

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2015 - No. 2



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THE MOGHO NABA: FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF PEACE

by Michael Lavoie, '75-'77

The peace efforts you are recognizing in me reflect the love of peace dwelling in the hearts and souls of the Burkinabè people.

-- Mogho Naba Baongo II

In early September my wife Kristin and I left for Burkina Faso, intending to present the FBF's first Peace Prize to the Mogho Naba, the emperor of the Mossi people, on Saturday, September 19. The ceremony was scheduled to coincide with the date of the FBF's annual membership meeting in Washington, D.C., in hopes of communicating the Ouagadougou ceremony digitally to the meeting in Washington.

Little did we know that the Mogho Naba's abilities as a peacemaker would soon be tested to their limits—and prove more than equal to the challenge.



Country Director, Tom Fox (third from left), and three of the first Peace Corps Volunteers, serving 1967-69 in what was then Upper Volta, at the FBF Annual Meeting September 19, 2015 in Washington, D.C.

Read more about this event on page 7.

The FBF established its Peace Prize in early 2015, at the initiative of our vice president, Kati McDonald. We plan to give it yearly to an individual who has played a major role in advancing peace in Burkina Faso. While several fine people were nominated for the award this year, in August the Peace Prize committee unanimously selected the Mogho Naba. This choice was based on the Mogho Naba's role mediating for the cause of peace in Burkina Faso and regionally for many years, most recently during the bloody public insurrection triggered by longtime president Blaise Compaore's attempt to add five years to his term. The Mogho

THE MOGHO NABA (CONTINUED)



The Mogho Naba pictured with the U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso, Mike Lavoie, Kristin Lavoie, and the Ambassador's spouse following the Peace Award ceremony.

Naba played a pivotal role in bringing about the installation of a civilian transitional government and arrangements for democratic elections to occur in October 2015.

At first, my preparations for the award ceremony went smoothly. My longtime friend, Christophe Sandouidi, had agreed to serve as my envoy, scheduling a personal meeting for me with the Mogho Naba at his palace on Tuesday, September 15. Speaking in More, we discussed the award and its significance; his majesty displayed the same familiar traits of warmth and humility that mark the character of the Burkina people. Moreover, he wore a visage of peace unlike anyone I have ever met. We so hit it off that he went into another room and returned with a copy of his book, *Poems of the Emperor*, which he personally inscribed to us. He asked if we could help translate that book, written in French, to English, and of course we said we would. The meeting ended with growing excitement for the Saturday ceremony.

The next day, Wednesday, September 16, everything turned upside down.

We were at the Peace Corps office at about 3 p.m. when the word came through that there was a coup d'état. The President and the Prime Minister had been overthrown and were being held by the notorious RSP (Régiment Présidence Sécurité), the elite presidential guard led by General Gilbert

Diendéré. The RSP was widely disliked by the people for years of terrible abuses. As I talked to more and more Burkinabè, the sense of despair was tangible. Burkina Faso, the land of people of integrity, seemed in danger of losing its essence.

But the spirit of the popular uprising of October 2014 reasserted itself. Over the next few days, thousands of people from both the capital and around the country marched on Ouagadougou to oppose the coup. Indeed, opposition to the coup was so universal that

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The Mogho Naba speaks with the press following the ceremony.



THE MOGHO NABA (CONTINUED)

its support was limited to little more than the RSP itself. In Ouagadougou, the forces of the RSP and the counter-forces of the people, supported by all the other branches of the military, came face to face. Both the RSP and the opposing branches of the military were heavily armed.

The Mogho Naba, with all his moral force, entered the fray, along with West African presidents and other regional governmental leaders who came to Burkina in an attempt to resolve the crisis. The governmental efforts, however, became bogged down in negotiations to obtain amnesty for the RSP, which was wholly unacceptable to the people in the wake of some ten deaths and many more injured. The Mogho Naba, however, was able to broker an interim resolution in which each side agreed to back off a specified distance. The interim resolution also called for the RSP to put down its arms with guarantees of security for its members and families.

