

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2016 - NO. 2



In this issue:

2016 Peace Award Winner
[page 2](#)

Education for Young Orphans
[page 4](#)

Pig Farmers to Permagardens
[page 5](#)

30 Years of FBF
[page 8](#)

Remembering William Johnstone
[page 11](#)

Girls' Education
[page 12](#)

Failure without Consequences
[page 13](#)

IN MEMORY

by K. Combs-Bicaba, '98-'01



Burkina Faso lost a true champion on October 13, 2016, with the passing of Michael Lavoie, FBF President.

If one word can be used to characterize Mike, it would be "passionate." Mike pursued each and every act with a contagious zest and enthusiasm.

Since his Peace Corps service as a well-digger in the mid-1970s, Mike maintained close relationships with his Burkinabe family and friends and made frequent visits to Burkina Faso. His most recent visit was in 2015 for the presentation of the First Annual Peace Award to the Mogho Naba, with whom he formed a friendship. Mike was elected FBF President in 2010.

Fluent in Moore, Mike's final words were the "Our Father" in the language of the land he loved so much.

Tond'Ba sen be arzanê.

Y yuur yi ne pègre.

Ti y naam wa.

Ti d maan yamb yam teng zugu

wend b sen maand' arzana.

Kô-y tond riib ti seg d runda

Kô-y tond d yelwêna sugri

Wënd d sèn köt d taab sugri

La y ra bas ti d lui kuiibg pugê ye.

La y yiis d weng buud fâa pugê.

Amina

Our thoughts are with Mike's wife, Kristin, and family. His obituary can be found [here](#).

IMPROVING PUBLIC SANITATION

by Ben Difabbio, '15-'17

When I arrived in my village of Tangasgo in the Sanmatenga province of Burkina Faso in September 2015, there was not a single family with a private latrine in their courtyard. In my introductory research about the village, I asked the head physician about the most common illnesses she treated. She said that apart from malaria during the rainy season, respiratory infections were by far the most prevalent. Her medical opinion of the cause was clear: lack of hygiene and public sanitation—specifically, open defecation in the fields where villagers worked. That same week, I was approached by a respected village elder who formally asked me to help him achieve his goal of building latrines for every courtyard in Tangasgo. This was the dream project for a volunteer; all of the motivation came from the village, and the entire community eventually became committed to its success.

The project moved from planning to action in January 2016, when local leaders in Tangasgo held a public forum led by the village development committee. We explained our grand goal, described what the villagers needed to contribute in order to achieve it, and gave them a week to commit. By the end of that week, 60 families had signed up. After diligent preparation by the project managing committee on budget details, we submitted the Peace Corps Partnership grant application in mid-March. By early May, the project received full funding thanks to many donors, including from the Friends of Burkina Faso. Construction began shortly thereafter.

The early phase of construction moved quickly. We had 1,200 concrete bricks and 60 platforms completed by the end of May. During that period, families began digging holes in their predetermined locations. The management committee mobilized the community to complete the holes before the rains became too frequent. We were largely successful. By mid-July, 52 latrines had been built. The final 8 were completed during dry periods between July and September.

Continued on Page 2

UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP DUES

In 2017, for the first time in 30 years, FBF will be increasing membership dues.

Starting January 1, annual dues will be \$25.

More details on how these dues are used will be coming soon.

In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly designated November 19 as [World Toilet Day](#). The UN's Sustainable Development Goals, launched in 2015, include a target to ensure everyone everywhere has access to toilets by 2030. This makes sanitation a global development priority.

This November 19th, Ben and his fellow health-care professions in Tangasgo will be celebrating World Toilet Day. He writes that he and his colleagues will be holding one of their personal hygiene and sanitation sensibilisations at the village health center on this day.

PUBLIC SANITATION *Continued from Page 1*

At the end of September, when the rains slowed to a stop, I worked with my counterpart and the head physician to organize public trainings on personal hygiene, sanitation, latrine usage, and latrine maintenance. The trainings are currently in progress. I am allocating the remainder of the grant funds to cover antibacterial hand soap for the participants. The objective is to train all of family members in each of the 60 courtyards where the latrines were built.

Cemented interior borders are ready for the mudbrick walls to be built around the new latrine.

Sidiki, Project Manager, surveys the work in progress.

Masons build latrine platforms.



2016 PEACE AWARD WINNER: U.S. AMBASSADOR MUSHINGI

by K. Combs-Bicaba, '98-'01

In a ceremony on November 4, 2016, His Excellence Tulinabo S. Mushingi, Ambassador to Burkina Faso, was awarded the 2016 Peace Award.

Nicknamed *Sidpawalmde* — “the truth shouldn’t be whispered” — by Burkinabe, Ambassador Mushingi was nominated by multiple sources for this award for the important role he played throughout the tumultuous events of the past two years and his engagement with the population.

In a letter supporting his nomination, the Ambassador’s youth outreach initiatives were well noted: “He has always been a reliable and responsible person in his work for democracy and peace in Burkina Faso, in particular in his interactions with the young Burkinabe, especially those in rural areas.”

When it was announced that Ambassador Mushingi would be leaving Burkina Faso for a new position in Senegal, Burkinabe petitioned to keep him at the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou. Ambassador Mushingi left Burkina on November 7th for his new role in Senegal, leaving behind many warm memories of his time there.



