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LAMBS FOR SCHOOL WINS FUNDRAISING COMPETITION

by Suzanne Plopper, Project Manager

In February, FBF won one of four \$50,000 awards in the first-ever America's Giving Challenge (AGC) sponsored by the Case Foundation, PARADE Magazine and Global Giving. The competition in the "international charity" category was fierce but the 1,598 individual, one-time donors put us in 4th place. However, we came in 1st place based on the total amount of money we generated.

You, your family members, friends, colleagues and acquaintances contributed a total of \$41,879 to our cause! Together with our existing funds, FBF will be able to support NEEED, a local community-based organization in Ouahigouya, in providing school materials and a lamb over the next four years for 1,200 girls in their first year of primary school – 300 more girls than we originally envisioned supporting. As many of you know, this project is self-sustaining because the girls' families

assume responsibility for the costs of the remaining years of schooling by raising and selling the lambs each year.

This innovative competition was announced to us shortly before Christmas. A major purpose of AGC, according to the Case Foundation, was to encourage the use of online tools for philanthropy. Overwhelmed by the wide range of networking tools and possessing modest computer skills, I was ready to pass on the competition until Kristie McComb, our optimistic leader, informed me that Nancy Weis-Sanfo, our energetic newsletter editor, was quite web-savvy and knew all about Facebook, blogs, widgets and the like. Nancy quickly set up our widget and we were up and running!

When we sent our first email on December 23, 2007 to request that each of you donate \$10, we had no idea about the ride we

would be in for over the next six weeks. Nor did we have any idea how far we would have to extend our request to make into the "final four." Within days, an informal but dedicated team (Kristie McComb, Nancy Weis-Sanfo, Caroline Chambre, Ashley Garley, Tom Vollrath, Lyndsey Wilson-Williams and myself) began devising our plan to sustain the fundraising effort for the duration of the competition.

What an exhilarating ride it was with so many of you enduring the ups and downs on the



Lambs For School Project girls and their parents.

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To contact a member of the leadership team, please visit
<http://fbf.tamu.edu>.



PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Kristie McComb, '01-'03

What an exciting start to 2008 for the Friends of Burkina Faso! If I had to give 2008 a theme, based on FBF's good news to date, it would be "meeting and exceeding Peace Corps' 3rd goal." In 1961, with the creation of the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship, President Kennedy defined the 3rd part of the organizational mission as "helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans."

Some will argue that simply existing as the FBF means that we meet our 3rd goal objectives every day. And with our website, our newsletter, in our responses to people who contact us out of the blue to learn more about Burkina Faso, we are educating and sensitizing people to the country we know and love.

In addition, each of us, touched deeply by our in-country experiences, regularly puts Burkina Faso "on the map" for our friends, colleagues, acquaintances and family members. But collectively, in the past few months, we've done an especially good job at this task and I want to take this opportunity to recognize all of us for our successful efforts.

If you haven't heard the good news yet – and this is truly extraordinary news for our volunteer-run organization – our Lambs For School project was awarded one of four \$50,000 awards in the first ever America's Giving Challenge sponsored by the Case Foundation, PARADE Magazine and GlobalGiving, one of FBF's partners for project fundraising.

This generous prize along with the ~\$42,000 that FBF raised in the six weeks of the competition will allow FBF to support the education of 1,200 young girls over the next four years in Yatenga Province in northern Burkina Faso. 1,200 young girls – *incroyable!*

You can read more about the project and the competition in the cover story but I want to say again on behalf of the Board, officers and committee members of FBF, thank you! Thank you for taking on the challenge with us, and thank you for encouraging your friends and family to do the same. We could not have won this competition from our membership base alone and are so grateful that you were able to help us get 1,598 individual people interested in this cause and the country so close to our hearts. For all of you that helped to put Burkina Faso in the minds of many, thank you!

