

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

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 Chief's Hat from the Ouagadougou market.

PEACE CORPS COLLECTION ON DISPLAY

by Amanda Whitty, '05-'07

On first entering my home, visitors never fail to notice the prevailing West African décor. A mud cloth and wooden masks on the wall, a balafone and djembe in the corner, a bronze statue and clay pottery on the shelves and numerous photos and wall hangings throughout the house are each witness to my love of and continuing connection with far away Burkina Faso. Each of these items has a unique story to tell of my service and for me, offers a tangible connection to my work and life in Burkina.

Mollie Denhard, an art student at Wheaton College and daughter of RPCV, George Denhard ('71-'73), has set about to highlight just such connections in her exhibition *Collecting the Peace Corps: Tangible Memories of the Toughest Job You'll Ever Love*. The three month exhibit features a range of items from practical to decorative from six Burkina RPCVs, including Mollie's father.

Mollie's personal interest in such collections began in the basement of her childhood home.

There she discovered a variety of Burkinabé items from her father's Peace Corps service including a model coconut thatched-roof house with eight small bronze figures, a chief's hat and a thumb piano made out of a sardine can. Over the years, the items her father had chosen to bring home, combined with stories of his service, helped Mollie develop an idea of who her father was and how the Peace Corps influenced who he is today. Mollie later wrote a paper titled, "Basement Wonders: Bringing a Peace Corps Collection Out of Obscurity", where she began to see the relationship between Peace Corps and collecting. Two years later, a professor suggested that she turn the idea into a gallery exhibition.

The creation of the exhibition allowed Mollie to examine the connection between these items and the meanings they hold. She discovered a bit about the collectors themselves, learning that the majority did not

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PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Kristie McComb, '01-'03

Dear Friends of Burkina Faso, I want to begin my last Burkina Connection update of 2009 by expressing FBF's gratitude to all of you who opened your hearts and wallets in response to the severe floods that hit West Africa, in particular Burkina Faso, on September 1 of this year. Many of you contacted FBF to determine how best to respond to flooding that affected 150,000 and displaced approximately 88,000 people. It is difficult to know how quickly the damages to the Central Hospital, bridges, schools, dams, and roads can be repaired but it is times like these when we as an organization are reminded of one of the main reasons we exist. Though FBF is not a relief organization set up to address a natural disaster such as this one, we are proud to serve as a conduit for those who care about Burkina Faso to communicate with each other. One of the main ways we keep our members in touch with one another and informed of current happenings related to Burkina Faso is through our electronic listserv. If you have yet to join, please consider doing so by visiting: <http://fbf.tamu.edu/listserv.html>.

One of the most exciting announcements we made recently on our listserv was to let you know that the FBF-supported Noon Meal Improves Girls' Learning Project was going to be a feature of a new on-line fundraising registry set up by Oprah Winfrey: www.oprah.com/forallwomen. Due to our ongoing and supportive relationship with GlobalGiving.com, a fundraising clearinghouse for development projects worldwide with which FBF has collaborated for approximately three years, our project was selected by the Oprah Winfrey Show to be showcased on the October 1 episode. Inspired by the New York Times best-selling book *Half the Sky*, the eye-opening episode

shared powerful stories of women overcoming adversity to realize a better life for themselves. The registry was launched on the show as part of Oprah's call to action to make a difference in the lives of girls and women. Within just 24 hours of the show, our project had generated \$4,000 in donations and currently, our project is \$9,000 better off than it was on September 30!

We hope that donations will continue to trickle in via Oprah's registry but we are also excited about another GlobalGiving fundraising challenge which will begin in November and run through the beginning of December: the *Give More, Get More Challenge* whereby all donations to our projects on the GlobalGiving website will receive some sort of match, up to 50% per donation! You have always been so supportive when these extraordinary fundraising competitions arise so we ask again that you mobilize your friends, family and acquaintances for this challenge—especially during this season of giving—by letting them know that

FBF is an organization which supports meaningful community-driven initiatives and most importantly, that our projects do quite a lot with just a little. *Merci d'avance pour votre soutien!*

But please also remember that FBF can use your support in other ways too. In addition to the projects that we support on an ongoing basis, we receive project proposals throughout the year which require someone in FBF to serve in the role of liaison coordinator (LC). Tom Vollrath (UV1, 1967-69) has done an outstanding job for several years in the role of Projects Chair, managing the committee and the proposal review process, leading our fall fundraising campaign, and making sure that our members are kept informed of where our money goes from year to year. Though

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



 Kristie McComb



FIELD NOTES FROM DOUGLASS

by Douglass Teschner, Peace Corps
Country Director

As I write this at the beginning of October, I have now been here 19 months as PC/BF Country Director (CD). It was a long hot season this year and the rains came late, but they continued well into September. In most areas of the country, the rain was sufficient for a good harvest.