With the interim accord in place, we were able to reschedule the Peace Prize presentation for Saturday, September 26. The ceremony unfolded with majesty, humility and joy. Dignitaries from the Burkina government attended, along with the U.S. Ambassador, Tulinabo S. Mushingi, the new deputy chief of mission, and the Peace Corps Country Director Keith Hackett. The ministers of the Mogho Naba were also present. Special invitees came as well, including representatives of FBF-supported organizations, along with close personal friends and family. With everyone assembled in the palace throne room, the Mogho Naba entered to the low sound of drums. After the guests had been welcomed, Christophe, serving as the master of ceremonies, highlighted the importance of the prize as recognizing devotion to peace and the absence of any discrimination based on color, race, religion or other factors. He then introduced the U.S. Ambassador, who recalled the history

of partnership between the U.S. and Burkina Faso governments, including the service of some 2,100 Peace Corps volunteers since 1967. The U.S. Ambassador then introduced me as the FBF president.

Speaking in both French and More, I stressed the great benefits that volunteers have received over the decades through their absorption of the wisdom of Burkina culture and traditions, as embodied in various proverbs: “It is better



Home Kisito, a well-established orphanage in Ouagadougou, was chosen by the Mogho Naba to receive the \$2000 prize donation.

to know a person than it is a town”; “It is better to have a friend in the hot sun than no friend in the shade”; “One cannot make one’s self laugh—another person is needed.” A favorite proverb states that “One who savors the mayfly should not forget the rain in the morning that made it possible”—referring to the outpouring of mayflies following the first rain of the rainy season. The mayflies are grilled and eaten, a delicacy that is available just once a year. I observed that the Peace Corps volunteers do not forget the Burkina people, who have truly been the rain of the morning to them.

I expressed the FBF’s delight that the Mogho Naba is being celebrated as a model for peace not just in Burkina Faso, but also in Michigan

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THE MOGHO NABA (CONTINUED)



The Award for Peace statue was created by Issouf Sebgo, a member of the Tigoung Nonma artisan center, an FBF project. The statue was designed to portray the intent of the Award for Peace through the dove, the bird of peace, and the upheld hand to symbolise the stopping of conflicts, and the raised left heel demonstrates the advancement of peace. The man's age symbolises wisdom, his cane and clothing are to symbolise diversity.

and elsewhere in the United States among all friends of Burkina Faso. I explained that in Michigan, his work is recognized at the Pontiac Middle School as well as by many individuals. I recounted the story of Dwight, a young man imprisoned for a firearms infraction, whom I had been mentoring. I told how I visited Dwight in prison and told him about the Mogho Naba, a great man of peace in Burkina. I told how Dwight said that he wanted to follow in the footsteps of the Mogho Naba and that he was grateful for having been exposed to such a great peacemaker. Afterward, several people told me that the story of Dwight deeply touched the Mogho Naba.

The offering of the statue of peace was preceded by the presentation of \$2,000 to the Home Kisito Orphanage, the Mogho Naba's designated charity. Also presented were FBF T-shirts bearing the words "The Peace of the Mogho Naba." From the Pontiac Middle School, soccer balls were presented that were companions to others given to the village of

Namtenga and the town of Dargo, where soccer matches were simultaneously being played in honor of peace and the Mogho Naba. From the Pontiac Middle School also came a "bowl of peace" made by the art class with individual fingerprints of over 150 students imprinted on the bowl, emblazoned with the words "Solidarity, work and peace"—the Mogho Naba's motto. The Mogho Naba was also presented with a weaving made by the Namtenga weaving sisters upon which the statue could stand and then sleep at night. It was imprinted with the American and Burkina flags and an image of the statue itself. Then, to the sound of drums and applause, the Mogho Naba received the statue of peace—a beautiful bronze showing a man holding a dove in his hand. It was sculpted by Issouf Sebgo, a member of the Tigoung Nonma center in Ouagadougou, an FBF supported artisan group, many of whom are living with disabilities.

