

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2012 - No. 1



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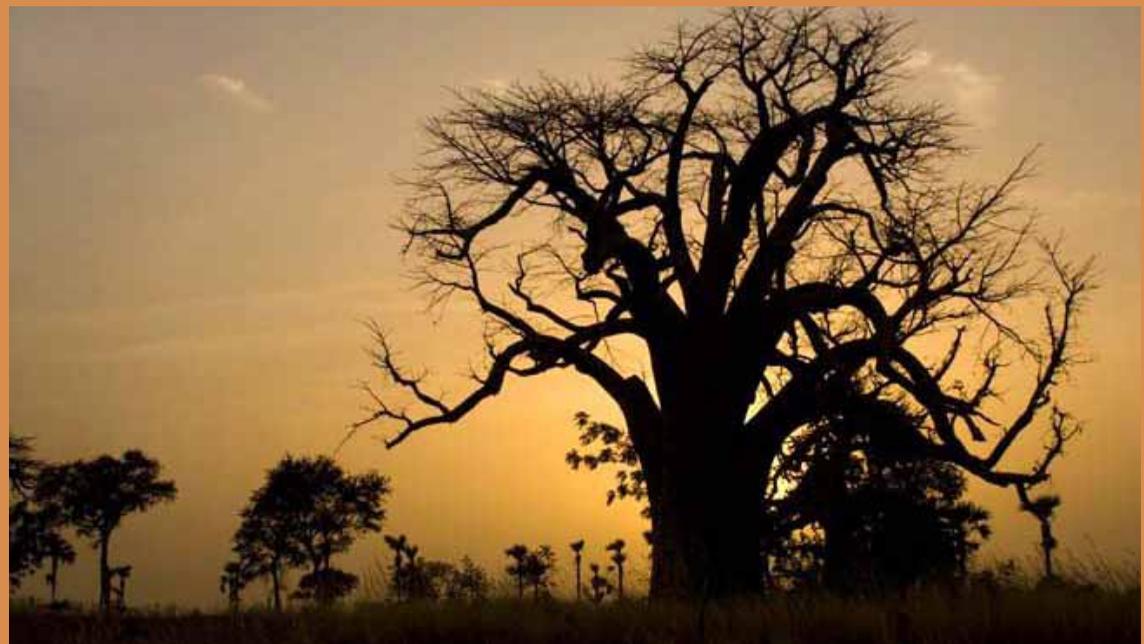
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Baobob tree near Banfora

FBF HONORED BY BURKINA FASO GOVERNMENT

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69

During regional Independence Day celebrations in Ouaghighouya December 11, the Government of Burkina Faso (GOBF) expressed appreciation for Friends of Burkina Faso's (FBF) commitment to the education of girls in the Northern Region. The GOBF awarded me a decoration (Ordre de Merite) on behalf of Friends of Burkina Faso for our fundraising efforts for the education of village girls through NEEED, FBF's partner NGO in Burkina. FBF was one of 74 awardees at this ceremony. That evening, NEEED held a reception in our honor.

Over the past ten years, FBF has supported approximately 2400 girls entering primary school through NEEED's Lambs Support Girls' Education Project. We have also helped support NEEED's noon meal project at the Lycee Modern de l'Amitie for the past six years. Both of these projects have benefitted from being posted on GlobalGiving's website.

FBF has received funds to support noon meals at the lycee for the next two years, after which our German partners and students' families will take over. As FBF has achieved its funding goal for the noon meal project on GlobalGiving, we have removed this project from the GG website, hoping that our donors will transfer their support to the Lambs Support Girls' Education Project.

