

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2005 - No. 2



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FBF HELPS OPEN NEW SCHOOL!



Suzanne Plopper of FBF observes as Henri Marie Dieudonne Yameogo, governor of the northern region of Burkina, and Lacine Sawadogo, project coordinator of NEEDED, cut the ribbon of the new Collège Moderne de L'Amitié. See story on page 6.



Thanks in part to your FBF donations, school supplies will be distributed to over 1,000 primary school girls supported by NEEDED and Friends of Burkina Faso.



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**Burkina
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PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Molly Chambers, '99-'01



Molly Chambers

February 24 to March 3, 2007. FESPACO is the largest film festival on the continent. I highly recommend it! For more information about FESPACO, you can visit <http://www.fespaco.bf>. If you are interested in going or helping to organize, please contact Guy at g-fipps@tamu.edu.

And while you're marking your calendars, remember the National Peace Corps Association 45th Anniversary celebrations in Washington DC, September 22-23, 2006. Look forward to a big reunion of all Friends of Burkina there. You can track on the schedule of events at rpev.org.

Board Updates

When the new board came together, one of our first necessities was to improve the quality of our membership and contributions data. While we have not achieved perfection in terms of merging all of the data

Do you ever miss Burkina? Well, board member Guy Fipps is interested in helping organize a trip to FESPACO 2007. Block out the dates on your calendars for

sources, we have made great strides and are continuing to improve this aspect of the organization.

During this process, the board has come to recognize the importance of maintaining an "institutional memory." To allow for smooth transitions between future boards, we would like to hold elections for a position that has come open—that of Vice President. Electing a vice president soon will ensure that an experienced board member remains to guide future board members new to their positions.

Are you interested in serving as FBF Vice President? If so, please send me an e-mail: mollychambers@yahoo.com. We plan to hold elections early next year.

New Ambassador

Ms. Jeanine E. Jackson, of Wyoming, has been nominated as ambassador to Burkina Faso. A member of the Senior Foreign Service, she currently serves as coordinator for the Iraq transition at the Department of State and has previously served in Afghanistan, Kenya, Hong Kong, and Saudi Arabia. Jackson received her bachelor's degree from Hastings College, in Nebraska, and her master's degree from the Florida Institute of Technology. The nomination is subject to confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

Thank you all for your generous support of Friends of Burkina! —Molly



FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

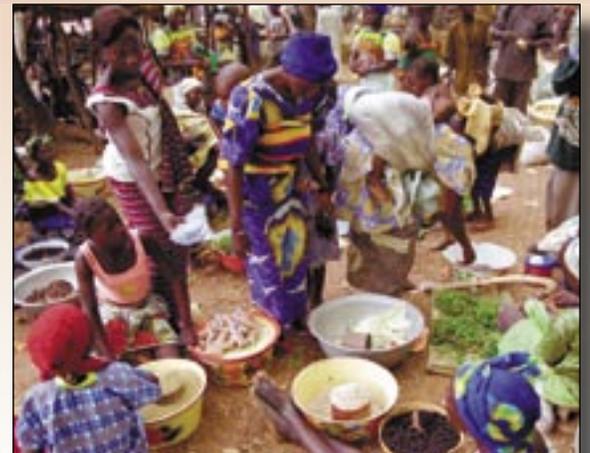
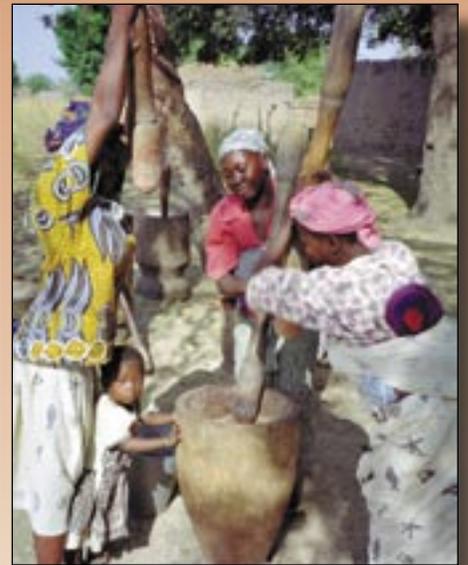
- Maintains a network of RPCVs and friends of Burkina Faso
- Provides funding and assistance to support projects in Burkina Faso
- Improves social interaction, communication, and information exchange
- Educates others about the country and culture of Burkina Faso

a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association

Learn more about us at <http://fbf.tamu.edu>

PCV LENS

photos by Matt McClure, '01-'03



PARTNERSHIPS FOCUS ON EDUCATION

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70, Projects Chair



Several Friends of Burkina meet at NPCA headquarters, Washington, D.C. — Bob Winterbottom, Etienne Yonly, Anastasia Hopkinson, Tom Fox, Tom Vollrath, Kristie McComb, Sibiri Sawadogo. Not pictured here: Marianne Bailey.

