorps mission/Year served: Alabama April Tornadoes with CrisisCommons/2011

Anything else to share: It was my privilege to assist GISCorps and CrisisCommons deploy a media monitoring service to aide in the recovery efforts for the Alabama storm victims.

Shondra Helen Hogan

Name: Max Silin

GISCorps mission/Year served: AllHands Volunteers - Geodatabase & Web Application Development / 2013

Share your experience about the mission: The goal of our mission is to design a web-based geodatabase and a web-mapping application for capture, management, and query of the spatial and non-spatial data pertaining to the All Hands Volunteers Recovery Coordination Services (RCS) operations. The major challenge in the beginning was to standardize the broad range of project requirements and determine the technology and skill set necessary for the successful project implementation. By now, we have a strong team of professionals, collaborating closely with the project stakeholders and working closely towards the next stage of the project. As we speak, the project team is in the process of optimizing the existing customer data to be loaded into the designed geodatabase and finalizing the functional requirements for the future web-application development.

Anything else to share: GIS - is the key to a better, environmentally friendly future. Nowadays, as the modern technology

enables GIS to perform to its full potential, businesses and government organizations of all levels realize the value that GIS brings to the table and embrace the geospatial technology. I am proud to be a part of the growing GIS community, and thankful to the GISCorps for giving me an opportunity to contribute my professional skills for a Better World.

Max Silin

Name: Jim Tobias, MS, GISP

Organization: Northrop Grumman

GISCorps mission/Year served: World Vision Sierra Leone mission to map Public Health Units and Schools, 2012
Share your experience about the mission: The goal of the mission involved the mapping of nearly 200 health facilities and schools within 4 districts of Sierra Leone (Bo, Bonthe, Kono, and Pujehun). The team of World Vision staff and myself utilized 4x4 vehicles, GPS equipment, mobile smart phones, cameras, survey forms, and interviews to collect facility level data. These data were used to build several web mapping services and web mapping applications within the World Vision ArcGIS Online for Organizations cloud framework. These data and applications are utilized by World Vision Sierra Leone to better allocate limited resources to populations in need and to focus relief efforts. Future work may expand upon this 3-week project (Sep – Oct, 2012).

Anything else to share: The World Vision Sierra Leone project was described in this link on the GISCorps website. For additional information, please contact Christian Boombu-Johnson, World Vision Sierra Leone.

Jim Tobias

Name: Allen Ibaugh

Organization: DTSGISCorps mission/Years Served: Member of the GISCorps Core Committee for the past 5 years. Help coordinate recruitment for missions as well as support technology utilized to connect volunteers with sponsor agencies.
Experience: I have found the experience to be immensely rewarding. We have been able to undertake such a wide range of volunteer missions that provide needed support for humanitarian, disaster relief, educational, and training purposes around the globe. Our sponsor agencies have been great partners to work with and I hope we launch 150th mission soon!

Allen Ibaugh On top of the largest Sand Dune in Idaho

Name: Michelle Kinzel

Organization: San Diego Mesa College

GISCorps mission/Year served: GIS Workshop Taught to SLCS members 2013

Share your experience about the mission: This mission was a combination of a tremendously fulfilling professional and personal experience. I was able to work alongside conservation workers doing amazing work in the fight against poaching and snaring in the South Luangwa Valley in Zambia, Africa. I shared my knowledge and skill sets for GIS and map making, and the SLCS staff shared their daily work in the fight for conservation. I was immersed in field work in the African Bush, and experienced wildlife viewing encounters that I had dreamed of my whole life. It was tremendously satisfying to spend hours each week in the wild beauty of the African Savannahs, and share the journey of learning and using GIS Rachel McRobb, Benson Kanyembo and Jerome Yugonot, from launching ArcGIS to creating polished conservation maps of elephant distributions and mortalities.

Anything else to share: The nature of volunteering is to give of yourself, your time, talents and resources. I was rewarded in ways that I hadn't dare wish for, through to my soul. Seeing wildlife without fences, with no cages or human restraints, infuses me with a passion for what I do and a satisfaction that will stay with me for a lifetime. I had the trip of a lifetime, and left knowing that I really did make a contribution to the conservation of a wild space that needs to be conserved and saved for future generations.

Olive Ridley Sea Turtles in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

Name: Lorri Peltz-Lewis

GISCorps mission/Year served: GISCorps volunteers assist in Search and Rescue pilot project in California, 2012-2014

Share your experience about the mission: I volunteered for this mission since we continue to see the need for integrating GIS into emergency services. Search and Rescue (SAR) for wilderness is a key opportunity to work with many local responders who don't have the skills to support mapping. After attending training I wrote up a project plan to help guide the pilot project, conducted numerous meetings, training sessions for the GISCorps volunteers and interested attendees, presented to the CA SAR Coordinators what GISCorps is and what GIS can do for them, etc. We ran into a couple of snags getting called out to incidents that appear to be soon corrected. The GISCorps team will be sworn in at a ceremony this January 2014 and that should open the door for us to participate in SAR events as well as provide support on state incidents.