Finally, FBF has provided scholarships to 20 girls for post secondary education and training over the past two years, thanks to generous support of the Milton and Beatrice Wind Foundation and the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas. We anticipate continued support from our partners to this scholarship program; and we welcome the participation of anyone else who would like to support the post secondary education of a young woman. The demand

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

PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Mike Lavoie, '75-'77

Teamwork in Friends of Burkina Faso *Neb fa ya a to tiim*

"Everyone is the next person's medicine." That is the meaning of the above proverb that I learned from the school director in Meguet during the 2011 Cross-Continental Tour in Burkina to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps. During the Tour and on countless other occasions since I began serving as FBF President in 2010, I have witnessed that proverb in action as so many of us in FBF have worked together to help each other get things done for FBF. To name just a few occasions, we have worked together on FBF sponsored projects in Burkina, on the Ouaga Story Wall, on the 50th celebration in Washington last September, on membership and website work, and on this newsletter itself. Most recently, we just worked together to update and streamline our bylaws for the first time in nearly 25 years. Let me say just a few things about the importance of our new bylaws.

On May 15, 2012, the board unanimously adopted a new set of bylaws. A copy of them is available on the FBF website. The bylaws have been improved to allow for more member and board participation and activism than ever before:

1. Larger board and more officer positions. The board is expanded to nine members with eight modern day officer positions including the usual ones and officers for membership, projects, technology and communications.

2. Streamlined membership and board election process. There is a streamlined process for members to join/renew (November-March), members to elect a board of directors every three years (April-June) and then the board of directors selects its officers every three years (June-July).

3. Regular annual board and member Meeting. This usually telephonic meeting will be held between July and September each year. From the comfort of your office or home you can learn what is going on and how you can impact where FBF should go in the future. Our next annual meeting will be on Wednesday, August 15, 2012 at 8 p.m. EST.

Of course, the sense of the above proverb is that we are not the best medicine for ourselves. Rather, it is in working with the next person that we receive the best medicine. That teamwork will make us all better. So, please think about getting involved when board nominations next occur in April 2013! With nine board and eight officer positions, the opportunities for teamwork will be plentiful. Just glance at this newsletter and the recent ones to see the range of various activities calling out for your innovation and activism.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the bylaws or any other FBF activities. Thank you all for making FBF great!

STAY CONNECTED

Receive the latest news, RPCV information, and take part in conversation on the FBF e-mail listserv. This forum is a great place to look for travel partner, and information for planning return trips to Burkina, sharing interesting articles about Burkina, and engaging in discussion with other FBF members.



SHANNON'S NOTES FROM THE FIELD

by Shannon Meehan, Country Director

Note from the Editor: Shannon is in the process of transitioning out of her position as Country Director, and asked that we share her last message in the Zakrama volunteer newsletter as her last Notes from the Field.

This is my last Zakrama letter to you all. So this is good bye and so long for now. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors and wherever the path may take you I do hope it is full of joy, fun, friends, family and your passions.

I want to take some quotes from a recent commencement speech that I think expresses how I would like to say goodbye – I have chosen highlights that are wonderful thoughts as our life changes – it feels like an end of something but also a commencement:

As you commence, then, and before you scatter to the winds, I urge you to do whatever you do for no reason other than you love it and believe in its importance. Don't bother with work you don't believe in any more than you would a spouse you're not crazy about. . . .

Resist the easy comforts of complacency, the specious glitter of materialism, the narcotic paralysis of self-satisfaction. Be worthy of your advantages.

And read . . . read all the time . . . read as a matter of principle, as a matter of self-respect. Read as a nourishing staple of life. Develop and protect a moral sensibility and demonstrate the character to apply it. Dream big. Work hard. Think for yourself. Love everything you love, everyone you love, with all your might. And do so, please, with a sense of urgency, for every tick of the clock subtracts from fewer and fewer; and as surely as there are commencements there are cessations.....

The fulfilling life, the distinctive life, the relevant life, is an achievement, not something that will fall into your lap

The first President Roosevelt, the old rough rider, advocated the strenuous life. Mr. Thoreau wanted to drive life into a corner, to live deep and suck out all the marrow. The poet Mary Oliver tells us to row, row into the swirl and roil.