Ouagadougou Flood. Speaking of rain, you are probably aware that we had 10 inches of rain in 12 hours on September 1, leaving some nine people dead and up to 63,000 homeless. Most of the homelessness resulted from house collapses when mud bricks became saturated and lost strength. Those with concrete houses came out a lot better although some had up to four feet of water inside. There was no significant flooding in Zone du Bois so our office and Transit House were unaffected. PCVs, too, were unaffected, but some did come to town to help undertake an assessment of conditions at several of the temporary shelters. There were 88 of these shelters, mostly in schools, and it has been a challenge to move people out so that the schools could open. Tent camps are being set up in various locations around the city.

119 PCVs with few ETs. After starting FY09 on October 1, 2008 with 97 PCVs, we now have 119 -- a 23% increase despite the cut in trainee numbers and the drop in Volunteer numbers in Peace Corps worldwide. We were excited to swear in 32 out of 32 trainees in August -- 100% for the second straight trainee group! In the past 12 months, only 4 PCVs decided to terminate their service. This is all pretty exciting and a testament to the deep commitment of our staff and Volunteers. We also received a transfer from Madagascar when that program was suspended, and we are expecting a transfer from Mauritania as well.

Key Statistics. 62% of our PCVs are women, 13% represent ethnic minorities, 91% are single. The average age is 26, with one Volunteer over 40 and one aged 68. We are currently operating four programs: Secondary Education (SE), Girls Education and Empowerment (GEE), Health Education (HE), and Small Enterprise Development (SED).

Health Program Impact Study. Peace Corps is trying to better measure the long-term impact of PC programs worldwide, and Burkina was among the first counties selected. 133 interviews were conducted in 30 current and former HE sites to measure how PC/BF has achieved implementation of the first two Peace Corps goals. One of the researchers emailed us: "It has been interesting interacting with people who have been profoundly touched by PCVs. We visited an association for people living with HIV last weekend. A PCV worked there and the people spoke so fondly of the PCV, particularly how she taught people not to stigmatize people living with HIV. There are many stories such as this one." We look forward to seeing their report!

Office of Inspector Auditor Report. The auditor, who visited in June, made a number of favorable comments about PC/BF, both while he was here and back at headquarters. For example, he referred to operation of the PC/BF Volunteer transit house as a "best practice" and noted that Volunteers were generally happy with their PC experience and positive about their relations with the staff. We recently received the report from this routine audit, and there are some minor administrative recommendations that we are addressing. None of these will impact services to Volunteers.

IPBS. This is our annual strategic plan which was developed after reviewing numerous sources (the bi-annual survey, formal Volunteer recommendation sessions, and other informal feedback). Some of our strategic priorities are to (1) improve language training, (2) provide more support to PCVs to positively address the food security crisis, (3) increase PCV work productivity (including more cross-sectoral training), (4) improve staff support of Volunteers, and (5) increase administrative capacity.

Welcome Back Jeff Estabrook! Jeff is our Administrative Officer (AO) who arrived April 18 for his second tour as PC/BF AO. His background includes serving as a PCV in Gabon. Jeff's wife Ruth was a PCV in both Gabon and Niger and is teaching at the International School of Ouagadougou (ISO). They have two boys, Simon

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Notes from Douglass cont'd

and Luke, who attend ISO. Jeff was happy to learn we have two PCVs from Maine, his home state.

USA Map. I have a map in my office of all the PCV sites and we did the same for a US map marking all the current PCV homes of record. According to my calculation, we currently have 36 states represented by Burkina PCVs! -- but not yet (at least since I have been CD) my home state of New Hampshire.

Planning for Growth. We are one of thirteen African countries that PC has designated for growth in FY10 starting on October 1, 2009. PC/Washington has asked us to take 77 trainees in FY10 (compared to 64 this past year). Much of this growth will be in SE teachers. We have also contacted the Ministry of Agriculture to discuss the possibility of starting an Agriculture/Natural Resources program. This will be all the more challenging in that we will only have one PST (pre-service training) this year, so all 77 will arrive in June!

Increased Staffing. We have asked for additional staff to support these additional PCVs. We have already hired a new Program Assistant who will be working with our Volunteers to promote food security as a secondary activity. We have also hired a full-time Language Coordinator to help strengthen our language training, including training of tutors at the village level.

Second Annual All Staff Teambuilding Retreat. We had a very successful four days in Kaya in September during which we addressed an array of topics, including active listening, conflict resolution, mediation, stress management, promoting PCV resiliency, communication styles, and time management. We are following up with various action steps to continue to improve PC/BF.