I would also like to thank each of you for your advocacy efforts both in 2007 and 2008. When called upon via our community listserv, you have routinely made calls to our Congressmen and Congresswomen to advocate on behalf of Burkina Faso and the Peace Corps. You've stepped up to advocate for changes to the U.S. farm bill to protect the livelihood of Burkinabè cotton farmers; you've advocated for increased spending for the

Peace Corps; and most recently, you advocated that Congress maintain funding levels for the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact to be signed with the government of Burkina Faso.

So be proud of yourselves! You, WE, are making a difference – even when our successes are not always as obvious as \$92,000 in the bank for girls' education. With your sustained support and commitment, we will continue to build on our many exciting successes to date, both big and small. As the proverb goes, "*Petit à petit l'oiseau fait son nid.*" (Little by little, the bird builds his nest.) Let's keep up our commendable efforts and 2008 may come to a close as extraordinarily as it began for FBF.

Merci encore and here's looking forward to the rest of the year ahead!

Kristie



 Kristie McComb



FIELD NOTES FROM JEANINE

by Jeanine Jackson, U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso

I am pleased to report that the U.S.-Burkina Faso friendship has grown stronger during the last two years and would like to provide you an update on progress on our four priorities.

Economic Development: Burkina Faso became eligible for U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) programs based on progress in ruling justly, investment in people, and economic freedom. The MCC Threshold program constructed 132 primary school complexes that focus on girls (<http://www.brightnews.org>). A Compact will be signed this summer for up to \$520 million that will add classrooms to the 132 schools, and finance roads, agriculture and land reform projects.

Food for Peace continues to provide essential school lunch, nutrition and food security assistance. The very successful USAID-funded “Kick AIDS” program educated thousands of youth on HIV/AIDS prevention. The U.S. contribution to Burkina’s portion of the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB is sizable, and we have leveraged private-public partnerships to gain major contributions of medicines and medical supplies to respond to emergencies and general health needs. The Centers for Disease Control have assigned two epidemiologists to the World Health Organization office in Ouaga to help combat meningitis and measles.

U.S. businesspersons, as well as “The Amazing Race,” have discovered Burkina Faso and we are seeing investments in mining, telecommunications, bio-diesel, cotton and shea butter. Victoria’s Secret is producing lingerie from Burkina organic cotton and with that “fair trade” deal comes social programs for women.

Democracy and Human Rights: Since my arrival two years ago, the country held its first ever municipal elections as well as legislative elections. While the international community considered the elections “free” they were not considered “fair” based on the considerable advantage of the President’s ruling party. We have focused on strengthening political parties and women candidates, and educating voters to help improve democratic processes. A major Anti-Trafficking


in Children program funded by the Department of Labor was just completed and we plan to implement other Trafficking in Persons programs.

Mutual Understanding: Our Martin Luther King Library, American Language Center, and dozens of exchange visits, lectures, seminars, Muslim outreach and cultural events have reached thousands. Check out our website at <http://ouagadougou.usembassy.gov>.


Regional Stability and Security: The significant increase in military cooperation includes training three Burkina Army battalions for peacekeeping operations in Darfur. Burkina Faso is also directly supporting the war on terrorism in West Africa.

Supporting these Goals: We just broke ground for a new embassy in Ouaga 2000 which will be completed in late 2009. Burkinabé are now eligible for 5-year tourist/business visas and we have noted a significant increase in the number of Burkinabé studying in the U.S.

And most importantly, since my arrival in March 2006 I have sworn-in three new groups of Peace Corps Volunteers and visited many of them in their villages to see for myself their important contribution to poverty reduction and mutual understanding through the health, education and small enterprise programs. While our 100 plus PCVs may not be spending big bucks, their impact is huge. The President, Prime Minister and people at all levels of society regularly tell me about their wonderful experiences with the Peace Corps.

Thank you FBF for your work, past and present, in the “land of upright men (and women).” 



 Ambassador Jackson with three PCVs and beneficiaries of the “Ambassador’s Self Help Fund” in Tenado.