The point is the same: get busy, have at it. Don't wait for inspiration or passion to find you. Get up, get out, explore, find it yourself, and grab hold with both hands. Like accolades ought to be, the fulfilled life is a consequence, a gratifying by-product. It's what happens when you're thinking about more important things.

Climb the mountain not to plant your flag, but to embrace the challenge, enjoy the air and behold the view. Climb it so you can see the world, not so the world can see you. Go to Paris to be in Paris, not to cross it off your list and congratulate yourself for being worldly.

Exercise free will and creative, independent thought not for the satisfactions they will bring you, but for the good they will do others, the rest of the 6.8 billion — and those who will follow them. And then you too will discover the great and curious truth of the human experience is that selflessness is the best thing you can do for yourself. The sweetest joys of life, then, come only with the recognition that you're not special. Because everyone is.

--David McCullough 2012

We have shared that commitment to help others, share deeply and to learn from others. I wish you well in that pursuit and I hope it continues – it is one of the greatest achievements in life.

On se hug, Shannon



PCVs JOIN FREE FROM BURKINA

PCVs, you are invited to join Friends of Burkina Faso before you even leave the country! We want to help you stay connected before, during and after your return to the states. Visit the FBF website at <http://fbf.tamu.edu/join.php> to sign up for free.

SUBMIT A PROJECT PROPOSAL

Are you looking for funding for a project in Burkina Faso? The FBF Projects Committee encourages proposal submissions early for consideration at the beginning of the year.



JOIN US ON FACEBOOK





STORIES FROM ABROAD

by Josh Shade

Rosa & I bought a Honda 110cc twin from the big Texan who worked at the American Embassy shortly after we arrived in Ouagadougou in early 1976. In the next 3 years we put 20,000 miles on it, traveling through Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast and repeated trips to Ghana.

We were on the fairly non-existent road from Yako to Kaya when we saw 3 boys about 8 or 10 years old or so walking along road. Hey, lets give them a ride, I suggested. We pulled over and asked if they wanted a ride. Well, of course, they were petrified, but Rosa hopped off and after she took off her helmet and shook out her hair they saw she was female and was handing them her helmet so she would be staying behind. We were about 30 or 40 km east of Yako, so in 1976 the probability was that these boys had never seen or certainly had never been so close to a nasara.

They conferred and said cautiously, yes. Then there was a little more discussion about

who would go first and we saw African culture in action, the youngest was told he would go first.

I took the first boy a km up the road and back, a bit smooth and then a bit fast with some wiggles. He hopped off and the second boy hopped on. I took him on a similar trip. Third boy, same deal, well with a slight difference on his part.

I dropped off the last kid and we said our pleasantries and rode off.

Rosa leaned forward as we rode away and said, Oh Josh, that was so funny. After you dropped off the first boy he ran into the bushes to pee. Then the second boy did the same. I was surprised when the third boy didn't do the same.

I said he didn't have to and I stood up as we rode and she could see that my pants were wet from where he had peed on the seat while riding with me..

And I would bet that even 35 years later if those 3 ever sit down for some dolo, they still speak of the day they took a motorcycle ride with the nasaras.



SHARE YOUR STORY



The *Burkina Connection* is a biannual newsletter and a great way for members to share information and stay up to date on all things Faso. One way you can contribute is to write an article about your experience as a Volunteer in Upper Volta/Burkina Faso for an upcoming issue of the *Burkina Connection*. If you are interested in sharing a story, please contact fbnewsletter@gmail.com. Photos are welcome and must be 300 dpi and include a caption.

for our scholarships is great and the selection process is strict. For additional information, go to www.fbf@tamu.edu and click on Projects – Post Secondary Training/Education for Girls.