The Mogho Naba's brief but eloquent acceptance remarks were given in More and French, as is customary, by his spokesman. After accepting the statue, the Mogho Naba stated:

The peace efforts you are recognizing in me reflect the love of peace dwelling in the hearts and souls of the Burkinabè people...Please know that the Friends of Burkina Faso's Peace Prize has strengthened my dedication to peace. If my work has served, or will serve, as a model for peace, here, in America, or elsewhere in the world, I can only express my thanks for such a blessing.



Following the ceremony, the Mogho Naba appeared in front of reporters and used the occasion to send out a call for peace and mutual understanding by all segments of Burkina society in resolving the ongoing crisis. Christophe later learned that the Mogho Naba secluded himself with the gifts after the ceremony to meditate on the meaning of what had taken place.

The crisis was not over. The Mogho Naba again called the representatives of the RSP and the military leaders to the palace to deal with the issues of the RSP's laying down its arms.

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THE MOGHO NABA (CONTINUED)

Throughout, he stressed forgiveness, mutual understanding, and the non-negotiable necessity for peace as essential to development. The Tuesday after the presentation, a military attack forced the RSP to surrender all its arms, and its leaders were placed in custody. The transitional government was fully restored, ending the crisis.

The next day, Wednesday, more than a few people commented to me that they could see new life and a fresh zeal for freedom and peace in the very faces of many in the capital. I personally detected a sense that, while the rigors and difficulties of daily life were no less than before, people now felt free of the dangers of oppression and injustice. Far and wide, the Burkinabè were wearing the Mogho Naba's visage of peace.

Thanks to Peg Hausman for editorial help with this article.

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Attendees of the Award for Peace ceremony pictured in the Mogho Naba's courtyard.



Reflections ON PEACE

Thoughts from attendees and participants of the Award for Peace ceremony in Ouagadougou on September 19, 2015.

I think that the "Peace Prize" you have launched, if it hadn't existed, would have to be created.

The political events that have visited our homeland, Burkina Faso, from October 30, 2014 to November 2015, once again confirm that more than mere chance directed you in choosing his Majesty, the Mogho Naaba Boango, for this award.

Long live peace and stability in Burkina Faso—and long live those who work to maintain that peace and stability.

-- Laticia Kabore

Thank you for letting me attend the ceremony at the Mogho Naba's palace. I was struck by the welcome we received, by the Mogho Naba's simplicity and above all by the way he drew close to his guests, conversing with them in a relaxed atmosphere and sharing the occasion with them. It was a major meeting for me.

-- Dr. Cyriac Da

The Award for Peace allowed the royal family to see themselves in a mirror. The ceremony came at the right time. God has allowed the Mogho Naba to be special and responds to his name as a man of peace. There had to be the events of September 16 for this award to enjoy an additional understanding of its true value. This award has galvanized the Emperor of the Mossi people and all Burkinabè by its special brand



of peace. With impossible odds, God raised someone thousands of kilometers to recognize the efforts of this illustrious man.

God put his seal to confirm this ceremony.

-- Zidyon Sandoudi

DISCUSSING PEACE AT PONTIAC MIDDLE SCHOOL

by Michael Lavoie, '75-'77

Building on a well-established partnership between the Pontiac Middle School (PMS) in Pontiac, Michigan and schools in Burkina Faso, Kristin and Michael Lavoie enriched the Award for Peace ceremony with gifts from PMS students for the Mogho Naba: a Peace Bowl incorporating the fingerprints of approximately 150 students at PMS and soccer balls. The soccer balls represented 12 others that were distributed in Ouagadougou and other parts of the country to be used during soccer matches played in honor of the Mogho Naba and the Award for Peace ceremony.

