



BURKINA CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR THE MEMBERS OF FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO



2019 Vol. 1

IN THIS ISSUE

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT
TO EDUCATION

P. 3



BECOME A
BOARD MEMBER

P. 4

SAVORISTA
COFFEE

P. 5

SNAPSHOTS OF
OUAGADOUGOU

P. 7

2018
YEAR IN REVIEW

P. 9

AG PROJECT GROWING STRONG IN MANGA

by Leslie Berger, '81-'83



Madame Tapsoba Marceline and over 200 other participating farmers gathered in Bindé to discuss the AIVDPL project with the town's Mayor in March.

For the third year running, the FBF Projects Committee voted to support an agricultural project run by Patrice Yameogo and the AIVDPL team of retired agricultural extension agents in the communes of Manga, Gogo and Bindé, located in South Central BF. In the first two years, 675 farmers (more than 50% are women) were trained in improved crop production practices in a drive to increase yields and increase the availability of food in rural communities. The focus was on collecting and using manure from farmers' own livestock, and providing them with access to improved seed for 4 different crops--corn, cowpeas, rice and soybeans. Yield calculations both in the demonstration plots and on individual farms in the first two first years revealed that farmers following the new practices were able to significantly increase their yields.

Interest in the project grew with more farmers in each village asking if they could participate in the program and with local officials expressing interest in getting involved. This enthusiasm could be seen in March when the mayor of Bindé approached the AIVDPL team and asked if he could convene an open meeting of farmers within his jurisdiction to learn more about the project. Farmers from across 15 villages who had participated in 2017 and 2018 were invited to share their experiences participating in the program. The AIVDPL team was surprised by the level of interest shown when 200 farmers turned up to the meeting.

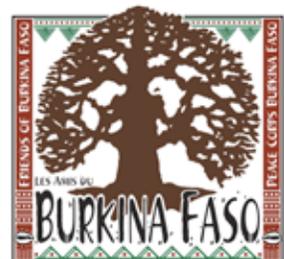
The positive aspects of the project identified by the many farmers who spoke up at this meeting included:

- heightened awareness of new production methods
- appreciation of the training with respect to how to use new seed varieties

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BECOME A BOARD MEMBER

It's time to elect new officers to the Friends of Burkina Faso Board of Directors. If you are interested in serving on the FBF Board, please email Leslie (secretary@friendsofburkinafaso.org) or Beth (communications@friendsofburkinafaso.org) by June 30. See page 4 for details.



- how to improve soil fertility through the deployment of composted manure
- new information about sowing dates
- correct dosage of organic and chemical fertilizers
- optimal timing for applying crop protection products
- proximity of the trainers – having them nearby in the villages to answer questions regularly
- improved food self-sufficiency for their families due to increased yields
- increased production enabling them to sell surplus commodities on the open market
- increased income to meet family needs

The farmers described some of the challenges they faced -- challenges which they felt were largely of their own doing. These included not collecting enough manure, so not getting the hoped for yield increases, and not respecting the prescribed timing and dosages for applying fertilizer and crop protection products. Naturally occurring challenges were also discussed (e.g., drought conditions, caterpillar infestations, damage to crops due to termites, wind, and grazing animals). The farmers benefited by sharing their experiences with others who offered possible solutions. For example, ideas for mitigating the problem of animals damaging neighbors' fields included fencing animals, imposing fines for the owners of the animals causing damage in neighbors' fields, and holding consultations within the village to find solutions.

The farmers also noted that it would be helpful to have wheelbarrows to facilitate movement of agricultural inputs into the field and ploughs to speed up weeding. They discussed possibilities of pooling resources to acquire such equipment.

The exchanges at this meeting were beneficial for all who attended, as they were able to share their experiences and give advice to each other.

The Mayor of Bindé expressed his appreciation, saying he had gained a good understanding of this project and that he was happy to provide support to the farming community. Both men and women farmers were welcomed at the meeting, reinforcing the equal treatment afforded to all in his jurisdiction. The members of AIVDPL were pleased with the outcome of this meeting, especially given the large number of farmers who participated and the frank and open exchange of information, all of which helped identify ways to move forward. The mayor asked the project participants to make a wooden bench for the members of AIVDPL to show their appreciation for the work they are doing, contributing to the local community in their retirement.