Leader Mondial. At last year's staff retreat, our staff set a goal for ourselves to be among the

best posts in all of Peace Corps. While we still have a ways to go, I am confident we are on the right track. In the past year, several of our staff have been sent to other posts to train staff or PCVs, and we have received much positive feedback for recent activities including Coaching for Hope (teaching HIV/AIDS through soccer coaching), low-cost community agriculture workshops, our new PCV handbook with clear expectations, and the positive OIG audit.

American Language Center Summer Session. Eight PCVs helped out on this summer program in Ouaga. Director Lynn Ouedraogo emailed me: "The volunteers have been awesome. They have worked super hard.... The kids LOVED their activities, their enthusiasm, and all the fun they injected into the learning environment in general.... Thanks again for all of your collaboration on this project. Both July and August sessions went extremely well. Not only did the volunteers organize and lead the camp activities every day for the kids, but they also worked with our teachers on the adult intensive classes that were being held in July and August".

Bravo Jennifer Lazuta and Christina Sobilloff! Jennifer, a talented SED PCV, won the women's division of the Burkina Faso marathon and, given her persistence and courage in the extreme heat, received many positive comments on Burkina television and in the newspapers. Christina Sobilloff, a GEE PCV who recently transferred to Togo for a third year, will be on HGTV, a national cable station, showing her work and a family reunion in New Jersey. Watch for it in December!

That is the news from Ouagadougou! I am eager to continue work closely with the FoBF and, if by chance you are in Burkina, please stop by my office and say hello. I want to hear your stories.

Douglass Teschner



PC/BF staff at the recent All Staff Teambuilding retreat in Kaya.

WELCOME AMBASSADOR BROWN

by Ambassador Gayleathea Brown

I am deeply honored that President Barack Obama has nominated me to be his representative as Chief of Mission in Burkina Faso at an important time in our relationship. It will be an exciting challenge to help to maintain the momentum of positive change in the country. In the past several weeks, for example, the United States of America was able to react swiftly with well-targeted assistance to Ouagadougou and other areas affected by the September 1, 2009 deluge. We immediately provided nearly a million dollars in potable water and food assistance. Longer term aid is on the way. We have devoted almost \$9 million in humanitarian assistance to Burkina in the past year. The Millennium Challenge Corporation Agreement with Burkina Faso is on track; USAID's presence is increasing; political military relations are excellent; Peace Corps' service remains stellar; the African Development Foundation joins our Mission team; and efforts with other USG agencies continue.

On a broader scale, Burkina Faso is playing a positive role in regional developments. The government is deeply engaged in mediating regional conflicts, realizing that they can have immense effects on Burkinabe development and international communication. The government is also eager to attract international investment, stimulate the private sector, and promote better regional economic integration and improve its access to Ivorian, Ghanaian and other regional

outlets. Last week's United Nations General Assembly gave President Compaore several opportunities to meet and speak with President Obama.

What you have done, and what the current generation of almost 120 PCVs in Burkina is doing, contributed a great deal to these events. One constant in your work has been the powerful, positive impact that you have had on Burkina Faso's development and, above all, Burkinabe perceptions of the American people. Throughout my career I have deeply admired and respected the character and dedication of the PCVs and staff with whom I have worked. As the Ambassador to Burkina Faso, I certainly intend to build on the work you have done over the decades.

I have spent the last several months immersed in Burkinabe affairs, studying, reading, and meeting with a broad range of specialists and analysts in African Affairs, particularly relative to Burkina Faso, and discussing the way ahead. Despite positive trends, there is a great deal to be done. Burkina's growth remains fragile. Water resources and deforestation, climate change, farm to market transportation, rural development and land reform, maternal/child health, and education issues need to be addressed. I am looking forward to working with you, PCVs in-country, development partners, FBF, and the government and people of Burkina Faso to help build a strong future for the people of Burkina Faso.



 Ambassador Brown

WELCOME AMBASSADOR BROWN



FBF LISTSERV

- ❖ Are you looking for travel partners or 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>.



CLEAN WATER & OPPORTUNITIES IN KOUKOULDI

by Stephanie Slater, '07-'09

Koukouldi, located 20 kilometers from Koudougou in the heart of Gourrensi land, is the village to which I was assigned to work as a community health volunteer. In Lyèlè, the word Koukouldi means “The Only Baobob.” Today, perhaps a more suitable Lyèlè name for the village would be “The Only Pump.”

Upon my arrival in Koukouldi, I conducted an *étude de milieu*. It became clear to me that the community views its children as its future. Village spokespersons, members of the Parent Teacher Association, and the school director expressed the need for a pump at the local school. I listened respectfully but didn’t give serious consideration to this request. I had come to the village to educate and promote nutrition programs for mothers and children. The idea of starting an infrastructural project didn’t seem to fit my assignment.