TRADEMARK RESILIENCE & INGENUITY

Omigbéfitè Project Making Strides Despite Setbacks

by Bob Coffey, '67-'69

Omigbéfitè, loosely translated as "help our brothers," is an organization of 30 Burkinabé adults located in the village of Loropeni in south central Burkina Faso. Each of the members grew up as an orphan or in a single parent household and they formed their organization eight years ago to aid some of the younger orphans in their community. Prior to Friends of Burkina Faso project funding, Omigbéfitè supported six to eight children each year by pooling its collective resources, seeking local contributions of food and housing, and establishing a gardening project which provided additional food and revenue.

Three years ago, in response to the influx of people crossing the border from war-torn Ivory Coast, Omigbéfitè attempted to provide more support for the growing number of orphans in south central Burkina. A



 Omigbéfitè supported orphans receive food, housing and education.

poultry raising project was started and funding sought from FBF. Just as the FBF Projects Committee was on the verge of approving their chicken proposal, the avian-influenza epidemic reached Burkina. The government expressed concern about poultry production, and this concern precluded project approval.

Disappointed, but nevertheless committed to providing food, housing, and access to education to local orphans, Omigbéfitè, with the help of local experts, went through an extensive planning process. They then submitted a revised proposal to FBF, this time focusing on a revenue-generating crop and livestock project that included peanut, vegetable, dairy and meat production, plowing with oxen and cattle-breeding. The project was ambitious in scope, but well integrated. Given the group's record of success, commitment to

providing social services, and strong support from the village community, the Projects Committee agreed to provide just under \$5,000 for two years of start-up costs and oversight.

The first 10 months of the project have been full of surprises, setbacks and successes. It reminds me just how useful the verb *se débrouiller* was when I first learned it in Upper Volta, because there are so many challenges that need to be managed by the characteristic Burkinabé qualities of ingenuity and patience. Early on, one of the steers lost weight and weakened despite intensive veterinary evaluation

and treatment. When he was finally slaughtered, he was found to have a plastic bag in his stomach.

An expensive breeding bull brought from northern Burkina languished in the southern Burkina climate, defied specific veterinary diagnosis, and cost a 100,000 cfa in

treatment trials. Now, to everyone's surprise, he appears much improved and may still serve his intended purpose. Peanut cultivation went well until late heavy rains and flooding washed the crop away. Meanwhile, all the animal shelters and fences have been completed, field agriculture and gardening have gone fairly well, composting technology has been much improved, and pigs have been purchased in place of some of the cattle.

Currently, Omigbéfitè is sponsoring 12 primary age children receiving food, housing and education, and three teenagers are doing apprenticeships. The organization's leadership committee eagerly hopes for more project successes this year which would enable them to sponsor and provide care for more orphans. While supporting Omigbéfitè's aspirations, I know that this will still require all their trademark resilience and ingenuity.



2007 FINANCIAL REPORT

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69, Treasurer

ORGANIZATIONAL

Income:

- FBF membership income: \$3,960
- NPCA membership fees: \$1,330
- Newsletter income: \$260
- T-shirt sales: \$204

Total: \$5,754

Expenditures:

- *Burkina Connection* (newsletter): \$3,655
- Membership letter: \$253
- NPCA affiliation: \$100
- NPCA rebates (includes '06 rebates): \$2,730
- NPCA virtual communication fund: \$328
- Miscellaneous: \$64

Total: \$7,130

Balance: (\$1,376)

PROJECTS

Income:

- Total unspecified (non-NEEED funds): \$10,520
- *NEEED*: Lambs for School Project: \$24,686
- *NEEED*: *College Modern de l'Amitie* lunches: \$35,377
- *NEEED*: *College Modern de l'Amitie* (expansion): \$10,000

Total: \$80,584

Expenditures:

- *NEEED*: Lambs For School Project: \$24,525
- *NEEED*: *College Modern de l'Amitie* lunches: \$19,627
- *NEEED*: *College Modern de l'Amitie* (expansion)*: \$11,000
- APRODES Project: \$2,244
- Omigbéfite Project: \$4,845
- Besazuli Sulu Project: \$1,178
- Miscellaneous expenses: \$734

Total: \$64,153

Balance: \$16,431

*Includes additional funds received earlier but not spent.