Back in Michigan, Michael and Kristin are further building the exchange between the Burkinabè schools and PMS, where Kristin is a librarian, through a variety of school activities. Incorporating lessons on the Mogho Naba, many of the students were very touched to learn about the Mogho Naba's role in achieving and maintaining peace in Burkina. As Chantal V., a PMS student explained, "Mr. and Mrs. Lavoie told us about a bridge of peace with [Burkina Faso] and that we are part of it."



Students at Pontiac Middle School talk about the Mogho Naba and the meaning of peace.

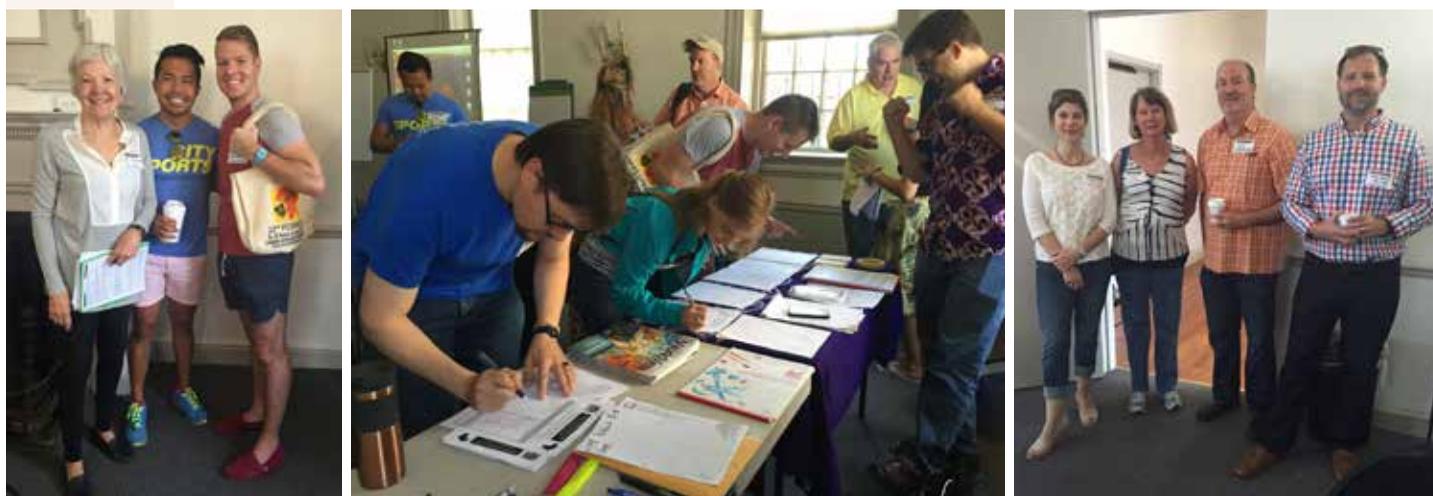


The Mogho Naba inspects the 150 fingerprints of Pontiac Middle School students on a gift received during the Award for Peace ceremony.

FBF's 2015 ANNUAL MEETING

by Kristen Combs-Bicaba, '98-'01

The Friends of Burkina Faso's Annual Meeting took place in Washington, D.C. on September 18-20, 2015. The weekend's events began with happy hour on Friday. On Saturday, the annual meeting and a visit to the African Art Museum were capped by a potluck hosted by Mead Over. If you were unable to attend, we can assure you the allocos, riz sauce d'arachide, and tô were absolutely delicious! On Sunday, the brunch was supplanted to gather with the Burkinabè community at the White House, to demonstrate support for Burkina Faso and a peaceful end to the attempted coup. Approximately 60 members of the FBF community came together for the weekend's events.



If you would like to help FBF continue to provide a link between Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Burkina Faso, please email any of the Board Members to inquire about volunteering on our various committees. To contact a member of the leadership team, please visit <http://www.friendsofburkinafaso.org>.

SHARING SUPPORT FOR THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE OF BURKINA

by Emily Forsyth Queen, '09-'11

I don't know about you, but I was glued to Facebook and Twitter while watching the recent events that took place in Burkina from the USA, scanning for the latest updates.