Anything else to share: While it has been difficult to get recognized by the state, for numerous appropriate reasons, this has been highly rewarding to work with so many dedicated volunteers and colleagues. I look forward to more events and broadening my geospatial network!

Lorri Peltz-Lewis

Name: Stéphane Henriod

Organization: Swiss federal statistical office

GISCorps mission/Year served: GIS Training at KPU (Kabul Polytechnic University) - 2014. The purpose of the mission was to provide GIS and remote sensing training to the staff of KPU, so that they could start designing a GIS curriculum for their students. As part of the project, a full GIS lab has been setup. Some of the staff got a scholarship to continue their GIS education in Kazakhstan.

Anything else to share: as it has usually been the case during my previous assignments in Afghanistan, I have met a bunch of highly capable and motivated people and it has been a huge pleasure to work with them. I would love to work with them again in the future and I'm sure I will!

Stéphane Henriod

Name: Heath Robinson

Organization: The University of Illinois

GISCorps mission/Year served: Establishing a GIS Laboratory at Kabul Polytechnic Institute (KPU) in Afghanistan - Summer 2014

Share your experience about the mission: This was a fantastic mission that not only served an immediate need in Afghanistan by providing the necessary hardware to establish a GIS laboratory at KPU, but it also had the potential for long-lasting benefits. By teaching the professors at KPU about GIS, there is the potential for a multiplier effect as they pass that information down to their students when KPU's GIS program is established.

Heath Robinson

Name: Charleen Gavette

GISCorps mission / Year served: World Health Organization Ebola Response - winter/spring 2015

Experience about the mission: My mission became a mixture of coordination and collaboration on behalf of WHO with other relief agencies in Monrovia, collection and archiving of existing data, writing standardized procedures for standing requests of weekly map production, providing one-on-one mentoring for two new Liberian national WHO GIS employees, providing maps requested by WHO staff, and acting as an advocate for training for WHO and the Liberian national GIS agency.

Anything else to share: GIS has the rare capacity of being a tool that is relevant across the globe and across the spectrum of disciplines. I have been using GIS for many years within the natural resources realm and volunteering my skills to animal conservation groups. This was my first venture into humanitarian activities. The power of this experience will stay with me. Many thanks to GISCorps for allowing me this opportunity.

Charleen Gavette

Name: Leslie Zolman

GISCorps Mission: World Health Organization Ebola Response - winter/spring 2015

About the mission: I was one of four volunteers that provided GIS support and coordination to the World Health Organization during the Ebola response effort. Each GISCorps volunteer was deployed to a different country and we worked independently to assist various project but also worked as a team and held weekly conference calls. I was stationed in Accra, Ghana as the GIS Officer for the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). Accra was the headquarters for UNMEER and I had the opportunity to work with many groups of people and assist in processing data and preparing maps for them as they traveled in and out of the three affected countries. Originally I was chosen for the position due to my ArcGIS Online skills, however as the response to the Ebola outbreak changed almost daily so did my duties. The project that I focused most of my time on was acquiring and cleaning administrative 3 and 4 boundaries for Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. I also worked with the countries to approve the updated boundaries and databases. These boundaries then served as a base for the geocoding of cases and allowed WHO to track transmission chains as the number of cases decreased.

Anything else to share: Being deployed to assist in the Ebola response was difficult, stressful, ever changing and an amazing experience that I will never forget! I learned so much, worked with wonderful people and watched as NGOs, governments, nonprofits and an assortment of other groups all worked under UNMEER to stop the Ebola outbreak. Things did not always run smoothly with different operating structures, cultures and languages but everyone kept their eye on the goal of getting to zero cases. One thing I learned was how important base data such as boundaries, roads, school locations and health clinic locations is during a response effort. It is not the sexiest data to gather but in an emergency it is the base that everything is built upon.

Leslie Zolman

Name: Jeff Pires

GISCorps Mission: World Health Organization Ebola Response - winter/spring 2015

About the mission: At WHO HQ in Geneva, our GIS Team worked to make the most current spatial information available and intuitive for the response community, partner organizations, and our global audience.

Anything else to share: It was an honor to be a part of such a dedicated team during this important phase of the Ebola response effort. I am confident that our work will also help to support future WHO initiatives.