Bank account balance on 12/31/07: \$31,385

A couple of notes about this report:

- These income and expense figures do not reflect balances brought forward from previous years. The bank account balance at the end of 2007 does represent the collective funds that FBF had at the end of the year.
- FBF recently opened a money market account to earn interest on funds held in the bank.
- The difference between "NPCA membership fees" (income) and "NPCA rebates" (expenditures) is because a number of 2006 rebates were not remitted until 2007.
- The NPCA virtual communication fund represents FBF's contribution to the purchase of new equipment to facilitate NPCA and affiliate communication.
- Income from T-Shirt sales represents gross income. Net income is approximately \$72.
- Current membership fees just covered costs of printing and mailing the newsletter and membership letter. FBF faces the following challenges in terms of rising organizational costs covered by membership dues that have remained the same since the inception of the organization in 1987:
 - Printing, photocopying and postage fees continue to rise.
 - In order to continue to publish the newsletter, FBF recently purchased new software at a cost of approximately \$700.
 - FBF pays yearly NPCA re-affiliation fees of \$100, and re-incorporation fees to the District of Columbia of \$75 every two years.
 - The Board has been advised that it should purchase liability insurance for Board members. This is currently being discussed.
- It would be desirable for FBF to have a modest reserve to cover such things as meeting space (for example, when NPCA holds their major meetings in D.C.).
- As FBF grows in terms of members and activities, we have set up line item income and expense sheets, allocating funds accordingly, in order that the Board and Projects Committee have a clearer idea of funds available for various activities.





FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO LES AMIS DU BURKINA FASO



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

by Tajanay Ki, '01-'03, Membership Coordinator

On behalf of the FBF board, I would like to thank everyone who has renewed their membership for 2008. As you may be aware, we had our annual membership renewal drive in January. We currently have 166 paid members, with 105 renewals since January 2008.

We encourage those of you who have not yet renewed your membership for 2008, to please send back your completed membership form. As a reminder, we use your \$15 membership dues to produce the award winning Burkina Connection. We also use your membership dues to help finance our operational and administrative expenses. To continue producing our newsletter and to help FBF run smoothly, we would really appreciate if everyone can renew their membership today.

You are welcome to renew your membership through the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) website (<http://www.rpcv.org>). If you renew through the NPCA, your dues will be credited within one month. We do, however, encourage you to renew through FBF so that you may be credited for a full year of membership, as NPCA enrollment is on a rolling basis. We offer the option of renewing your NPCA membership on the FBF renewal form as well.

Please send back your membership form! One can be found on page 11 or please visit the FBF website at <http://fbf.tamu.edu>. You can also email me at fbfmembership@gmail.com to request a renewal form or to check the status of your membership.

I look forward to hearing from you all, and thank you once again to everyone who has already renewed for 2008!



NPCA UPDATES

by Lyndsey Wilson-Williams, '01-'03, NPCA Liaison

There's a lot of planning and activities going on at NPCA that provide opportunities for RPCVs and their families to get involved.

The Peace Corps is turning 50 in 2011! To celebrate this anniversary, Peace Corps is launching a variety of events and exhibitions in cities across the U.S. and in each country where Peace Corps currently serves. Some events include a two-year traveling exhibition beginning in 2009 and a four-day festival on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. in September 2011. For more information on how you can get involved, go to <http://www.peacecorps.gov/50>.

NPCA's Peace Corps' Third Goal Report. Published in 2007, this report explores how NPCA member groups are interpreting the Third Goal. Information in the report is organized around three tasks (connect, inform, and engage) and was gathered from group documents, newsletters, surveys and websites. The report identifies a broad spectrum of activities, many of which focus on technology. For more information, go to <http://www.rpcv.org/pages/sitepage.cfm?id=1815>.