The larger news outlets would publish occasional articles in English with short summaries and a few informative gems peppered in, but the real diamonds about the ever-evolving situation were posted on social media.

So, when the Friends of Burkina Faso (FBF) annual meeting fell just days after the coup erupted, an opportunity to meaningfully engage in the online conversation arose.

As the meeting approached, many members swapped news stories over email and shared their concern for their friends and family in Burkina Faso. One member, Hyacinthe Nare, hatched the idea to communicate our support over social media, saying:

The goal of the message is to express solidarity with the people back home, and join voices to condemn this coup, request the restoration of the transition committee, for us to continue our march towards elections, peace and prosperity. We are at the crossroads, and we need to take control of our destiny. It may not be a game changer, but it is important for people back home to realize that people outside are in solidarity.

At the FBF meeting, many members wrote out messages for the people of Burkina and had their photos taken with their message in hand. When these photos were posted on the Friends of Burkina Faso Facebook page, they received an overwhelming response.

The [post containing these photos](#) of solidarity reached nearly 30,000 people and 700 people either liked, shared, or commented on the post. Burkinabe from all over the world expressed how encouraging it was to see such support, with comments like: « Infiniment merci aux amis du Faso pour ces mots d'encouragement. Barka », « Merci pour le soutien. Ça fait chaud au cœur. », and « Thanks. You are real friends. »

Several days later, after power was returned to the transitional government, Mike Lavoie (President of FBF) was able to present the first FBF Award for Peace during his visit to Burkina. The worthy recipient, the Mogho Naaba, posted an [update on his Facebook page](#), with photos from the event and a description of the award. We were happy to share his account of the event, along with that of Burkina24. Mogho Naaba also received much deserved recognition of his role in restoring peace in Burkina after the coup on social media and in major news outlets like the BBC.

The word that tied all of these updates, news stories, and displays of support for the people of Burkina was [#lwili](#), which simply means bird in Mooré. But the way this little bird connected people all over the world in their love and hope for the people of Burkina Faso was an impressive feat.



A WALK ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN 160 DAYS

by Renee Patrick, '99-'01

Little did I know when I pulled a thick paperback from the shelves of the Ouahigouya Regional Center in Burkina Faso in the fall of 1999 that the direction of my life would be irreversibly altered. *There are Mountains to Climb* chronicled the 50-year-old author's hike along the 2,000+ mile Appalachian Trail, a journey that traverses 14 states along the east coast of the U.S. and attracts thousands of potential thru-hikers (those who complete the hike in one trip) each year. No matter that I had never backpacked before, I knew this was for me. This is what I would do after my service ended, even though I had only just begun my time in West Africa.



Day 1 on the CDT

Flash forward to 2002. Fellow Burkina Faso RPCV Cindy Ryals and I found ourselves at Springer Mountain in the northwestern corner of Georgia and, over the next 5 months and 2 days, walked 2,175 miles to Mt. Katahdin in Maine. And I loved it. I loved the simplicity of life, I loved how many parallels I found between living in Burkina and living on the trail. I loved the people and the mountains and how my body could hold up to months of walking every day.

I was hooked, and over the next 13 years, I thru-hiked the Pacific Crest Trail, the Colorado Trail, Arizona Trail, Northville Placid Trail, West Highland Way, and Wonderland Trail. Over the 7,000+ miles, backpacking had become a way of life. It was my life. And all those miles prepared me for the next big challenge: The Continental Divide Trail (CDT). Probably the most difficult endeavor of the long distance trails in the U.S., the CDT is referred to as the PhD of hiking trails. It could be for the isolation, the weather, or the animals one could encounter along the backbone of the country; or it could be that the trail isn't complete, is sparsely traveled, and is the longest of the three major trails that make up the triple crown (AT, PCT, CDT) at around 3,000 miles.