In an effort to put what we are trying to accomplish with FBF Projects into the context of other development initiatives, I came across some interesting recent changes in U.S. foreign aid policies.

A major new initiative aimed at forging partnerships, called "compacts," between the United States and low-income developing countries was introduced in 2002, the same year that the FBF Projects Committee was born. Congress created the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and authorized it to allocate up to \$5 billion per year in development assistance. The MCC pledge was to involve new money going above and beyond existing aid requests. To be considered for such aid, countries are required to meet minimum standards of political and economic freedom, with regard to democracy, governance, and corruption. Countries that clear these hurdles are then held responsible for designing their own development plans. For further information, go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/developingnations/millennium.html> and <http://www.mca.gov>.

Two questions immediately came to my

mind. What has been the success of this innovative policy shift? What has it meant for Burkina, if anything? Here is what I have been able to glean from the world-wide web.

Burkina Faso was not one of the 17 countries identified by the MCC as being eligible to receive full funding. However, the good news is that the MCC instituted a "Threshold Program" that went beyond the original vision, to aid 13 additional countries (Burkina among them) which are making additional reforms toward "ruling justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom."

The very good news is that in July of this year Burkina became the very first "threshold country" to be approved for MCC funding! The development plan submitted by Burkina was a \$12.9 million program focused on improving girls' primary education completion rates. This program aims to improve educa-



A group of Projects Committee members brainstorming.

tional infrastructure, construct primary schools, and enroll 1,650 new female students within its first year of implementation.

There are parallels between the MCC-Burkina partnership, focused on female education, and our own FBF partnership with NEEDED in the Ouahigouya area. Both MCC and FBF are targeting resources to help meet a basic need that development experts in Burkina have identified as being important. Our program's strength is its cost-effectiveness and its grass-root participation. We witness village chiefs requesting that girls in their villages be able to participate. We see the investments that parents are making to enable their children to attend school.

I hope that you all will respond generously to our upcoming Friends of Burkina Fall Fundraising Campaign. Your contribution to FBF Projects will enable us to continue to make a difference.



FBF PROJECTS



WHAT TO PACK

by Matt McClure, '01-'03

Every Peace Corps Volunteer agonizes over what to pack before leaving the U.S. for two years. We're given 80 pounds of space, and everyone tries to figure out the best way to use this. What makes it so hard is that we don't really know what we're going to need, or what is going to be available. Who knew that you could buy a toothbrush in almost any village in West Africa? I certainly didn't, which is why I brought 12 of them. At the time, I thought it seemed reasonable. As did bringing four rolls of toilet paper, realizing neither the high availability of toilet paper, nor how absurd it was to think that four rolls might last two years. I was consumed by a process of carefully selecting 80 pounds worth of things I would later look at and ask, "Why on earth did I bring this?"



On the road to Bobo

I wouldn't have packed a single useful thing, if my mother didn't insist I take a camera. Before the Peace Corps I had never taken more than a few pictures, so a camera wasn't exactly topping my list of "essentials." Still, it seemed like a practical item to bring on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. I packed the camera, replacing my 3.5 gallon vinyl sunshower, and don't regret it for a second. In Burkina I developed a love for photography, and realized that photography is really a way of honoring



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the things we find beautiful. I'm very grateful that I was able to witness Burkina's natural beauty, its culture, and its people.



Padema

My website at <http://www.burkinabymatt.com> is a collection of photographs taken during my Peace Corps service in Burkina Faso from 2001-2003. During those two years I worked as a physics/chemistry teacher at a secondary school in Kouka. Feel free to contact me at mattmccclure@mail.com.



BURKINA BY MATT



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COLLÈGE WELCOMES FIRST STUDENTS

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69, Projects Committee



The Collège Moderne de l'Amitié was inaugurated October 1 in Touzagué, 3 km outside of Ouahigouya.

The collège was

built to ensure the continuing education of girls whose primary education has been supported by NEEED through the *parrinage* and the *mouton école* projects. FBF has been an active supporter of the *mouton école* project for the past four years.