The information contained in this article was taken from a report describing the March 4th meeting, which Patrice Yameogo, the AIVPDPL team leader, wrote for FBF. Throughout 2018, he has provided excellent reporting and testimonials that document the progress of this project.



VIDEO: Patrice Yameogo, AIVDPL Project Manager, visits the test fields, demonstrating various results achieved, depending on the method used. Click the image above to view the video report.



Participating farmers meet at a recent training session



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SUCCESSES IN THE LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69



Since 1999, Friends of Burkina Faso has collaborated with NEEDED, supporting the education of nearly 4,000 girls.

Twenty years ago, a secondary teacher, Lacine Sawadogo, and a midwife, Ahoua Tao, were concerned about the low number of village children -- particularly girls -- entering primary school in the Yatenga. In response, they formed Association NEEDED (Nimbus Enfance Environnement Education et Developpement) for the purpose of addressing the challenges faced by rural subsistence farmers in the education of their children. They have undertaken the following projects, with financial assistance of donors like Friends of Burkina Faso who support their endeavors.

In 1999, NEEDED initiated the Lambs Support Girls' Education Project, enabling the education of village girls at a cost of \$80 per girl for 13 years of primary – secondary school. NEEDED has worked with interested village chiefs, elders and parents to identify 6-7 year-old girls in their villages whose parents were unable to send them to school. NEEDED provides: a) basic school materials, b) a T-shirt and skirt, c) a lamp, and d) a lamb to village girls entering primary school. Parents raise their daughters' lambs and sell them at the end of each year to pay for the next year's school materials and a new lamb.

To date, 10,143 girls from 375 villages have entered primary school with the support of this project. Friends of Burkina Faso has supported nearly 4,000 of these girls. 84% of girls have passed national exit exams at the end of primary school, qualifying them to continue into middle school, this

in comparison with 64% of primary school students in the northern region. NEEDED reports that when girls initially receive a female lamb that is pregnant, they are able to grow their herd; and that in many villages, girls reimburse funds initially received to another young girl.

NEEED anticipates responding to requests from additional villages in the coming school year, after which they will have covered all interested villages in the region and demonstrated throughout the region a sustainable strategy for the education of village children.

In 2005, NEEDED built the Lycee Moderne de l'Amitie (LMA), the combined middle/secondary school. Initially, the LMA was for village girls and orphan boys. As it has grown, it has admitted students from Ouahigouya, but continues to give preference to village girls and orphan boys. The LMA currently has 16 classrooms and 876

students, of which 71% are rural and indigent girls. 50% of these girls have completed primary school under the Lambs Support Girls' Education project. (Other "Lambs" girls continue their studies in public middle/secondary schools nearer their homes.) In the 2018-2019 school year, 98.5% of LMA girls passed national year-end exams. Friends of Burkina Faso supports noon meals for rural and indigent girls attending this school.

In 2010, NEEDED initiated the Postsecondary Education and Training for Girls Project to provide scholarships to young women who complete secondary school and have no resources to continue their educations. To date, NEEDED has provided scholarships to:

- 220 young women for primary school teacher training and 59 for nursing and midwifery training. 218 have either completed

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The ambition of LMA student Salmata: "My dream is to one day become a pilot and work with a company like Air Burkina or Air France. It isn't easy to become a pilot, but I know that with determination and God's grace, it will be possible."

their training or are currently in training; and 95% of graduates are actively employed in their fields.

- 35 young women for university studies (in Burkina) in the fields of medicine, law, science & technology, accounting, management, geography, economics, English and business communications. 94% have either completed their studies or are currently in school.

Scholarship criteria include academic achievement and financial need. Selections are made in collaboration with Ministry of Education.

Through generous donations from our members and partners, Friends of Burkina Faso has supported 175 of these young women!