NEED has had an enormous impact on girls' education in the Northern Region in the past 12 years. There is a visible and remarkable increase in the number of girls attending school, and their academic achievement is well above average. When I asked parents why they thought their daughters were excelling beyond their classmates in school, they were quick to reply, "Because they have been provided the tools to go to school: pens, pencils, paper, books, a small chalkboard and chalk, and a lantern so they can study at night". On visits to several homes of girls in CP1 (first graders), parents proudly showed me where their daughters study at night. Parents' enthusiasm for their daughter's education is seen in the ways they are making the Lambs Support Girls' Education Project sustainable by multiplying the resources given them in order to also send younger children to school. Some breed the lamb they are given by the project to get a second lamb (or two) before they have to sell the lamb to pay for the following year's school materials. Others fatten up their lamb well before selling it and earn up to three times the cost of purchasing a younger lamb, which allows

them to pay for their daughter's school materials the following year and purchase two lambs. The Provincial Director of Primary Education said that villagers have built over 300 village primary schools out of banco and thatch in the last few years so that they can receive government teachers.

Looking ahead, NEEDED's goal remains to mobilize village parents throughout the Northern Region to send their daughters to school. NEEDED estimates that this goal will be achieved with the support of an additional 2000-2200 young girls in an estimated 100 villages in the region over the next 3 – 4 years. (This year, NEEDED turned down requests for support from 60 villages due to lack of funding.) Since 1999, NEEDED has supported the first year of school for girls in 161 villages, providing support to each village for only one year. NEEDED's focus is 1) to demonstrate to parents their daughters' educational capacity and the parents' ability to provide an education for their daughters via the Lambs Support Girls' Education strategy; 2) to mobilize parents to continue sending younger children to school, using this same strategy; and 3) to demonstrate to the Government what can be achieved with expanding opportunities for the education of girls.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Congratulations to Jaime Butler Dawson ('05-'07) and Jonathan Schultz ('06-'07) as the newest Burkina RPCV newlyweds. Jaime and Jonathan tied the knot in Stanley, ID on June 26.



Jaime and Jonathan joined by family and friends, including a handful of RPCVs.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS TO PROJECTS COMMITTEE

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

We are very fortunate to have Jimmy Kolker, former U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso (1999-2002), join the FBF Projects Committee. Jimmy's insight, experience, and friendship will surely strengthen our organization. Ambassador Kolker headed the HIV and AIDS program at UNICEF for four years (2007-2011). Currently, he is Principal Deputy Director of the Office of Global Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Global Affairs, in the office of the Secretary, leads the Department's efforts to better the health and well-being of the world's population through global strategies and the coordination of global health policy.

Désiré Bansé expressed interest in joining the FBF Projects Committee and becoming actively involved in our organization shortly after his arrival in the United States. Désiré, who was raised in the village of Zabré in Bissa country, was recognized as an exceptional student, witness his selection to enter the Lycée Technique de Ouagadougou, the only school in Burkina Faso that offers Baccalaureate degrees at the Series E level. Désiré graduated with honors, majoring in mathematics and technology from this lycée. In 2006, he earned a scholarship to study computer science for two years at the University of Metz. Thereafter, he matriculated at the ESIAL computer engineering school in France and was awarded a masters degree in engineering in 2011. Currently, Désiré is a guest researcher at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Debra Banks, PCV in the village of Sourou (1975-77), worked in and with a UNDP animal traction program, assisting with the bookkeeping in setting up manufacturing plants for oxen-drawn

plows and carts. For the last 23 years, Debbie has been working as a contracting officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development. She brings a wealth of experience reviewing technical proposals and budgets to the Projects Committee. Debbie says that she is "honored to serve on the Projects Committee and very excited about the great ideas and projects that Burkinabe and Peace Corps Volunteers have proposed." She finds that "there are many innovative and worthwhile ideas coming forth from Burkina Faso!"

