

Former U.S. volunteers invited to visit Korea

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A group of Americans who conducted volunteer work here in the 1960s revisited Korea yesterday at the invitation of the Korea Foundation.

The 31 former members of the Peace Corps, an American volunteer program established in 1961, are scheduled to stay until Saturday.

Along with their family members, they will look around hospitals and schools where they served and meet their old Korean friends.

Of them is Kevin Murphy, 65, English professor at Ithaca College in New York. For the two-year stint from 1968, he carried out research on the malaria spread in North Gyeongsang Province for the Korean branch of the World Health Organization. During the semester, he came up to Seoul to teach English at Seoul National University.



Kevin Murphy, a former member of the Peace Corps, visits the International Vaccine Institute in Seoul yesterday. IVI

Murphy yesterday visited the International Vaccine Institute based in Seoul, which is an organization under the United Nations devoted to vaccine development. Established by the Korean government in 1997, the IVI has studied vaccines for infectious diseases as well as offering them to developing countries.

"I was deeply impressed by what the IVI does to help out," said Murphy after learning about the IVI and its work. "It was a great opportunity to visit

the IVI and learn what Korea is doing now to help other countries."

He said some people have an image of Koreans as only being interested in their own gain, but he found them to be quite different.

"I found students to be very idealistic and interested in helping others," he said.

"Over the past 40 years, Korea has had quite a change, but one thing remains the same: Koreans always love to help out foreigners."

During their stay, the former volunteer workers will also share their experiences with staff of the Korea International Cooperation Agency, the state-run overseas aid program.

They will be briefed about the nation`s international relief activities and cooperation with other countries, witnessing the change of Korea`s status from a beneficiary of international aid into a donor country.

Their five-day visit will be completed with a farewell party hosted by U.S. Ambassador to Korea Kathleen Stephens, who herself was a member of the volunteer group.

According to the KOICA, almost 2,000 people of the U.S. Peace Corps stayed in Korea from 1966 to 1981 to participate in volunteer activities such as teaching English, improving public health and conducting job training.

(jylee@heraldm.com)

By Lee Ji-yoon