Since 2008, NEEED has engaged in the construction of rural primary and secondary schools. At the request of villagers and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, NEEED has built three combined middle/secondary schools in unserved provinces in the north and 10 village primary schools, replacing the oldest mud-wall thatched-roof schools built by villagers. All have been turned over to the government and integrated into the public school system. FBF has contributed to the construction of five of the village primary schools.

NEEED's commitment to education continues in the Yatenga, along with that of villagers. The numbers of village girls attending the LMA increases every year, and the number of young women applying for and qualifying for postsecondary training/education is well over 200 per year. And thus, NEEED continues to seek support to enable the maximum number of village girls to achieve all that they are capable of achieving.

BECOME A BOARD MEMBER

It's that time! You follow Friends of Burkina Faso (FBF) activities via our bi-annual newsletter, the Burkina Connection, our Facebook page, our web site, and our annual membership and fundraising letters. All that you read and hear about FBF takes volunteers of our organization working as a team in order to make FBF the remarkable organization that it is known for.

Board Positions

It's time to elect new officers to the Friends of Burkina Faso Board of Directors. The FBF Board serves for three-year terms. This is an open election, and we welcome candidates for all positions:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Projects chair
- Technology chair
- Membership chair
- Communications chair
- Newsletter editor

What would your Board participation involve?

The following link includes descriptions of the responsibilities of each Board position. Check them out. [\[link\]](#)

We hold Board meetings every 2-3 months as needed and work as a team to keep our organization running smoothly.

Election Timeline

Voting will be conducted through a combination of email and online forms and is planned for July 15 - 30. If you are interested in serving FBF in any of the above positions, please communicate your interest to Leslie Berger: secretary@friendsofburkinafaso.org; or Beth Knight: communications@friendsofburkinafaso.org by June 30. Please consider in what capacity you would like to serve FBF in the next three years.

We'll send another announcement with the exact process for Board nominations and selection of individual positions.

PEACE CORPS TO CAREER: STARTING A DECAF COFFEE COMPANY

by Kait Brown, '08-'10

“Burkina what?!”

That’s the question that everyone asked me when I told them I was joining the Peace Corps in Burkina Faso. I had spent two years after college in Washington, DC working behind a desk for a great social impact organization. Sipping coffee and feverishly typing on my computer. But I was itching to get out into the world and learn how change happens on the ground. I had previously studied abroad in Senegal, so when the Peace Corps assigned me to Burkina Faso in West Africa, I quickly said yes!

As a PCV in Bani, Burkina Faso, I collaborated with farmers in the Sahel to build a sesame business so they could earn more by growing and selling better quality sesame for export. I helped them form a cooperative and build relationships with exporters. We collaborated to build and implement the tools they would need to run their businesses with limited literacy.

While surrounded by this farming community, I began to think back to another agricultural product I love: coffee. Most coffee is grown by small scale farmers like the ones I worked with in Burkina. I also began to think back to my days as a teenage barista and wished for a great cup of coffee to replace the Nescafe I was drinking every morning in my village.

Collaborating with these farmers made it very real to me how business could be a powerful tool to create a positive impact. My time in Peace Corps shifted my path towards business school at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan (where JFK proposed the Peace Corps!). After business school, I worked in consulting for a few years.

It was during my time in consulting that my father was diagnosed with cancer while I was on a stressful work project. The combination of work stress and worrying about my dad prevented me from sleeping, and my love of full-strength coffee was making it worse.

The only thing I could change at the time was to give up my coffee, or at least caffeine. I quickly learned how challenging it was to find decaf coffee that I was excited to drink. Decaf drinkers are drinking coffee for the taste and the ritual, not the caffeine fix, so I believed that we deserved excellent tasting coffee, too!

Last year, I started [Savorista](#), a craft decaf company that focuses on caffeine conscious coffee lovers. Rejecting the stigma placed by many in the coffee industry, Savorista is proud to prioritize decaf, and we celebrate the incredible community of people who love coffee without the caffeine. Our Savorista Coffee online store



Kait with the female leaders of the sesame cooperative in Burkina Faso.



Tasting coffee in Kenya

allows us to share this coffee with customers across the US.