Alice Ouedraogo, member of the FBF Peace Award Committee, presents Ambassador Mushingi with the Peace Award trophy.



Representatives of the U.S. Embassy and Lavoie family pose with Ambassador Mushingi.



Ambassador Mushingi presents the donation of \$2000 to the non-profit of his choice: CFIAM (The Women’s Learning Center for Professional Development). Also pictured are Alice Ouedraogo (left) and Kristin Lavoie (right).

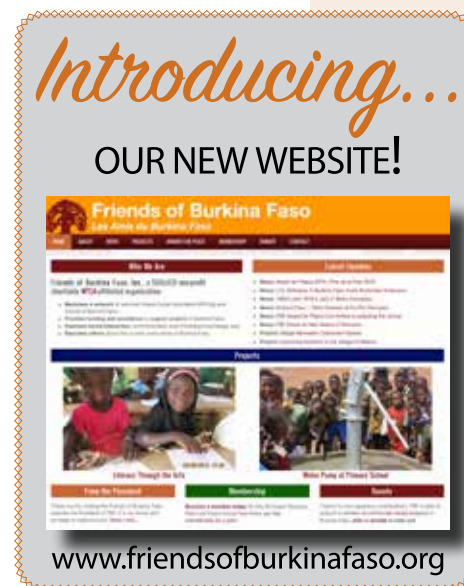


THE PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Michael Lavoie, '75-'77

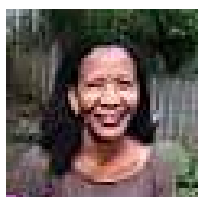
We have had five board meetings this year along with countless committee meetings that have been full of action. Notable events included the following:

- A new Board was elected by the membership in May, injecting fresh energy and ideas. Joining the Board are Faissal Ouedraogo as Vice President and leader of the Peace Prize committee; Leslie Berger as Secretary; and Sali Greeley as Membership Officer.
- Kati McDonald of the FBF Projects Committee paid a memorable visit to Burkina Faso in January. Despite the political turmoil, she was undeterred in visiting the Kamsi rainwater catchment basin which FBF supported with help from GlobalGiving.
- Several new projects have been approved and implemented in recent months, thanks to Tom Vollrath's enduring leadership and dedication. Tom has been greatly aided by the support of many committee members, including former U.S. Ambassador Jimmy Kolker.
- Suzanne Plopper's Treasurer work has again been both exceptional and tireless, particularly her work with fundraising.
- Our website and social media have advanced under the leadership of our new Technology Officer, Aaron Buchsbaum, with indispensable help from Chris Wells, Kristen Combs-Bicaba, and Emily Forsythe Queen. In addition, Beth Knight is now administering FBF's Facebook page.
- Fantastic newsletters were produced by Kristen Combs-Bicaba, who is moving forward with new approaches in 2017.
- Cindy Guo, Jon Underdahl-Peirce and Sali Greeley all worked to make the annual board/member meeting in D.C. a reality.
- Since the awarding of the 2015 FBF Peace Prize to the Mogho Naaba, we have spread news of the Mogho Naaba's model role as a peacemaker in the United States, as described in the last newsletter. We hosted Issaka Kabore, the Mogho Naaba's photographer, in Michigan and highlighted the Mogho Naaba's work at several school, university, and federal court events and presentations. If anyone would like to have the benefit of the PowerPoint presentation I have used, it can be accessed through this link: [The Triumph of Peace, Democracy and Tradition, Burkina Faso 2015](#).
- Recently FBF selected Ambassador Tulinabo Mushingi as the winner of the 2016 Peace Prize. His service in Burkina has been widely acclaimed for many reasons. Ambassador Mushingi has actively promoted development throughout Burkina Faso, traveling widely in search of synergies with what the United States can do. He offered calm determination and support for peace during the political turbulence, from the unrest of 2014 through the coup in September 2015, the 2015 elections, and the current challenge as the country seeks stability with a new government while dealing with lingering issues of social justice and border security.

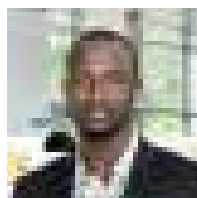


Meet the Board

To learn more about your Board members, visit our [website](#).



Sali Greeley
Membership



Faissal Ouedraogo
President



Kathleen McDonald
Vice President



Tom Vollrath
Projects



Suzanne Plopper
Treasurer



Aaron Buchsbaum
Technology



Beth Knight
Communications



Laura Berger
Secretary



Kristen Combs-Bicaba
Newsletter



PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR YOUNG ORPHANS

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

Two non-governmental organizations — the *Burkina Faso Girls Scholarship Fund* (BFGSF), led by FBF member Beth Knight, and *Help for the Future*, under the leadership of Hermann Yelkouny — have been promoting educational opportunities for girls in Burkina Faso by providing need-based scholarships for both primary and secondary school. During the 2015-16 academic year, BFGSF/H2F granted small scholarships to 17 students living in the northern region of Burkina Faso. FBF was asked to contribute to this effort. Thanks to donations from generous individuals during FBF's 2015 Fall Fundraising campaign, we were able to honor their request to defray schooling costs and to finance the purchase of bicycles.

The bikes made a big difference. They enabled nine BFGSF scholars who had successfully graduated from primary school to continue their education. The bikes enabled the students to transport themselves from the small village of Gonsin to the high school in Yako.