MorePeaceCorps Campaign. This is a multifaceted public awareness and legislative campaign aimed at rejuvenating the Peace Corps and doubling its size and budget by 2011. Future activities include raising awareness of Peace Corps and its meaning through a YouTube contest, publishing op-ed pieces in local newspapers, and calling RPCVs to gather support. For more information on how you can get involved, go to <http://www.rpcv.org/pages/sitepage.cfm?id=1814>.

Help Spread the Word. NPCA has joined MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Find them under the name "PeaceCorpsConnect" and become their friend.



ADVOCACY EFFORTS PAY OFF

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

Last December, FBF joined forces with Catholic Relief Services and other interested parties to launch a public relations campaign on behalf of foreign assistance that promises big dividends for Burkina Faso. Many of our members called representatives in Congress to encourage the continuation of funding for the U.S. foreign aid program, administered by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

Burkina Faso had planned to sign a MCC Compact that would provide over \$500 million to support important projects in agriculture. The Senate's budget proposal called for a reduction in spending that placed funding for the Burkina Compact in jeopardy. Fortunately, our public advocacy efforts were successful! The budget passed by Congress provided the MCC with sufficient capital to fund the program. We are all now expecting great achievements in the future!

The overarching goal of the Burkina Faso Compact, as articulated by its government, is to improve the rural economy through the removal of binding constraints. The Compact also plans to continue providing educational opportunities for young girls. The specific objectives of the agriculture component of the Compact are as follows: 1) establish property rights so that farmers have confidence to make investments to improve farms productivity; 2) expand the land

under irrigation in the Banfora area and in the Sourou Valley near Koudougou and Dédougou; 3) provide farmers with technical assistance and technologies to increase income; and 4) rehabilitate road infrastructure to permit Burkinabé to more effectively market goods.

The second component of the Compact has to do with expanding the girls' education program initiated 2.5 years ago by the MCC Threshold initiative for Burkina Faso. This program bestowed

\$12 million to advance female education. It provided financial support to teachers and communities in the North and East regions of the country. To date, 132 schools have been constructed and over 12,000 girls have enrolled in a 3-year elementary school program. The envisioned MCC Compact will allow these

girls to complete their primary school education by phasing in grades 4, 5, and 6.

Burkina Faso has demonstrated both commitment and an ability to improve the lives of its people by virtue of success with its MCC Threshold Program. The country surely will make the best possible use of MCC Compact funds aimed at improving the quality of life for the Burkinabé people reliant upon its rural economy.

For more information about Burkina Faso's Compact with the MCC go to http://www.mcaburkina.bf/index_anglais.html or <http://www.mcaburkina.bf/index.htm>.



"Burkina Faso has demonstrated both commitment and an ability to improve the lives of its people by virtue of success with its MCC Threshold Program."

MCC AND THE BURKINA COMPACT



Burkina
Connection
7

FBF LISTSERV

- ❖ Are you looking for travel partners/travel tips for a return trip to Burkina?
- ❖ Do you want to locate long-lost Peace Corps friends?
- ❖ Are you recently-returned and looking for a mentor in your field?
- ❖ Do you have an interesting news article about Burkina to share with our members?
- ❖ Are you doing some exciting Burkina-related work that might interest our members?

If yes to any of these, our listserv is a great place to exchange information!

To join, please visit: <http://apache.tamu.edu/fbf/listserv.html>.



WELCOME DOUGLASS TESCHNER

New Peace Corps Country Director Arrives in Burkina

by Douglass Teschner, Peace Corps
Country Director

Joining the Peace Corps and returning to Morocco in 1971 was one of the most important decisions I ever made, and many in my family (seven in three generations) followed in my footsteps.

While working in Rwanda a few years ago, my nephew John was a PCV in nearby Kenya. I visited him several times at his site, and he and a group of fellow Volunteers spent a week at my house in Kigali. I got to know some of these Volunteers quite well, especially a young man named Chris Austin.

After they COSed in 2005, John and Chris visited me in Morocco. Among other adventures, we hiked into the Atlas Mountains to visit a Morocco PCV. We spent two nights in his village and climbed a nearby peak. I remember well a particular conversation after that climb, while riding in a grand taxi back into the city of Marrakech, when Chris looked at me and said, "You should apply to be a Peace Corps Country Director."