Harnessing what I learned in the Peace Corps, that there is no substitute for learning and building relationships in person, my now husband and I set out on a global decaf quest to learn about coffee, meet

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With coffee-producing friends in Rwanda

potential partners, and look for decaf coffee that was worth savoring.

In a blind taste test in Colombia, we fell in love with a coffee that had such great flavor. I loved it, but was sure it was caffeinated. At the reveal, I was pleasantly shocked to learn it was decaf. In that moment, I decided that this would be our first coffee and that Savorista would only offer shockingly great decaf; coffee so flavorful that we and our customers are surprised to learn it is decaf!

During our decaf quest, which also brought us to Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia, I continued to draw on my Peace Corps experience -- focus on relationship building, learn the cultural context, be flexible and don't give up.

The Peace Corps enabled me to build my entrepreneurial muscles while working with the farmers, and taught me about accomplishing things resourcefully. In Burkina Faso, I learned how to deal with ambiguity and move forward, even when the path isn't completely clear. I draw on this everyday as I navigate building a startup.

Years ago, I spoke with many RPCVs before deciding to join the Peace Corps. When I returned, it was the conversations I had with RPCVs that would convince me that going to business school would be a good next step. I'm so happy I sought out RPCVs at these different times in my life. Otherwise, I definitely wouldn't be on this path I love!

This article was reprinted and edited by the author. It originally appeared on peacecorps.gov. You can follow Kait and [Savorista Coffee](#) via [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).



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to support FBF Projects

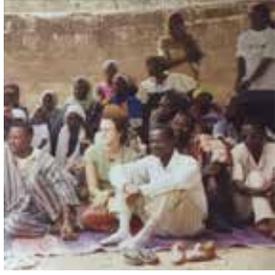
Use code **FBF10** and receive 10% off orders of full-sized bags from Savorista Coffee now through July 31, 2019!

20% of proceeds from sales using the code above will be donated to support FBF projects.

Visit
SavoristaCoffee.com 

SNAPSHOTS OF OUAGADOUGOU

by Nancy Weis-Sanfo, '02-'04



Back in the day. I was a health volunteer 70 kilometers outside of Ouagadougou in the early 2000s. Here I am watching a dance performance by a local troupe during a special occasion. I **moved back to Ouaga with my two sons and Burkinabé husband in 2017.** My sons and I visited the office before it closed. I

didn't know many of the current employees, but did see a few familiar faces!



Garbage, deforestation, and climate change. These three issues are not unique to Burkina Faso, but are present daily. Plastic bags can be found all over the city, but also outside in rural areas. Some trees have black sachets waving in the wind instead of leaves.

On the outskirts of Ouaga, old ancient trees are uprooted to make room for more structures and/or for firewood. **The harmattans still block out the sun;** some days there is just a haze. In my 2 years back, I would say the seasons are no longer predictable. In 2017, the harmattan started in November/December. In 2018, it rained in November. And this hot season? Not so hot. We had about 2 weeks of 108 degrees only. It has rained a lot, which means it's been HUMID.



You can still get a plate of riz gras for 100F, along with your choice of sauce, fish, and spiciness level. **People are still excited for caterpillars,** which you can now buy dried and seasoned in nice packaging. **While shopping at the markets in the city is not as scenic as in rural areas,** I have been able to improve my Moore with the veggie and fruit vendors. One thing I wish we could get more readily is fresh milk. While you can buy it in sachets at some neighborhood boutiques, often because of electricity cuts it has already spoiled or lasts only a day. Oxfam has launched a campaign to support the local milk industry, to encourage people to drink local.



From the gravel streets in the neighborhoods, to the streets of downtown with icons such as the FESPACO roundabout, to new street art. Ouaga in many ways hasn't changed, but everywhere you look there are new roads being blacktopped and buildings started. The Grande Marché has been rebuilt (burned down during my service) and is bustling. You can find Indian and Chinese boutiques with food items. All your favorite Burkinabe items are still at the Artisan Village and Nuance, but also at specialty shops like Umoja, Les Délices du Burkina, and Agribusiness Shop. And if you can't find what you want ready-made, you can have it made!