Here are some letters received from scholarship recipients:

Hello, my name is Neimata, now in 6th grade at the municipal high school of Yako. Thanks to your generosity, I have grown up a bit and I'd like to know about you. I write this letter to say thank you. It's all I can do for the moment, but I promise you that I will not disappoint you, I will work very hard. Thank you, until next time.

My name is Haguera in 2nd grade. I lost both of my parents but thanks to you, I am still in school. Every evening, I think of you before going to sleep. Thank you, and I wish you a long life.



BFGSF Scholars with their bikes

In December 2015, FBF Project

Committee member Bagassi Koura took advantage of being in Ouagadougou on a work assignment with the Voice of America to meet and interview Hermann Yelkouny on two occasions. Bagassi sent the Committee a written progress report after these meetings and, once back in the States, he debriefed us about the BFGSF/H2F program.

This summer, FBF's Anne Spear, who was in Burkina conducting preliminary research for her PhD degree work at Johns Hopkins University, also met Mr. Yelkouny. The two of them traveled to Yako in July to meet students and their parents at the local high school. The girls described the many challenges they face in attending classes, including the costs of tuition, school supplies, uniforms, noonday meals, and textbook rental. Anne, in turn, underscored the importance of education for the girls' future and that of their families.

BFGSF submitted a proposal to FBF that included a budget to cover the critical needs for the 29 girls selected by faculty members to qualify for support for the next academic year. In mid-September, the Projects Committee endorsed the BFGSF proposal. Our Board agreed to complete the funding needed to pay schooling costs for 13 girls whom FBF helped support last year, as well as for 16 girls entering the BFGSF program for the first time. Subsequently, the Board authorized release of \$3,540 enabling BFGSF to support their scholars during the 2016-17 academic year.



Thank You!

Thanks to your generous contributions, FBF is able to support a number of community-based projects in Burkina Faso. Visit our [website](#) to read about the various FBF-sponsored projects.

[Donate](#)



FROM PIG FARMERS TO PERMAGARDENS, PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY ACROSS BURKINA FASO

by Calder Bethke, '14-'17

During my first two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Burkina Faso, I lived in a village of about 2,000 people. I worked on community economic development with small savings and loans groups, with a focus on income-generating activities.

Now that I've extended my service to a third year, one of my jobs has been to visit past sites where volunteers have received a West Africa Food Security Partnership (WAFSP) grant, funded through [Feed the Future](#). The grant sites I've been able to visit are up to four years old, and it has been thought-provoking to hear and see the challenges recipients have faced and explore how sustainable their work has been.



Alizeta with her pigs

Recently I visited the site of a 2012 WAFSP grant that provided funds to repair old pig farms. Pigs were bought and newborn piglets were paid forward to new members of an association created to ensure the sustainability of the project within the community.

This sustainability aspect was important. I learned that the previous year, some of the herds had been struck by the pig flu, and two members of the association had lost all of their pigs. Because of the solidarity of the association, those members were given piglets on credit and their herds were able to be re-established.

Want to know more?



Watch this "Volunteer Life" video about Calder produced by the Peace Corps.

One person I spoke with was Alizeta, who was a member of the association along with her husband. She said the project was helpful because profit from the pigs allowed her to pay for school fees, school clothes and food for their children.

It was great to see that WAFSP grant had created a sustainable cooperation and support system between members that did not exist before. Pigs

supply protein to the community, and the profit from their sale is directly helping improve food security.

I also visited another community in northern Burkina Faso that received a grant for a school garden. The recipients credit their small but hard-earned garden patch with helping to increase school attendance, as parents know school lunches are now served with

nutritional veggies. Improved attendance contributes to a better education, meaning more chances of employment, more stability and better food security.

The nearby water pump is broken, so every morning, even with the dry season well on its way, parents send their children to school with a container of water from their local wells to help water the garden. This way the garden can continue to provide children with healthy and diverse meals.

Current Peace Corps volunteers are also doing a lot of work to increase food security in Burkina Faso. Their projects include new income-generating activities and food transformation and preservation skills, from beekeeping to creating mango products (like jam and dried mango), shea butter products, soy products, and more.

Peace Corps Burkina Faso has also facilitated several trainings using funding from the WAFSP partnership. This year alone, we've done trainings on agriculture and animal husbandry, beekeeping, soy transformation, and permagardening. This effort has led to the creation of 11 permagardens — gardens generating produce year-round — and more than 300 people being trained on income-generating activities using soy.

One volunteer held a large-scale nutrition and culinary diversity training. The training focused on the benefits of eating a balanced meal and the importance of consuming local and diverse foods, as many families don't get adequate nutrition due the traditional diet of mostly starchy staple crops.



School Director with garden

Afterwards, as part of a friendly competition against others in the training, community members put their new skills to work planning and purchasing ingredients to make the most highly nutritious and creative meal they could think of. It was a great success.

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Nutritious and delicious

MIDTERM REPORT ON THE NEBROU NUTRITION PROJECT

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

Peace Corps volunteer Victor Martinez-Cassmeyer recently sent us a second status report on the "Two Garden" project in the village of Nebrou, located in the Ziro Province. Last July, he informed us that construction of the community's fenced gardens at the school and at the local health center (COGES) was proceeding as scheduled. This October, he sent pictures of eggplants, watermelons, tomatoes, onions and cabbage growing in both locations.