Jeff Pires

Name: John Van Hoesen

Organization: Green Mountain College

GISCorps mission/Year served: Advanced Spatial Analysis & Remote Sensing training for faculty at Kabul Polytechnic University, Afghanistan / 2015

Share your experience about the mission: Working with the faculty at KPU was incredibly fun and their eagerness to learn and commitment to their students was inspiring. This mission really made me appreciate these shorter - but intense - experiences and demonstrated how powerful they can be for all participants

Anything else to share: Providing GIS support for any community is as much about the people it serves as it is the software, architecture, technology, etc. Therefore in the same vein as McHarg's design-with-nature concept, I think our approach to teaching or leveraging a GIS needs to similarly consider the holistic importance of place, not just optimization and functionality

John Van Hoesen

Name: Dr Gary Hunter

Organization: Self-employed GIS consultant

GISCorps mission/Year served: Teaching GIS at Kabul Polytechnic University, Afghanistan, 2015

Share your experience about the mission: It was a great experience teaching Afghan faculty members who were keen to receive training in advanced GIS and remote sensing techniques. The teaching was delivered not only to junior faculty, but also to two Heads of Department plus the Dean. They all deeply appreciated our efforts as well as the handover of our training datasets and complete course teaching materials. I would certainly do it again.

Dr Gary Hunter

Name: Sami Snunu

Organization: Nexen Energy ULC, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

GISCorps mission/Year served: Geocoding Policy Holders Locations in Guatemala – MiCRO's Initiative, 2015 & Downloading and Parsing OpenStreetMap data for Syria, 2015

Share your experience about the mission: I was content to share my GIS experience for humanitarian and poverty relief needs. I worked remotely for both missions, and acquired a lot of personal development skills. In addition, I proved that Open Source GIS tools and databases can be used to complete the work and achieve the same results as proprietary software.

Anything else to share: There is an increased need for GIS support by many non-profit organizations. In a world suffering from brutal wars, diseases, and natural hazards, I would encourage every GIS professional to please give some of your skills and experience to help build a better life for the people.

Sami Snunu

Name: Brian Baldwin

Organization: Esri Inc.

GISCorps mission/Year served: Nepal Earthquake 2015 & member of GISCorps' ArcGIS Online (AGO) Subcommittee

Share your experience about the mission: Like many people that watched the humanitarian crisis unfold after the Nepalese earthquake of 2015, I had wished there was something I could do to assist. The GISCorps mission was a request from ACAPS to create an interactive mapping application that could be used to assess where the most vulnerable populations existed in Nepal, in order to prioritize and focus projects. The mission was a fantastic experience to work with a diverse coalition over 3 weeks to assess the needs of the organization and quickly build out a web mapping application that could be used to query across multiple vulnerability indices. Knowing not only that the application was used, but also that it was pushed onto the UN's Nepal website gave me a great deal of satisfaction.

Anything else to share: I love spending time with my beautiful family, including my expectant wife and goofball toddler. I also love to crank up my guitar amp and rip on my old Stratocaster when time allows, hike, obsess over the perfect method for cold brewing coffee, and join in an occasional dance party with my toddler when we start spinning the Saturday Night Fever record.

Brian Baldwin

Name: Renato Salvaleon

Organization: Alabama Power Company

GISCorps mission/Year served: MIA Recovery Network – GIS data conversion and web map proof of concept/2016

Share your experience about the mission: As my first GIS Corps mission, I was very passionate to do a good job. I am touched by their goals because my first GIS experience was in the Army and I have a father who survived WWII and the Vietnam War. MIA Recovery Network, as a non-profit agency, aims to identify unknown gravesites of military servicemen that fought and died around the world. They have a database of 2000 plus gravesites and it continues to grow. Like most data conversion projects, the project required data cleanup, data migration, and data normalization. The biggest challenge was to make the proof of concept project work for an organization that did not have time to learn the intricacies of managing data but still ended up with the desired workflow to keep up with their GIS. With this proof of concept I hope the members of their organization will have another valuable tool with good information to use to accomplish their mission. Through this project I also learned about the numerous American Battle Monuments that were established by the United States around the globe to honor its heroes who have fallen in battle.

Anything else to share: I am very passionate and enjoy sharing my GIS knowledge and expertise, whenever I can lend a helping hand or volunteer. Aside from love of God, country, family, and helping my users use GIS to solve their work problems, I am also an avid golfer and love to travel in the US and around the world with family as time and resources allow.

Renato Salvaleon

Name: Shruthi Srinivasan

Organization: Texas A&M Forest Service

GISCorps mission/Year served: Worldwide Fund for Nature-South Africa (WWF-SA) Interactive Story Maps/2016-2017

Share your experience about the mission: I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work on this project for one of the world's largest independent conservation organizations. Water doesn't come from a tap and only 8% of South Africa's land area produces 50% of its surface water. I truly enjoyed and learned a lot while developing authoritative and interactive maps with compelling multimedia content that can help reconnect people to the real water source areas in South Africa

Anything else to share: Overall, it was an enriching experience working with GISCorps and WWF-SA. I look forward to working on more GISCorps projects in the future!

Shruthi Srinivasan