You always want to be at the second-hand shop when they open a new bundle of stuff, in order to get the best selection! It is challenging to find quality and affordable Western clothes, so I often buy second-hand. However, I have a number of tailors who make amazing outfits with Faso Danfani, Koko Dunda, pagne, and indigo.



There are no shopping malls here! You can find whatever you need on the sides of the streets. At the edge of the road here are hampers made from the plastic straps which are wrapped around the second-hand clothes bundles. These hampers are super sturdy. Another model you'll find are bags and hampers made from old plastic mats.



Support for entrepreneurship is on the rise. Last year I attended a 2-day workshop with participants from around West Africa. It was amazing to hear about all of the amazing businesses people are starting. There are many organizations funding start-ups, but the competition is tough!



Why do I love this city? It's because of the arts and culture. From SIAO to FESPACO to the amazing dance and music to street festivals. Of course, Ouaga can be challenging and exhausting at times, much like any major city. However, there are silver linings to living here, and I am so thankful to have the opportunity to be here again.



Nancy Weis-Sanfo served as a health volunteer from 2002-2004, and was the editor of the Burkina Connection from 2007-2009. She currently lives in Ouagadougou with her husband and two sons, and has worked in the international education sector for 15 years. Follow her Instagram @mamiwaga.



ABOUT US

Friends of Burkina Faso is a 501(c)3 nonprofit affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association. We maintain a **network** of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) and friends of Burkina Faso. We provide funding and assistance to **support projects** in Burkina Faso. We strive to **improve social interaction**, communication and information exchange. We **educate** others about the country and culture of Burkina Faso.

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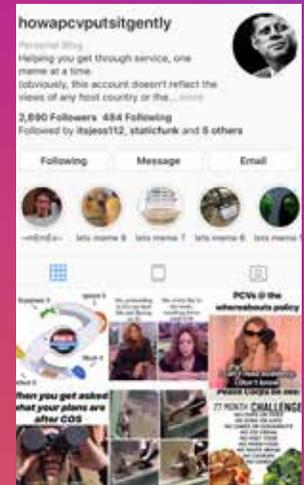
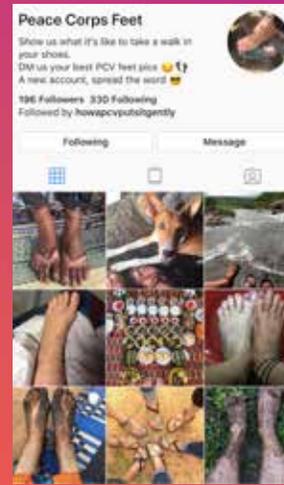
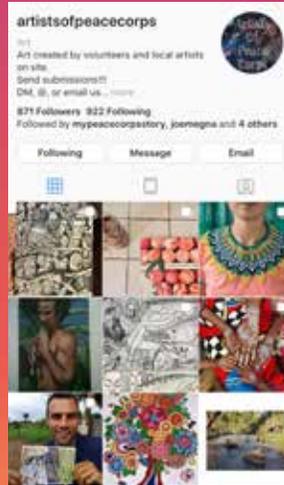
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LOOKING FOR SOMETHING NEW ON INSTA?

Check out these PCV issue feeds!



Have you heard of Iron Biby?

One of the world's strongest men, Guinness Record holder, and... Burkinabé! Check out his 25.5 inch biceps and acrobatics [here](#).



To stay up-to-date on everything related to Friends of Burkina Faso and current events in Burkina.



We are constantly looking for content for our newsletter and blog. Send your submissions to newsletter@friendsofburkinafaso.org or communications@friendsofburkinafaso.org.

WWW.FRIENDSOFBURKINAFASO.ORG





2018 Friends of Burkina Faso YEAR IN REVIEW

WITH YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT,
\$149,089

was distributed to new and ongoing grassroots projects in Burkina Faso.

Lambs Support Girls' Education | \$5,513

75 village girls entered primary school for the first time. Since inception, FBF has supported 3,995 girls through this project. Of those eligible last year, **89.6% received their Certificat d'Etudes Primaires**, compared with 61.6% of students nationally.