According to Victor, the director of the primary school is overseeing the planting and care of the garden by students. Soon the produce will be harvested, providing more nutritious lunches for teachers and students alike.

At the community health center, a problem arose when the master gardener moved to a different village, leaving the COGES garden unsupervised and poorly tended. It was challenging for the community to identify a replacement gardener. The primary reason: the rainy season is the time when almost everyone in village goes to the fields to plant and cultivate their millet and corn fields. There were also some challenges involving politics selecting a new master gardener, given the various local organizations and ethnic groups.

Village leaders held several meetings with the Health Center Council. A set of qualifications was drawn up to guide the selection process:

1. The person applying to become master gardener must have demonstrated successful experiences in gardening.

2. He must be a Nebrou resident to insure that the garden was watered daily during the hot season.
3. The person must not be a member of the Health Center Council nor any other established organization within the village.

Thankfully, the village was able to identify and recruit Benjamin, a well-qualified master gardener.

According to Victor, Benjamin has worked miracles in the health center's garden since assuming his new position. Not only have many vegetables been planted in the COGES garden, but moringa tree saplings are thriving.

As noted in the previous issue of The Burkina Connection, moringa leaves, pods, seeds, and oils are a rich and inexpensive source of vitamins, minerals and protein. For example, three tablespoons of moringa leaf powder give children most of their daily vitamin A, calcium, and iron needs, as well as 40 percent of their daily protein needs.

Victor and his colleagues continue their efforts to educate Nebrou's population about the importance of improved nutrition. They also are encouraging folks to plant more gardens using approved, modern technologies.



10m x 10m garden plot nearing completion at the elementary school



Vegetable and moringa garden at the local health center



Benjamin, Master Gardener



PARTNERSHIP ASSISTS ARTISANS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

by Mead Over, '67-'70



Exhibition Sale

Tigoung Nonma (which means “strength through unity”) differs in several respects from other groups supported by FBF. First, thanks to the assistance of a British aid group, International Service (IS), Tigoung Nonma was able to construct its own bilingual [website](#). Second, it has been able to market its artisanal products both in Burkina Faso and in the United Kingdom. Third, it receives recognition and support from two other international groups. In view of these organizational strengths, and in furtherance of Tigoung Nonma’s professed objective of independence, the Project Committee worked with the group’s leaders, especially Zoénabou Savadogo, and with a British former IS volunteer, Alice McGonnell, to launch Tigoung Nonma’s project on the GlobalGiving website. Thanks to active maintenance of TN’s GlobalGiving site, TN has performed well--meeting the goal FBF had set for matching their first few months’ fundraising and subsequently achieving their overall fund-raising objective on the GG platform in October.

Tigoung Nonma has conserved the resources they have collected from GlobalGiving, FBF, and other sources until they can find a suitable parcel of land on which to build the workshop that they firmly believe will be the foundation for a more secure financial base. Unfortunately, TN has suffered setbacks in the last year from forces outside their control. The British government withdrew its IS volunteers from Burkina Faso because of security concerns. The precipitous decline in tourism that accompanied the heightened security concern hampered Tigoung Nonma’s two primary sources of income, its craft sales and its catering business. Furthermore, high and rising land prices in the Ouagadougou area have frustrated their efforts to acquire a plot for their workshop.

Despite these setbacks, TN continues to work energetically to raise revenue from all its traditional sources, while investigating new revenue ideas. The enclosed pictures show TN members selling their cuisine and their crafts. We were pleased to be able to support them by commissioning one of their members, Issouf Sebgho, to create FBF Peace Prize statuettes for the 2015 and 2016 award winners. Personally, I would love to have them come to Washington to cater a party. While international trips between the States and Ouagadougou are too expensive for more than a few of us, we continue to stay in touch and help as best we can.

Having recently fulfilled Tigoung Nonma’s initial fund-raising objective on GlobalGiving, TN is now planning its next steps. Since acquiring the parcel of land continues to be their immediate goal, they are working towards that objective in several ways. First, they are planning to submit a revised statement to GlobalGiving, in accordance with GG procedures for projects that have attained their original financial goal. Second, they have requested help with their land purchase from the Government of Burkina Faso, and have received preliminary encouragement, conditional on evidence of continued support by FBF. Faissal Ouedraogo, current president of FBF, has signed a [letter of recommendation](#), which will strengthen the probability that TN will receive a subsidy from the GOBF.



Issouf Sebgho displaying the 2015 Award for Peace statue he crafted



President Zoénabou Savadogo and TN members chat with Michael Lavoie in 2015



TN Catering Staff



MEET AND GREET WITH NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR

Jimmy Kolker, former Ambassador to Burkina Faso and FBF member, offered his home in D.C. to introduce Andrew Young, the recently Senate-confirmed U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso, to members of Friends of Burkina Faso. The reception took place on October 29.

To learn more about Ambassador Young, click [here](#).



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

by John Sneed, '67-'69

In the Fall of 1986 the National Association of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers or NCRPCV (now NPCA) held a conference on the Mall in Washington, DC, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of Peace Corps. The conference focused on reawakening the idealism and spirit of service behind Peace Corps. It featured inspiration from Sargent Shriver and Philippine President Cory Aquino, as well as ideas for ways RPCVs could continue to serve.

