

She Helped South Korea in Its Time of Need. In the Pandemic, It Repaid Her.

Decades ago, a young American woman served an impoverished South Korea as a Peace Corps volunteer. Now the country is an economic powerhouse, and it decided to send her a token of its gratitude.



Sandra Nathan teaching a class in South Korea in the late 1960s as a Peace Corps volunteer. via Sandra Nathan

Gratitude and What Endures

Recent days have brought a powerful reminder of the enduring value of Peace Corps service — across continents and generations. Sandra Nathan served as a Volunteer in Korea in the 1960s. Early this month, she received a package labeled

“Covid-19 Survival Box.” It was a gift from the South Korean government that contained 100 masks and other items “as a token of our gratitude for your dedication to Korea.”

“There was something magical about the box,” Sandra told the *New York Times*. “Some people, Korean people, very far away wanted to make sure that I was OK.”

In a time of COVID-19 crisis around the world — with tragic consequences in the United States — this gesture is a testament to peace and friendship. Sandra is one of many hundreds of Volunteers who served in Korea, and many received care packages this year. It is heartwarming to see more of their stories shared in the past few days as well. And [a video produced by the Korea Foundation](#) honoring the work of Volunteers is truly inspiring.

I’ll also note that this year Friends of Korea, the affiliate group founded by Volunteers who served in Korea from 1966 to 1981, was recognized with the Loret Miller Ruppe Award for Outstanding Community Service. They were honored for creating a study guide to help people understand the transformation of the country in which they had served. Years ago, they helped empower people in a time of need.

We know the work we do in building peace and friendship doesn’t stop with our close of service. It’s something we strive to carry into our communities at home. And in unexpected ways, it may sustain us in years to come.

In service,



Glenn Blumhorst
NPCA President & CEO