Noon Meals at Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié | \$2,448

72.5% of students in their final year of middle school passed their year-end BEPC exams compared, with 43.9% of their peers in the region; 98.5% of the 400 girls from indigent families passed year-end national exams.

Post-secondary Education for Girls | \$53,490

18 young women received post-secondary education scholarships (3 for university educations, 15 for primary school teacher training). Over the past eight years, all but four of the 173 young women receiving FBF scholarships have either graduated from their training programs and are working or are currently in training: **98% success!**

Village Primary School Construction | \$75,098

FBF funded the construction of a primary school in Bourbo, Yatenga Province. FBF continued its partnership with two NGOs for a second year to complete construction of a bilingual primary school near Bittou, Boulgou Province.

Kaonguin-Sangao Latrines | \$540

FBF helped RPCV Melissa Sieffert with funding to purchase equipment and complete her latrine project after the suspension of the Peace Corps program in 2017. **Now 1,500 villagers in Kaongin-Sangao now have a "safe place to go"!**

AIVDPL Agriculture Project | \$12,000

For a second year, FBF funded AIVDPL, a group of retired Burkinabe agricultural extension agents committed to educate and share their expertise with young farmers in the Zoundweogo province. The aim of the program is to reduce food insecurity and increase crop yields. **300 farmers (179 women) living in three communes (Bindé, Gogo and Manga) were trained in improved production techniques.**



- Our **FBF Facebook followers** (people who follow the page) **increased** from 903 followers to 1055 followers
- Our **FBF Facebook page likes** (people who like the page) **increased** from 908 likes to 1044 likes
- We posted **123 posts** on our Facebook page
- Our FBF Members Facebook Group membership went from **zero to 75 members**

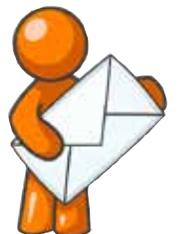


In 2018, we sent out **4 emails blasts**, reaching up to 601 members each time.

50% OPEN RATE

FBF emails achieved a 40-50% open rate, **compared to the 20% average among nonprofits.**

Not wanting to leave your mailboxes empty, members received a **membership renewal letter in March and a fundraising letter in December.**





Thanks to everyone who has visited www.friendsofburkinafaso.org!

Keep the views coming. We added a blogging section that needs to be filled - would you like to blog on a recent trip, a story from around home, or a perspective on Burkina & US activities? Write us! We updated our Award for Peace page with each of the winners, and added new options to donate. Most importantly, we keep all our newsletters and project letters online -- a great way to stay informed on the organization and learn about ways to support Burkina Faso. If you're looking for an excuse to learn about website maintenance and development, we welcome volunteers and will teach!



**2018 Friends of Burkina Faso
YEAR IN REVIEW**

About Us

Founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, Friends of Burkina Faso, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable NPCA-affiliated organization. We work to:

- Maintain a network of returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) and friends of Burkina Faso;
- Provide funding and assistance to support projects in Burkina Faso;
- Improve social interaction, communication and information exchange; and
- Educate others about the country and culture of Burkina Faso.

Our volunteer Board has nine members, elected to three-year terms. Our members are Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, Burkinabe, and anyone having an interest in Burkina Faso and its people.

Other Notable Events



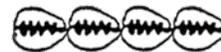
Visit with U.S. Ambassador Young

In May, FBF members met with U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso Andrew Young in Washington, D.C.



Kick Terrorism Out of Burkina

In collaboration with ABURWA, FBF led a successful GoFundMe campaign to help victims of the August 2017 terror attack in Ouagadougou. Ensuring the funds were received by families directly impacted took much time and effort on the part of Membership Chair, Sali Greeley. Sali was able to put victims in contact with Association Panissé. Association Panissé was then able to proceed at disbursing funds on behalf of FBF in September 2018.



Award for Peace

First awarded in 2015, the Friends of Burkina Faso Award for Peace was established to recognize the contributions of individuals at all levels, to provide support and motivation to those individuals, and to raise powerful examples of good works for others to see and from which to be inspired. For more information, visit our [website](http://www.friendsofburkinafaso.org).