The conference also featured country-of-service reunions, bringing together volunteers and staff who had shared experiences in in the host countries, many for the first time since their service. Coincidentally, it had been almost 20 years since "Upper Volta 1" had arrived in Ouagadougou, and many of those volunteers were now at a place in their family and professional lives where they wanted to reconnect with one another. It was in that environment of remembering and renewal that Friends of Burkina Faso was born.

FBF: THE EARLY DAYS

By early 1987 FBF had incorporated in Washington, DC, had selected an initial Board of Directors, and had published its first newsletter. A core group of volunteers and staff representing all the years Peace Corps had been in Upper Volta/ Burkina Faso began monthly meetings at the Church of the Epiphany, where one of our members served as church secretary and could provide us with meeting space and some office services.

It was clear from the outset, at least initially, that FBF needed to be located in the DC area to take advantage of the number of people interested in Burkina living in the region, as well as proximity to Peace Corps, the National Association of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and the embassy of Burkina Faso. However, as this core group began reaching out to the larger RPCV community, it was clear that there was a broad desire to reconnect with the Peace Corps experience. People wanted to know what was going on in Burkina and they wanted to find old friends - both Burkinabé and fellow volunteers.

LOOKING BACK

In 2017 Friends of Burkina Faso will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Though this is a somewhat arbitrary milestone, it gives us an opportunity to reflect on who we are as an organization, what we have accomplished, and what do we need to do to ensure that the connection between our two nations and our people continues to thrive.

FBF has had five administrations over these 30 years, each bringing new energy and directions to the organization; however, we have not done a very good



THE MONUMENT OF MARTYRS IN OUAGA 2000

The symbolic gourd on the ground floor symbolizes respect for national heroes, while a second upraised gourd on the 3rd floor symbolizes Burkinabe fraternity.



job of documenting our accomplishments. Also, though we have been fortunate in having individuals step up into leadership roles, we do not have a good process for developing new leadership, making continuity in our efforts difficult. In order to begin to address this continuity gap, the Communications Committee has authorized the construction of a FBF timeline, highlighting major accomplishments over the 30 years and creating an archive of what we have done.

The early days of FBF were devoted to building membership, establishing communications for members distributed around the world, and providing a platform and network for the ideas and interests of members seeking to further connections between the people of the US and Burkina. The initial newsletters were edited by hand and mailed to everyone regardless of membership status (these early newsletters will soon be online at the FBF website). Membership fees and generous donations were targeted to building the organization. This included developing a relationship with the NCRPCV, which resulted in some grant funding for outreach projects and conferences. Additional relationships were built with the Burkina Embassy and Peace Corps, providing sources of information for members and a platform for influencing the return of Peace Corps to Burkina.

From this foundation we have developed an award-winning newsletter, strong relationships with Peace Corps BF and the US Embassy in Burkina, an online and social media presence, and a strong portfolio of development and assistance projects. The FBF Timeline will attempt to capture these efforts and, where appropriate, document them in an online archive.

AN INVITATION TO OUR MEMBERS

Friends of Burkina Faso has evolved over the 30 years, reflecting the interests and priorities of each new leadership team. But it has also had a strong continuity of purpose, reflecting the loyal involvement of many individuals over its entire history. I will be gathering input from past leaders of FBF, but I also invite ideas from the membership about what you consider the most important milestones, as well as any documentation you might have in the history of our organization. These can be emailed to me at jdoe5502@gmail.com. In the next edition of *Burkina Connection* we will explore some of the highlights of the FBF's 30-year history and some of the people who made it happen.



2016 ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN SEPTEMBER

The 2016 annual meeting of Friends of Burkina Faso was marked by a gathering at the home of Sali and David Greeley in Bethesda, Maryland in mid-September.

Attendees called into the annual board meeting and partook of delicious Burkinabe fare and fellowship.

Pictured at right, Mead Over is holding a 1960s-era ethnic map of Burkina Faso, donated by former PCBF Country Director, Douglas Teschner. This map will be used to raise funds for projects.



RENOVATIONS OF KAMSI'S RAINWATER CATCHMENT BASIN

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

Kathleen McDonald (FBF Board member), Seydou Traoré, PhD (Extension Associate at Texas A&M University), and a nongovernmental organization called [Give Water Give Life](#) forged a partnership in 2013 to build and refurbish village rainwater catchment basins. Properly designed and constructed in appropriate locations, these basins tap into the existing water aquifer and raise the groundwater table. They provide opportunities for local farmers to increase agricultural production, improve villagers' health, and create local employment.

FBF marketing efforts on GlobalGiving and donations earmarked to support this initiative received from our members financed the construction and repair of a village basin in Sisene, completed in 2014. Accumulated funds enabled us also to underwrite the cost of refurbishing the basin in the village of Kamsi. Renovation of this second basin was completed in early 2016.

Below are brief excerpts and photos taken from GWGL's final report following the completion the work on the Kamsi basin:

Thanks to the Friends of Burkina Faso

This project was made possible by the support of the Friends of Burkina Faso (FBF), which enabled Global Giving to collect donations earmarked for the repair of the rainwater catchment basin in the village of Kamsi. The collection and storage of this scarce commodity will undoubtedly improve access to water in the village of Kamsi...