I thought about it, and not long after, I did. To become a CD involves an arduous application process with essays, detailed background investigations, and cross-cultural and language tests, as well as phone and in-person interviews.

This past December, I received a call asking if I was interested in becoming the CD of Burkina Faso. Of course, I accepted! I had never been to Burkina, so I called my then one Burkinabé friend, Daniel Etienne Yonly, who immediately connected me with the FBF leadership.

On January 21, I flew to Washington, D.C. for four weeks of Peace Corps training that included new CDs as well as host country national staff from many of the 75 Peace Corps countries around

the world. Among this international group was PC Burkina Faso's Training Manager, Thierry Younga. It was Thierry's first visit to the States, and I taught him about riding the Metro and eating fast food at the Mall food court. I tried my best to explain how a drive-thru works, although Thierry was a bit incredulous.

In turn, Thierry taught me about Burkina, the Peace Corps training program, and the positive work the staff and Volunteers are doing. I am most thankful that I had a chance to get to know Thierry and learn from him before I headed to Ouaga.

In D.C., I also found time to connect with Etienne and his wife Patricia MacWilliams. Etienne taught me my first words in Mooré. I also attended a dinner with the FBF President Kristie McComb, former CD Nelson Cronyn, and several Burkinabé living in the DC area. That was a wonderful evening!

I went home to New Hampshire to pack up. The day I left for Burkina, it was -18 degrees F. I can

assure you it is nothing like that here as we are now in the hottest season of the year. My connecting flight from Paris to Burkina was 5 hours late, and I arrived in Ouagadougou at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 2. I met my first PCVs at a buvette outside the terminal. That was a thrilling moment, as I had spent the past three months getting ready for this job. And now, here they were, REAL Volunteers! We talked for about half an hour, before I collapsed into bed at 4 a.m. 28 hours later, the staff greeted me at the office with a water drinking ceremony and a potluck lunch of Burkinabé cuisine.

As I write this, I have been in Burkina for four weeks. I continue to experience a very warm

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 *Teschner meets the PC staff on his first day.*

FBF WELCOMES THE NEW BURKINABÉ AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S.

by Drissa Dao, FBF ABURWA Liaison &
ABURWA Treasurer


His Excellency, Dr. Paramanga Ernest Yonli (born December 31, 1956 in Tansarga, Tapoa Province) began his new role as Ambassador of Burkina Faso to the United States on December 5, 2007. He met officially with President George W. Bush in the Oval Office on January 22, 2008 during the credentials ceremony for newly appointed ambassadors to Washington, D.C.

Dr. Yonli was appointed as Ambassador after leaving office as Prime Minister, a position that he held from November 2000 to June 2007. On

June 3, 2007, he submitted his resignation as Prime Minister to President Blaise Compaoré following the May 2007 parliamentary election. Tertius Zongo, the most recent former Ambassador to the U.S., was appointed his successor as Prime Minister the next day.

The Friends of Burkina Faso warmly welcomes Ambassador Yonli to his new post in the U.S. and looks forward to strengthening ties between FBF, the Embassy of Burkina Faso, and the many Burkinabé living in the U.S.



 *U.S. President George W. Bush with Ambassador of Burkina Faso to the United States Dr. Paramanga Ernest Yonli in the Oval Office. (Photo by Eric Draper)*

FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

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

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

NEW AMBASSADOR TO U.S.





AGC Winners cont'd

Leaderboard with us! The *Leaderboard*, which became available in the last two weeks of the competition, showed every charity's standing in the race in real time. For many of us, it became an addiction to check the standings several times a day. Sobering though it was to see that we were only in 8th place when the *Leaderboard* was posted, it gave us the kick in the pants we needed to reach out to you again. This time we requested that you share our message as far and wide as possible. In just three days, thanks to all of you who not only donated but also passed on our request, we sped up the list from 8th place to 4th. We also managed to win three of the five daily competitions that week, where our largest donations were matched up to \$1,000. These incentives made us think, "We can do this!"