The inauguration ceremony was combined with the distribution of school materials to primary school girls.

The ceremony was presided over by Mahamoudou Ouédraogo, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Primary Education and Alphabetisation, and *parrain* of NEEED. A number of government ministers and other officials from Ouagadougou, as well as regional and local government officials and religious and traditional leaders, attended and participated in the ceremony. Mme Zallia Mantoro Ouédraogo, Assistant Peace Corps Director for the Girls' Education and Empowerment Project, represented Peace Corps.

I was honored to participate on behalf of Friends of Burkina. Alex Koch, from Munich, Germany, represented the Stern Stewart Foundation. Stern Stewart, FBF, and Erklarung Von Grae (from Austria) were partners with NEEED in the construction of the collège.

Classes began the week following the inauguration. Since nearly 100 students supported by NEEED passed their primary school exams in June, the collège opened with two classes of *6ème*. Given that the 4-year collège was built with four classrooms, NEEED plans to build an additional four classrooms next year in order to accommodate the number of girls expected to qualify.

Lars Wensel, the PCV who collaborated with NEEED and FBF in providing reports on the collège construction, showed us the artisan center where he assists people with disabilities in marketing the crafts they make.

I was thrilled to visit neighbors I knew from when I was a PCV in Ouahigouya, and to be able to connect Zallia Mantoro Ouédraogo with my PCV colleague at the time, Helen Hinshaw Shore. Helen had lived with Zallia's family and, as is the case with most of us, they had lost contact over the years. Wonderful things can happen as a result of such visits!!

In Ouaga, I met with Marily Knieriemen, the new Peace Corps Director, Zallia Mantoro Ouédraogo, APCD for the Girls' Education and Empowerment Project, and Rose Armour, APCD for Micro Enterprise. Rose and I discussed the *Bureau-des-Artisans* project which was implemented in collaboration with PCVs. See the article by Mike O'Sullivan regarding this project on page 9.

I also met with Salibo Somé, Director of ASUDEEC, an NGO which FBF has supported in the purchase of a hydraulic oil press for extracting shea nut butter in Babora, as well as in training village women in micro-enterprise development. According to Salibo, the shea butter production has gone well. However, the project has been challenged by the inability to sell the volume of shea butter produced. Although many efforts have been made to identify viable international markets for shea butter, the outlook is not promising as the market seems to be saturated. ASUDEEC supports other projects in agriculture, education, micro-enterprise and animal husbandry. To learn more about ASUDEEC and their projects, visit their web site: <http://www.asudec.org>.

It was wonderful to be back in Burkina and especially in Ouahigouya! The town has grown a lot, as has Ouaga, and so it is difficult to get one's bearings. But the warm hospitality, generosity and *amitié* have not changed and that's what we most remember from our experiences in Burkina Faso!



INAUGURATION!



FIELD NOTES FROM MARILY

by Marily Knieriemen, Peace Corps Country Director

Dear Friends of Burkina Faso, I was delighted when I learned that I was to become the new Country Director for Burkina Faso. And I consider it a real privilege to be able to serve in this role.

So that you know something about me... I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cameroon where I taught English in a secondary school in the French-speaking part of the country.

Following that experience, I taught English as a Second Language to refugees in Minnesota and then completed a master's degree in international administration.

As part of the degree program, I came to Upper Volta in 1984 to do an internship with a research project studying grain marketing.

It was an interesting time to be here—and it's when the country changed its name to Burkina Faso. I very much enjoyed getting to know the people and country of Upper Volta/Burkina Faso at that time and always hoped to have a chance to work here again.

For the next 16 years I worked with international NGOs—Lutheran World Relief and CARE. That work took me to Niger, Cameroon, Mozambique, and Zambia. It was a great opportunity to work with people from those countries to address key needs in the areas of health, education, village water supply, agriculture, and savings/micro-credit. And it really reinforced my appreciation of the diversity of this great continent.

In 2002 I was chosen to be a Peace Corps Country Director—serving first in Gabon, then in Tanzania, and now in Burkina Faso.

When I arrived here in August of 2005, pre-service training was already underway in Gourcy town and neighboring villages. The

new Volunteers—for Small Enterprise, Health, and Girls' Education—swore in as Peace Corps Volunteers at the Ambassador's Residence on the evening of October 21, 2005. They join other Volunteers in the field to make approximately 100 Volunteers in Burkina Faso for those three programs plus Secondary Education.

One reason I am

delighted to be part of Peace Corps

Burkina Faso is the new program promoting girls' education.