After the deposit of the construction aggregates and other materials, work began on such tasks as building the dike and weir and treating the ravines. During this stage, there was a major mobilization of the population to help carry out the work. The women were in charge of drawing water for the construction; the men, especially the younger ones, contributed by their labor...

The repair of the village's water catchment will make it possible to collect rainwater in large quantities, helping to raise the water table and to fill the wells all around the catchment. With the wells full, the women can conduct small-scale irrigation of the field used by their group for market gardening. This will improve their nutritional health and that of the population.

Small activities related to market gardening will impact the socioeconomic development of the village, improving people's incomes. The replenishment of the wells around the catchment will mean that the women and girls will not have to travel so far in search of water. As a result, women will have more time to carry out income-generating activities, and, in particular, girls will have more time to go to school.



Rebuilding the rainwater catchment basin allows for improved water collection and retention, as well as helping to maintain water in surrounding wells.

Want to know more?

Watch these interviews from Kamsi.



Victorine, member of the women's cooperative in Kamsi (Moore)



Naaba Tigre, Kamsi's Village Chief (French)

REMEMBERING WILLIAM JOHNSTONE

by Leslie Berger, '81-'83

William Johnstone lived a full and inspirational life of dedicated purpose and service to others. His joie-de-vivre and magnetic personality still glow brightly in the memories of those who served with him in the early 1980's when we collectively witnessed the revolution that changed Upper Volta to Burkina Faso. Volunteering for Peace Corps in his 50's, William was a worldly and seasoned larger-than-life figure remembered and beloved for his keen mind and generous spirit. Deeply religious, he was never above a good naughty joke.

William touched many of our lives; here are a few memories recounted by his Peace Corps friends:

William, or Guillaume as he became known, quickly settled down to life as a stagiaire during our time in Kamboinsé in the summer of 1981 and successfully completed all required language and cultural lessons. Not everyone managed so well and nearly 30% of our group of volunteers dropped out due to the rigours of coping in such a challenging environment. William had all the coping skills and strength of personality to succeed and to make lasting friendships.

William's seniority, experience and open personality made him a big hit in his home village of Mogtêdo where he worked with village groups and small businesses to assess new projects, disburse small loans and improve business management practices. Each evening after work he would wash and don his white caftan robe, prepare his dinner, relax with a gin and tonic, and read or mix with his local friends. We were all amazed at how he managed to procure gin and tonic fixings in such an environment!

His village friends loved coming to his house where he sometimes organised tea parties in the afternoon. And in the evenings, by the bright light of his Coleman lamp William overcame the language barriers and taught his friends to play whist, and passed many a happy evening in that way. William had what it took to break down cultural barriers.

After our return to the U.S., William was one of the key people in getting Friends of Burkina Faso going. When we were first fumbling around to get started, he quickly identified the basic, practical things we needed and found a way to get them done. He provided a meeting place for FBF at the Church of the Epiphany in Washington, D.C., as well as banking and office services, invitations to his apartment for social events, and an endless supply of cigarillos for the closet smokers in the group!

I have stayed in touch with William over the years as he and I have both been based in the UK for the last 20 years. William's final role was serving as a priest at St. Mary's Church in Chettle, a small Dorset village, where he lived in a cottage on the church grounds in the shadow of the grand Manor house. I visited with

William there many times and found that he never lost his sparky sense of humor, gift for storytelling, and keen interest in others. He is buried between the cottage and the church.

One of the priests who had worked with William sent a biography of his life, summarised here:

William was born in Ohio and raised in Detroit. He served stateside in the Navy in both World War II and the Korean War. Following his time in the Navy he became a banker in Washington, D.C., living in Georgetown, Foggy Bottom and DuPont Circle.

In 1972, William spent almost a year travelling throughout Southern Africa and then secured a position as a lay missionary and assistant to the Archbishop of Tanzania where he stayed for 5 years. It was here that his affection and interest in working with the people of Africa grew. During this time he became involved with the Kindwitwi Leprosy Trust in the Rififi valley.

When he returned from the Peace Corps, William became financial administrator at the Epiphany Episcopal Church in D.C. From there he became the Diocesan Secretary in Belize and worked there throughout the 1990's. William was ordained a Priest in 1994 at age 67.

William left Belize in 1998 for a posting in the UK where he served as Priest in Residence in Chettle, and as an Officiating Chaplain to the School of Royal Signals at Blandford Camp. William remained in Chettle for 20 years where he became an integral member of this historic village near Salisbury. William was presiding over services up until one month before he died of cancer, just shy of his 90th birthday. I am sure all who knew William will agree that he was a truly remarkable man.



William following his ordination in 1994



William and the original AVV Volunteers, circa 1981



AS THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69

As the new school year begins in Burkina, I am proud to announce that Friends of Burkina Faso, in partnership with the NEEDED Association in Ouahigouya, is supporting three major educational efforts:

- the entrance into primary school of 349 village girls through the Lambs Support Girls' Education Project
- school lunches for village girls at the Lycee Moderne de l' Amitié or LMA (the girls' middle/secondary school established by NEEDED)
- post-secondary education/training scholarships for 18 young women.

Our support for girls' education is made possible by contributions from our very generous partners, including the Milton and Beatrice Wind Foundation, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas Foundation, GlobalGiving donors, our members, and other individuals committed to the education of girls in Burkina.