By the final day, the numbers were changing so fast that it was anybody's guess who would qualify

for one of the \$50,000 awards. With only an hour to go, FBF was 30 donations down from 4th place. What a turnaround took place in that final, nail-biting hour. Ultimately and collectively – thanks to the participation of all of us in so many corners of the globe – FBF and the Lambs for School Project prevailed! What a feeling of elation, and relief!

We have heard anecdotes from many of you who joined in and became essential parts of the web that spread across the U.S., to parts of Europe – Germany in particular – and to Burkina. With no formalized strategy, this contest was one of imagination, stress, and a lot of fun and laughter for many people (from primary school girls to grandparents) who worked their networks on behalf of the education of the girls. To each and every one of you who contributed, and/or who networked for the Lambs For School Project, our most sincere thanks/*grand merci/pousse barka!*



New CD cont'd

welcome from the Volunteers, PC staff, and the American Ambassador who is an enthusiastic supporter of Peace Corps and often visits our Volunteers at their sites.

I came into the job amid a Volunteer standfast (initial alert given by Peace Corps when there is an impending emergency; Volunteers are required to stay at their site) due to civil unrest related to the high cost of living. Assuring the safety and security of the volunteers is "job number one" so I have spent quite a bit of time monitoring that situation. Fortunately, things have calmed down, at least for now.

There are currently 106 Peace Corps Volunteers teaching math and science, supporting health clinics, promoting girls empowerment and education, and supporting small enterprise development. We have one volunteer who is 65 and another who is 42, but most are in their early to mid-twenties. More than 60% are women.

As you all know well, the PCVs are passionate and enthusiastic, despite the tough challenges of having to learn both French and a local language, and working and living in small towns or villages without electricity and running water in the extreme heat. They are incredibly positive representatives for our country overseas, and I admire them greatly.

I visited three Volunteers at their sites that first

week, and many have come to my office during visits to the capital. I love listening to their stories and make this a priority even when I am in the middle of pressing administrative tasks. I also recently hosted a BBQ at my house for 40 Volunteers in Ouaga for IST. They loved the burgers with ketchup, and we had a contest to give out some Girl Scout cookies my wife had sent over.

It is very clear that Peace Corps is much appreciated in Burkina Faso. Ambassador Jackson and I have met with three key Ministers and all have been very supportive. The Minister of Secondary Education made a moving, heartfelt statement on the enthusiasm and humanity of the Volunteers and the way they integrate into their communities.

While I was in D.C., I heard Garrison Keillor on NPR read this quote by Edith Wharton: "Life is always a tightrope or a feather bed. Give me the tightrope." I told that to the Volunteers at the BBQ. I also quoted to them from Thoreau: "I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life." These thoughts, in many ways, sum up the challenges and benefits of being a Volunteer.

I am honored to have been asked to contribute to the newsletter and will keep you posted on happenings here. I am eager to work closely with the FBF and, if by chance you are in Burkina, please stop by my office and say hello. I want to hear your stories too.





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 *New Country Director Douglass Teschner and staff visits an exhibit during a trade fair at SLAO. Read more about Teschner's first experiences in Burkina Faso on page 8.*

CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND CONTENT

The Projects Committee would like to issue a call to those interested in submitting project proposals for possible FBF funding in 2009. Guidelines for proposal write-ups can be obtained directly from the FBF website at <http://fbf.tamu.edu/projects.html>. The deadline for tendering proposals to fbfprojects@gmail.com is October 1, 2008.

The "Burkina Connection" is a biannual newsletter and a great source for information about FBF projects, updates from the FBF President, PC BF Country Director and US Ambassador to Burkina Faso, and a chance for RPCVs to reconnect.

Please email story ideas or content to fbfnewsletter@gmail.com. Photos must be 300 dpi and should include a caption. Submissions are accepted year-round, but the deadline for the next issue is October 1, 2008.



Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within do not necessarily reflect the position of the Friends of Burkina Faso.



BURKINA CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO



C/O Suzanne Plopper
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