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A WALK ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN 160 DAYS (CONTINUED)



Skiing in Colorado

I was ready for the challenge, and began my northbound thru-hike on April 14 in the bootheel of New Mexico on the Mexican border. Bring it!

There are always challenges when one attempts to cross the country on foot. The CDT, which traverses New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana, held many difficult barriers including long dry desert

sections, long miles of ridge walking above tree line during the summer storm cycles, distant resupply spots, and the big hulking danger of grizzlies for 1,000 miles of the trail. That's a long time to be worried about getting your face ripped off by a hungry bear.

2015 was an uncharastically difficult year in Colorado. After my hike started about 7' of fresh spring snow fell on the high peaks, and when I got to the state line at the end of May I found conditions were warm and wet, making the avalanche danger high. I had anticipated snow in Colorado, and had my touring skis sent out. To say the other hikers were jealous was an understatement. As they struggled through the feet of snow either postholing or with snowshoes, I was able to glide across many of the long traverses in the Southern San Juan mountains. But as the terrain got steeper and avalanche danger increased, I too left the divide for the safety of lower roads and trails.

Lightening and rain was my constant companion over the 5 months, until fire season started in Montana, then it was smoke-laden air and threat of evacuation.

Despite all the environmental challenges my mantra became "One Step at a Time" because to think ahead too much was to not be present in the moment. To not be present in the moment may mean slipping and falling down a mountainside, missing an important junction or water source, getting caught in a storm above tree line, or surprising a bull moose (note: you don't want to surprise a bull moose). As I was hiking the CDT alone, I needed to be sure I could finish safely, and always tried to make the prudent, often conservative decision.

It hasn't been long since I finished the hike at the end of September, and I'm sure I will be processing the journey for a long while to come, but what has always attracted me to hiking long trails...what attracted me to Peace Corps too...was the chance to dig deep and challenge myself. To take a step outside of "normal life" and see what lies outside my comfort zone. To see the world from a different point of view. In that way my service in Burkina Faso paved the way for my hiking life.

Renee Patrick is a freelance writer and graphic designer where she lives in Bend, Oregon when not hiking across the country. Visit www.sherahikes.wordpress.com to read her daily blog from the CDT this year.



300 VILLAGE GIRLS HEADING TO SCHOOL

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69

The 2015-2016 school year got off to a good, if slightly late, start for girls whose educations are supported by Association NEEED in partnership with Friends of Burkina Faso (FBF). Political unrest in September affected both NEEED and the Ministry of Education in preparing students and educational institutions for the opening day of school. NEEED informs us that girls enrolled in primary, middle and secondary, and postsecondary education with FBF support are now hard at work in their respective schools.

With this year's support of 300 village girls embarking on their first year of school in northern Burkina with assistance of the Lambs Support Girls' Education Project, FBF has now enabled a total of 3571 village girls to take their first educational step in primary school. This may be the last year of the Lambs Support Girls' Education Program as, over the past 16 years, NEEED has responded to requests to introduce this project into virtually all villages who have requested the project in the northern region of Burkina. It will be interesting to see in the next several years the effects of NEEED's introduction of the importance of girls' education into rural communities.

The College/Lyce Modern de l'Amitie (the middle/secondary school run by NEEED) has enrolled 630 students this year (compared with 865 last year). FBF was involved in helping to support school lunches for girls at this school from its opening in 2006 until 2012. (The school is located in a village 3 km from Ouahigouya where students must live and there are no other provisions for food during the day for these students.) A European partner to NEEED who took over support for school lunches in 2012 has had to withdraw its funding for lunches due to its own financial constraints. NEEED has asked parents to bear the additional cost for their children's education. Unfortunately, many families have been unable to do so. Only 22 students are currently able to pay for their noon-day lunches which typically consists of a millet or sorghum porridge, rice, or beans with local sauces. The average cost of lunch is \$.45 per day, \$9 per month, or \$76.50 per year per student. Earlier this year, NEEED asked FBF to reinstate our support for school lunches which we have done and for which we therefore are actively seeking funds.