Kaitlyn Brown was one of Peace Corps' "rock stars" during her years of service (2008-10) Burkina Faso. She worked with 500 semi-literate farmers belonging to a cooperative in the village of Bani to improve their management and marketing of sesame. She strengthened the cooperative's institutional capacity in quality control, record keeping, and provided advice as to how the farmers could organize themselves to sell sesame directly to an exporter, bypassing intermediaries. In addition, Kaitlyn developed informal village pre-schools to ease transition from village life by enabling 5th and 6th grade students to lead activities for 100 pre-school aged children. Towards the end of her service, Kaitlyn was asked by Peace Corps to identify and design volunteer sites in Burkina Faso. Kaitlyn is known to those who attended the gathering of friends of Burkina Faso at the Unitarian Church in Washington D.C. during the 50th anniversary celebration of the Peace Corps last September. She introduced many of us to the good work being done by the Ashoka Foundation supporting social entrepreneurs in developing countries.

We are very fortunate to have these highly talented and committed individual in our midst.



From left to right:
Jimmy Kolker,
Désiré Bansé, Debra
Banks, Kaitlyn
Brown

NEW PROJECT COMMITTEE MEMBERS



SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A FORCE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

FBF COLLABORATION WITH AN ASHOKA FELLOW

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70 and Kaitlyn Brown, '08-'10

Ashoka is a non-profit organization that has promoted social entrepreneurship around the world for 30 years. It engages in extensive vetting processes to identify practical visionaries who have innovative ideas about what can be done to address urgent social problems. Individuals chosen as Ashoka fellows are provided with 3 year salary stipends, enabling them to focus attention on implementing their ideas. Currently, there are 25 individuals in Burkina Faso who have been selected as fellows based upon their character, social consciousness, and the promise of their proposed system-changing solutions to problems affecting society.

Recently, three Ashoka fellows submitted project proposals to FBF. The consensus at a February 2012 gathering of FBF members at former U.S. Ambassador Jimmy Kolker's home was that supporting projects identified by Ashoka fellows is appealing is consistent with one of our important project selection criteria, namely that FBF support projects that are initiated and managed by Burkinabé. After considerable deliberation, the group elected to support one of the three proposals; namely, the Nursery/Forestry project developed by Ouedraogo W. René Marie Christophe.

The overarching goals of Christophe Ouedraogo's nursery/forestry project are to mobilize youth and develop a rural economy around forestry products. The project has multiple objectives. It aims to establish a network of plantations that creates employment, decreases migration of youth to urban areas, helps meet the growing demand for wood and fuel, stems deforestation, and mitigates dryness and climate change. The nursery and the network of plantations are located in the Bendatoege zone near Pabre, 15

kilometers from Ouagadougou.

Christophe will be advising 150 young farmers which trees will grow best on their land. He will also train 25 youth on how to create and run a nursery. Under his leadership, the network of youth will plant eucalyptus and acacia trees using best practices so as to produce wood for hangars and construction without destroying the trees. Wood is a highly valued commodity because the demand far outstrips domestic supply. In addition, Christophe will encourage young farmers to plant mangos and other fruit trees. Once the orchards mature, he envisions introducing basic processing and creating a market for dried fruit. Finally, Christophe shall be encouraging the youth in his network to plant Jatropha and harvest its seeds for sales to oil processing operations in Ouagadougou. Jatropha is a feedstock for biofuels that is being hailed by scientists and policy makers because it can grow in marginal soil and does not require a lot of fertilizer. Moreover, the nutrient-rich seed cake, left after the seeds are pressed for oil, will be used to fertilize farmer fields.

Christophe requested financial support from FBF over the course of the next 3 years. The largest portion of the grant will be used in the first year to purchase equipment for the nursery. Each year thereafter, revenue from the sale of forestry products from the existing plantations will provide an increasingly large proportion of operating costs. Self-sufficiency is envisioned for the 4th and subsequent years. On April, 9, 2012, FBF treasurer, Suzanne Plopper, wired \$4,077 to Burkina Faso enabling Christophe to launch the first stage of the nursery/forestry enterprise. Kaitlyn Brown, FBF project manager, shall be monitoring progress and developments of this initiative.