The first group of Girls' Education

Volunteers are now getting settled into communities in the north and the east where the need is particularly great.

There are lots of challenges to overcome to increase girls' participation in education in Burkina but it is something that is now receiving a lot of attention from the government and the

donor community. Peace Corps Volunteers have a real role to play at the grassroots—and it's great that we are able to be part of the movement to promote girls' education in Burkina.

I look forward to sharing more about the girls' education program as well as Peace Corps Burkina Faso's other programs in future newsletters.

Warm regards,
—Marily Knieriemen



Marily Knieriemen



*"The first group of
Girls' Education Volunteers
are now getting settled into
communities..."*

PEACE CORPS



Burkina
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PEACE CORPS IN REVERSE

by Mike Lavoie, '75-'77



Mike Lavoie's former host-family members — Simeon and Noelie — receive royal welcome in Michigan.

The Baguian family had been my host family in the village of Namtenga, south of Tougouri, where I worked as a well-digger from 1975-77. Two of the Baguian children with whom I have corresponded over the years are Noelie and Simeon, now a small business owner and a medical assistant, ages 32 and 39 respectively. Fulfilling years of hopes and prayers, they just spent four weeks here with my family as we returned the favor by serving as their host family.

My wife Carol and two daughters Katie and Melissa opened up our home to them. We did everything together—family meals, school and church events, even watching *American Idol*. We took in the Zoo, an IMAX movie, a baseball game. It was the Peace Corps in reverse as Noelie and Simeon were acclimated to us and learned about many of our cultural nuances.

The pinnacle of their visit was the welcoming ceremony at Cranbrook Schools Brookside in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, the elementary school that has had several projects with Namtenga School. In a ceremony fit for a visiting head of state, Brookside welcomed Noelie and Simeon with hundreds of students lining the sidewalks, wearing special Burkina t-shirts, displaying “BIENVENUE” banners, all amidst

a band playing. After a welcoming song, sung in French, Mooré and English, Brookside showed a slide program that recounted five years of projects, including a school and health supplies project, a school uniform and book bag project, and a girls' education awareness project—the results of which led the school to grow from 40 to 220 students, half of whom are girls. Two U.S. Ambassadors, Jimmy Kolker and Tony Holmes, both visited Namtenga to make the project presentations.

Brookside raised \$10,000 for a water well and pump in Namtenga—thanks to countless bake sales, t-shirt sales, sidewalk lemonade sales, and donations. The

well is now serving the school and village.

A fourth grade class at Brookside also raised \$400 for a cow for the school, and a \$250 scholarship fund for the top students in each class. The continuing scholarships are named the “Marcy DeCraene-Namtenga Scholarship Fund” in honor of the Brookside school nurse who is leading the projects.

Simeon and Noelie were ambassadors in their own right, making stirring and unforgettable presentations about Burkina, its people and the hope-filled present times. We ended with a sight-seeing trip to Washington D.C., where we had a great visit with Jody Olsen, deputy director of the Peace Corps. We all expressed appreciation for the Peace Corps and “its ancestors” that brought us together. Simeon and Noelie left us with many gifts and returned to Burkina with many ideas and inspiration for their future, just like we did when we came back.

If you would like to try something like this yourself, please let me know — lavoie@butzel.com — and I would be happy to share with you how to get it done—the visas from a wonderful U.S. Consul in Ouagadougou, the tickets, the logistical considerations. You too, I am sure, will find this to be an out-of-this-world Peace Corps experience—in reverse.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



BA/PC SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

by Mike O'Sullivan, '01-'03, Projects Committee

The FBF-funded partnership between the *Bureau des Artisans* and Peace Corps Burkina (BA/PC) recently marked the completion of its first grant cycle and issued a detailed report describing the successes and challenges faced thus far. The principle aim of the grants fund for small-enterprise training, known as *Fonds Alloué aux Artisans Agréé par les Volontaires Américains* (FAAVA), is to “provide resources to artisans through training in technical and business skills enhancement.”

FAAVA was designed to enhance the technical skills of village artisanal groups, creating income-generating opportunities. A PCV would collaborate with a group to develop a training proposal for submission to a grants review committee made up of three PCVs and two BA representatives. The FAAVA committee established proposal guidelines and then met quarterly to review and vote on grant applications, which included training and budget information. Funding amounts were limited to 450,000 CFA, with 20 percent cash or in-kind contributions from the community. Rose Armour, the Small Enterprise Development Assistant Peace Corps Director, served as the committee's technical advisor.