With this year's students, the Postsecondary Education for Girls Project has provided scholarships to 116 young women over the past

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Meet Germaine, Salmata, Mariam and Aicha, four of this year's 35 recipients of FBF scholarships for postsecondary education! Germaine is studying law at the university, Salmata is training to become a State nurse (Infirmiere d'etat), Mariam is in midwifery training, and Aicha is in training to become a primary school teacher!





GlobalGiving's year-end fundraising campaign features the Postsecondary Education for Girls Project in northern Burkina Faso. From December 1 - December 31, GlobalGiving is offering \$10,000 in bonus awards. Projects must raise at least \$3,000 from 30 donors in order to qualify for a bonus award. Bonus awards will be given to organizations that have met the designated thresholds and raised the most funds respectively. Awards ranging from \$900-\$3000 will be given to the top 9 projects. That's a lot of chances to win. For your year-end donations, please consider the Postsecondary Education for Girls Project. To donate, go to <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/post-secondary-education-for-girls-in-burkina-faso/>

HEADING TO SCHOOL (CONTINUED)

six years. This year's scholarships support the university education of four young women (two in law and two in science), training for two midwives and one nurse, and training for 28 primary school teachers. Two Microsoft GlobalGiving Youth Spark bonus days this year enabled FBF to garner nearly \$20,000 for this project in addition to generous support from other partners and GlobalGiving and FBF donors throughout the year. To date, this program has had only one student fail in her studies, this at the university level. Check out GlobalGiving updates to this project to learn more about some of our students www.globalgiving.org/projects/post-secondary-education-for-girls-in-burkina-faso/

VIRGINIA YOUTH SUPPORTS GIRLS' EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

The First Lego League (FFL) is an organization (present in over 80 countries) that introduces young people, ages 9 to 14* (grades 4-8), to the fun and excitement of science

and technology. It also encourages them to raise funds for a worthy cause. By embracing FFL core values, the children learn that friendly competition and mutual gain are not separate goals, and that helping one another is the foundation of teamwork. They also learn the importance of helping others in society less fortunate than themselves.

Recently, fifth-grade students at the Nysmith School in Herndon, Virginia formed a FFL team, which they named Structile Robotum. The team elected to raise money to increase awareness about the importance of girls' education in the developing world. They chose to support NEED's post-secondary-school scholarships after learning about this program from FBF member, Bony Porrogho.

The young students then conducted a three-day donut sale to raise funds. Last May 26th, the Structile Robotum team presented a \$500 check to Bony and myself. They stipulated that the money be used to enable aspiring women to become primary-school teachers in rural Burkina Faso!



Students in Herndon, Virginia conducted a 3-day donut sale to raise funds for aspiring women in Burkina Faso to become primary-school teachers.

COMMUNITY LIBRARY TO OPEN SOON IN SEBBA

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

Last Spring, David Greeley (Boromo, '81-'33) approached FBF's Projects Committee about the possibility of securing funds for a first-ever public library in Sebba, the home village of his wife Salimatou (Sali) Greeley. The envisioned library was welcomed by the Friends of African Village Libraries (FAVL), a non-profit organization that is committed to long-term



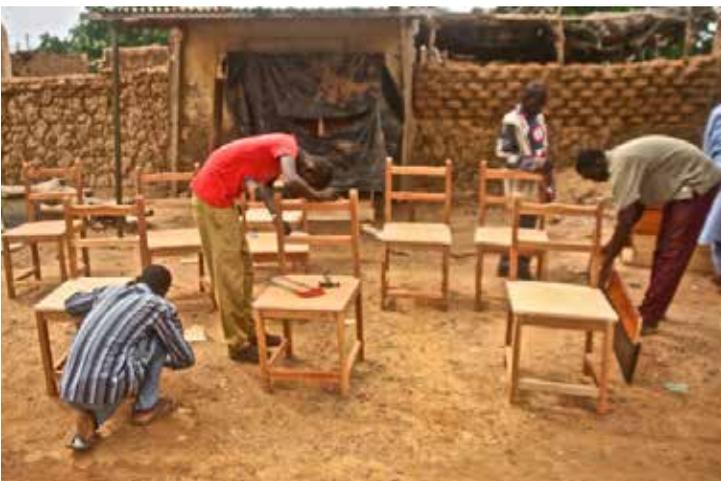
Near completion, the building to house the Sebba Community Library was donated by the village.