Our support for the Lambs Support Girls' Education Project is in its 15th and final year. Through this project, village girls enter primary school with the gift of a lamb, which their parents raise and sell to pay for the girls' school costs. With the leftover cash, the parents can buy, raise and sell a new lamb, repeating the process each year to support their daughters' primary-secondary schooling. Since 2002, FBF has supported the education of 3,920 young village girls through this project. Over the past 15 years, an average of 84 percent of these girls have passed national primary school exit exams enabling them to continue on to middle school, as compared with 64 percent of their peers throughout the region.

FBF continues to support school lunches at the LMA. A noon meal has been an important factor in the success of the students, who all live in Ouahigouya and make a 6-km round trip by foot or bicycle each day to school. Academic success rates for students at this school are consistently higher than the national average. For the 2014-2015 school year, for example, 81.86 percent of LMA students passed middle school exit exams, compared with 58.62 percent of students nationally; 84.3 percent of LMA secondary students passed their final exams, compared with 37.04 percent of students nationally.

The 18 post-secondary education and training scholarships we funded this school year include four university scholarships (one each in English, law, business communications and medicine); two in midwifery training; and 12 in primary school teacher training. Our most sincere gratitude to all of our donors who contributed to scholarships this year, giving each recipient an educational opportunity that would not have otherwise been possible. Since the beginning of this project in 2010, we have supported scholarships for 138 girls. Two girls have failed in their studies and one girl has dropped out of her training over the six years of this program, a 98 percent success rate! In each case, their scholarships were immediately applied to other candidates. How many universities or other training programs in the U.S. can boast that kind of success?

FBF can be proud of the achievements of the girls and young women we have supported in the various stages of their educations. They have obviously taken the opportunities offered them seriously, as demonstrated by their academic success.



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FAILURE WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES

by Michael Beals, '15-'17

A QUIET RAINY SEASON

Since my last blog post I can only describe the time that's passed as ... peaceful. I've been in village almost exclusively over the past month and a half. I fill my days with farming, work meetings, hanging with my neighbors and reading. I enjoy long mornings, since there aren't any pressing issues that need attention. The influx of mosquitoes is annoying but manageable. Twice a week my work group organizes to meet or take care of some tasks at our garden space. Even though there are only 6 months left, there is still much work to be done post-harvest — and I want us to use our time as efficiently as possible.



Michael Beals is a 2nd Year BFPCV.

Peaceful has been nice, but I wasn't anticipating a relaxing rainy season. Instead, my health clinic staff and I were supposed to be conducting a large-scale, door-to-door malaria campaign (called PECADOM+) to reduce the rates of malaria in Ramsa. We've been officially planning this project since February, and all previous signs showed that it was going to succeed. The Head Nurse and participating workers were motivated to combat the rampant malaria that infects nearly 70 percent of our villagers during the summer months. We conducted a successful test run in May to experiment with the project model and let the workers learn the ropes.

FAILURE TO LAUNCH

Unfortunately, when it came time to get to work in July, things stalled. I had been away on vacation, and upon my return I found nothing was happening. I approached the Head Nurse and he told me that the Health Clinic was overwhelmed with other rainy season campaigns, which was completely true. They had to distribute

mosquito nets to the entire village, as well as implement a government program and give anti-malaria pills to children under the age of 5. As for the health workers who would be doing the door-to-door sweeps, they were all volunteers, and the need to concentrate on their farm work drained away their motivation.

I brainstormed with my counterpart to find a way to save the project. Eventually, we discovered a project model where the volunteer workers would buy the medicine themselves upfront (at cost) and then make a reasonable profit selling the medicine while conducting the project. This approach would give the workers enough financial incentive to participate. Not all volunteer workers, however, could afford to do this, and the Head Nurse refused to help carry out this plan. I saw his reasoning, because in the past volunteer workers had pocketed money that was rightly owed to the Health Clinic.

I still encouraged those who could afford to purchase the medicine to do so, because they would still make some extra income while doing a great service to the community. Some of our health workers had money in hand ready to buy their own medicine when we ran into our final roadblock. Our Head Nurse was no longer willing to train our health workers on how to properly dispense and sell malaria medicine because of a larger political issue occurring with his superiors. Even though our project model had been approved all the way from the Minister of Health in the capital, our Head Nurse didn't feel comfortable giving the training until a "later" date.

HARD TO FATHOM

Here we are in the month of September still waiting on that training, while the most important period of the year to conduct malaria work passes by. I feel frustrated because it feels as if the Head Nurse failed us, even though I probably don't know the entire story.

I knew conducting a large-scale project like this was going to be hard from the start. We began early and involved all the necessary actors (even in at the ministry level), and I thought we had the green light. However, like many development projects, ours ran into one too many issues that ultimately kept it from lift-off. Or in other words, we failed in our first major project.

Personally, I felt discouraged because I knew this project could have had a direct positive impact on my community if carried through. We were close, but not close enough.

I updated my Peace Corps boss on having canceled this project and in response I got a "congratulations for trying" – kind of like the consolation ribbon one gets in elementary school for effort.





Observing a permagarden training with the new group of PCVs. We infuse the soil with local compost, charcoal and ash to improve the soil throughout the following year.