With an initial FBF grant of US \$5,500, the FAAVA committee approved and funded seven *groupement* (six of which were women's groups) trainings throughout Burkina during its first cycle. FAAVA artisanal training workshops imparted skills in soapmaking, soubala production, shea butter production, and mechanical repair. Some of the trainings were very successful. One such training occurred in Bougounam, on the Mossi Plateau. PCV Sophia Chae met with *Pag-la-yiri*, a local women's group that was reselling soap it had purchased in Ouahigouya. The group expressed an interest in learning how to produce its own soap to increase income, so Sophia assisted the women in obtaining a FAAVA grant. A trainer from a producer of export-quality soap taught the women how to make soap using basic materials. *Pag-la-yiri* members also learned how to calculate their costs and maximize

their profits in the sale of soap. The women continue to produce and sell soap in their local market, and they “have a greater cash flow” resulting from their enhanced skills.

The report adds that, on the whole, FAAVA training sessions—which were led by well-qualified trainers—were both participatory and engaging. Also, the FAAVA funds were managed well throughout the first grants cycle. The BA kept accurate and transparent records of the fund's finances and PCVs accounted for all training expenses with receipts as back-up.

FAAVA has faced some tough challenges since it began last year. As the PCV authors of the FAAVA report noted, the “long-term results of the trainings have been mixed.” Three of the seven groups that received training “are continuing to use the skills they learned in their *formations*.” Moreover, it was suggested that the FAAVA committee members could have spent more time closely evaluating the merits of each proposal and budget—including the proposed amount of money dedicated to the purchase of materials and equipment. The lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) follow-up with the trained groups was also listed as an area of concern, particularly given the importance the initiative places on skills transfer.

In light of these findings, the report adopts a constructive approach by suggesting ways that the fund's protocols and structure can be improved. Setting up a clear M&E framework to track skills transfer was listed as a top priority. The report authors also proposed the idea of working with village groups to develop post-training business plans. Finally, the FAAVA committee was encouraged to consider ways to analyze grant proposals more closely and to strengthen the project proposal guidelines in the future. By incorporating these lessons learned into the next grants cycle, FAAVA could bolster its ability to impart skills to future Burkinabè entrepreneurs.



Mike O'Sullivan

FBF PROJECT UPDATE



Burkina Connection

BURKINA DVDS

reviewed by Denny FitzPatrick, '67-'68



Ever wish you had been able to videotape some of the vibrant life and art and culture you saw in Burkina? Fortunately, Chris Roy has a good deal of it on DVD for you.

Chris is Professor of African Art History at the University of Iowa. He and his wife, Nora, were Burkina PCVs in 1970-72.

His DVDs are informative, enjoyable, and a valuable resource for your library, especially if you're an educator.

You can preview them on the *Art and Life in Africa* website <http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart>. They cost \$25, but remember to use the PCV/RPCV discount code HAW2DLYE to get \$5 off. It's worth a visit to his website just to see the hundreds of photos of Burkina art and culture.

BURKINA IN MOTION



A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF AN AFRICAN FAMILY

Join the Bamogo family of northern Burkina, from fall to spring, as they plant and harvest crops, cook meals, make pottery, thresh grain, and tend the children. Includes several ceremonies and festivals, including dancers. Helpful subtitles translate Mooré to English. 120 minutes.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VILLAGE IN AFRICA

Spend some time in the day-to-day life of the village of Sayaga in southwest Burkina. Includes food preparation, house building, spinning and weaving, pottery making, iron forging, sand divination, a traditional funeral, balafon music, and a lot more. 60 minutes.



AFRICAN MASKS: BURKINA FASO

This DVD is actually three-in-one. The first is video from 1977 and 1985, showing Mossi, Bwa, Bobo and Nuna (Gurunsi) masks in action. The second is the 2002 mask festival in Dedougou, and the third is Nuna masks of Savara and Tisse. Some incredible dancing and drumming. 60 minutes.



BREWING MILLET BEER IN AFRICA

Ever wonder just exactly how that *dolo/daam*/millet beer is made? Every visitor is offered a gourdful sooner or later. It's been brewed for hundreds of years, and it's a staple of social and religious life in Burkina. It's boiled for three days, and the whole process is demonstrated here. 60 minutes.





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- I would like to make an FBF Project Fund contribution of \$_____.
- I would like to make an FBF Newsletter Fund contribution of \$_____.

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Photo by Matt McClure

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