oversight of and support for small community libraries in sub-Saharan Africa. A public library serves the entire community. School-age and school-attending youth will likely benefit the most from their use of the library. While the government of Burkina Faso puts increasing emphasis on improving the quality of education, little attention has been paid enabling youth to further and deepen their education on their own.

Libraries are particularly needed in remote areas, such as Sebba. Sebba is located in the far upper northeast of Burkina Faso, beyond Dori. While there is a book storage room attached to the lycee in Sebba, it is barely functioning, usually under lock and key, not conducive to reading, and only available to school kids. Furthermore books can't be taken out.

The Greeley family and FAVL representatives in Ouaga impressed our Project Committee

members with their due diligence, making sure that leaders in the Sebba community were fully involved and committed to the project and that they had devised a sound implementation plan. Both Sali and the FAVL team did a lot of fact finding on several visits to Sebba where they had extensive discussions with local leaders. The result: a signed agreement with local authorities spelling out roles, expectations, and resources devoted to the project. The village donated



Local carpenters build chairs and other furniture for the Sebba library.





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To contact a member
of the leadership team,
please visit [http://www.
friendsofburkinafaso.org](http://www.friendsofburkinafaso.org)



SEBBA (CONTINUED)

an existing government-owned building for which refurbishing is in its final phase. Furniture and other materials are being secured locally for the interior of the building, books are being ordered and plans are underway to hire and train a librarian.

On the basis of the well-conceived proposal FBF received as well as six supporting letters from village representatives for the Sebba library, our Board of Directors approved \$4,000 for this project. These funds are earmarked to defray the costs of basic library supplies and to buy books, the majority of which will be authored by West African authors and written in French, Moré, and Fulfudé and will be purchased in Ouagadougou, thanks largely to FBF donors.

There are high hopes that by establishing and operating a library in Sebba, the local community will accomplish the following goals:

1. Improve schooling outcomes for children in the town. Students will become better readers, and hence improve their test scores. They will be more motivated to thrive in the school environment and, therefore, more likely to continue schooling at higher-grade levels.
2. Serve the reading public. Adults who are literate will have the opportunity to read fiction and non-fiction, as well as newspapers and magazines. They will, therefore, be able to continue to develop their literacy skills.
3. Provide information for rural residents. Farmers and other village residents will have access to information about farming techniques, health information, small business pamphlets and other information useful to the community's economic development.

The initial inspiration for the Sebba library stems from the Greeley family. To a large extent this motivation came from their 13-year old son, Ethan. Ethan, who has been to Burkina Faso many times to visit his mother's extended family, has gotten to know the village where she was born and grew up. Noting that there was no library in Sebba, he remembered comments his mother made when he was younger about how much more fortunate he was than she had been going to a school where there were virtually no books. Ethan chose to advance the idea of establishing a library in Sebba as part of his Bar-Mitzvah program. He launched a promotional campaign on behalf of the library that raised \$1,500 from Temple Emanuel. Subsequently, Ethan donated \$8,000 he received as gifts from fulfilling his Bar-Mitzvah commitments to the project.



The investments in the Sebba library will, undoubtedly, generate handsome returns due in no small part, to the local community involvement in Sebba, FAVL's leadership, a \$5,000 donation from the pharmaceutical company Merck, the \$4,000 from Friends of Burkina, and, of course, to the Greeley family's efforts. Thanks to all for their generosity!

For more information on Friends of African Village Libraries, visit www.favl.org.