With the heavy rains this season our Moringa trees have been abundantly producing. Once or twice each month we harvest the leaves to turn into powder. We are almost ready to start consistently selling our nutritious powder to the community and hopefully soon in our regional capital!

After digesting this experience, I realize that overall, Peace Corps Community Projects cannot be classified as “high-stakes.” I know that I am here to work and accomplish large and small development projects with my community. Yet I also know that it’s not unusual for them to fail. That’s the price we pay when a majority of our projects are without any funding and stem from our community’s needs and motivation.

ON THE OTHER HAND

Overall, I’m still very proud of our work accomplishments in Ramsa. We’ve been able to achieve more than I originally anticipated when I first arrived in my village, due to the hard work of my counterpart and community members.

A great example of this willingness to work is our most recent undertaking — permagardening. I was able to observe a quick permagarden training by chance while helping train the new group of Peace Corps volunteers who had just arrived in June. I immediately realized that this model of gardening — creating small, low-cost, permanent, bio-intensive household gardens specifically to improve nutrition — is the perfect tool that I’ve been searching for to make better nutrition feasible in my village.

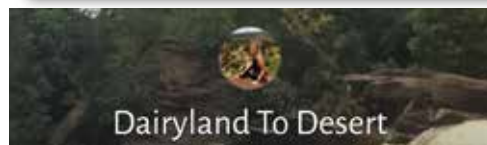
So, in the place of PECADOM+ we are now transitioning to permagardening during the remaining months of the rainy season. I’ve already constructed two, one with my neighbor and one with my counterpart, and the concept is growing in popularity. While this gardening technique is modern and new, it’s not so foreign that it scares away potential users. I hope that my villagers latch on and start their garden construction ASAP.

In other news, my schedule for the next 6 months is wide open. I know the time is going to pass too fast, but I’m going to do my best to make the most of it. I’ll try and travel some inside the country but for the most part I’ll be at my post, relishing my last months living in a small African village.

This blog post was edited and reprinted with permission from the author. It originally appeared on Michael Beal’s blog [Beals in Burkina](#).

Check out these blogs from newly sworn-in volunteers:-

hey Blogger...





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MEET GEORGIE BADIEL

by Georgie Badiel



Badiel's book, The Water Princess, was Amazon's Best Book of September.

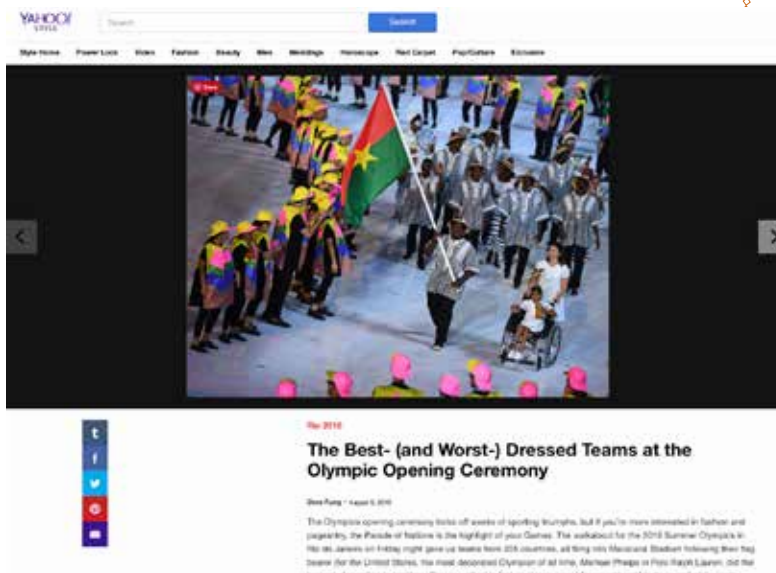
Georgie Badiel hails from Burkina Faso; was named Miss Africa 2004; is the co-author of a children's book, *The Water Princess*, which was named Amazon's "Best Book of September"; and has always been a true citizen of the world. As a model, she loves working in fashion; as an activist, she has made the Georgie Badiel Foundation her passion. A small and focused charity, the Foundation is dedicated to helping the people of Burkina Faso gain access to clean water and a healthier life.

The Georgie Badiel Foundation is a not-for-profit charitable organization — a 501(c)3 — that provides access to clean drinking water in selected areas of Burkina Faso. The organization also builds sanitation facilities and plants trees.

Burkina Faso is a land of beauty and deprivation. Landlocked in West Africa, this desperately poor nation has more than 17 million people. Water and sanitation are a luxury to most: The British trust [WaterAid](#) estimates that at least 6,000 children under five die each year from the lack of these basic necessities.

The Georgie Badiel Foundation has a simple but clear goal: to provide access to clean water and sanitation services in the founder's hometown of Réo, the capital of the Sanguiné province. More than 37,000 people live in Réo, and very few benefit from clean water and sanitation. The Foundation is out to change that cruel reality — and that's just a start.

The Georgie Badiel Foundation is less than a year old, but in that short time it's helped 25,000 people in rural Burkina Faso by easing access to clean water.



The Burkinabe Summer Olympic team was named "best-dressed" by [Yahoo!](#) for their opening ceremony attire:

Hands down, this might be the best Opening Ceremony outfit of the night. It ticked not one, not two, but three of fashion's favorite tropes: the stripes, the tunic shape, and the street style-worthy hat. And as a bonus, intricate prints and detailing.