After I got to know the villagers and the community, I realized, however, that a water pump project actually had a lot of merit. When the primary school was built in 1998, the villagers had dug a well for the students to use. But this well quickly dried up. Construction of another well was not attempted because the school is located on a rocky hill making both digging and locating the water table difficult.

Not having a source of water posed hardships for the school and the community at large. Fortunately, a family near the school allowed students to drink from their hand built well. But there were problems with this solution. Students had to walk 500 meters (over half a mile round trip); these trips to fetch water took them away from their studies and it was extremely disruptive to the teachers. Moreover, wells without cement

reinforcements are dangerous for anyone and they are especially dangerous for young students who are not strong enough to pull up a full bucket. Tragically, two students from the primary school have died in the past three years from well accidents.

The primary school in Koukouldi was the only school in the department that did not have a school garden because there was no way to irrigate the crops. The school garden is normally the main source of funding for lunch programs. Consequently, the Koukouldi school did not have a lunch program in place. This situation discouraged attendance

and made it difficult for those attending class to concentrate on their studies.

Villagers have become increasingly aware of the importance a primary school education. Having a source of clean drinking water that is both safe to drink for the students and a source for

irrigation seemed like it would have a pretty large impact for the students and the village as a whole.

With the help of Friends of Burkina Faso, and the generous donation from a former student of the primary school, the water pump was installed at the Koukouldi school and became operational in May 2009. Villagers helped the construction crew. Girls brought bucket after bucket of water, men mixed cement, other donated their time and wheelbarrows to haul rocks and sand from the *brousse*. Several chiefs sat on rocks monitoring the work with a jug of dolo. It was truly a collaborative effort. Today the pump serves the primary school under the supervision of the association of parents of students. As school starts in October the Association will be starting a garden to help support a lunch program for the students and maintenance on the pump.



The future of Koukouldi around their water pump.



FBF PROJECTS CONTINUE TO BUILD MOMENTUM

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

FBF's outreach program endeavors to provide opportunities for Burkinabé to empower themselves and improve the quality of their lives, especially those living in rural areas. I would like to inform you of new initiatives that we have supported this past year and present some notable accomplishments.

FBF continues to support NEEED in traditional fashion with truly impressive results. The success rate of students who passed their exit exams in the primary and secondary schools sponsored by NEEED, as Suzanne Plopper has identified elsewhere in this newsletter, is truly impressive, far exceeding national averages. The NEEED program was a brilliant idea hatched by Lacine Sawadogo (NEEED's Project Coordinator) and his wife Ahoua Tao (NEEED President). This year, Mme Tao devised a plan to encourage girls attending Le Collège Moderne de l'Amitié to excel in their studies, rewarding them with insecticide-treated bednets to take home upon completion of their studies at the end of the school year. The girls were instructed to educate their brothers, sisters, and other members of their extended families about the health benefits using insecticide-treated mosquito nets. FBF purchased 400 mosquito nets so that Ahoua's plans could be realized. Early reports indicate that the girls, as well as their families, are in better health this year than last due to fewer instances of malaria.

Stephanie Slater, PCV in Koukouldi, writes about how the community strongly impressed upon her the value they place on educating their youth and the need for a pump at the local school. FBF decided to lend some financial support which enabled the community to acquire the pump. In communication with Shenandoah Sampson and Tom Fox of the Project Committee, Stephanie wrote about the many sacrifices villagers are willing to make on behalf of their children: "Families must invest a great deal of their income in school fees, providing a bicycle, notebooks, pens and other school materials as well as forego the work the child could contribute on their farm to allow their children to attend school." She also noted how it was "impossible to know how many children have been sick and possibly died from

drinking dirty, contaminated water which could contain chemicals, bacteria, viruses or parasites."

The Projects Committee authorized the second and third payments to the Moringa Réseau in Ténado on the basis of recommendations from Molly (Chambers) Burrell, FBF manager for this initiative. It was evident from the detailed and very informative quarterly reports sent to FBF that the project had achieved considerable progress in meeting its goals. By September 1, the Moringa Réseau had planted 8,300 Moringa trees, thereby attaining more than 80 percent of their ambitious goal of 10,000 planting/seedlings. Ryan Gallagher, PCV overseeing this project in the field, recently informed us that sales have been going very well and that the project is generating income for local producers. He also noted that fresh Moringa leaves are "readily available this time of year and the local women are buying them like crazy." This is very good news for at least three reasons: 1) Moringa leaves alleviate malnutrition, an endemic problem in rural communities; 2) Consumption of Moringa leaves is an important source of iron, calcium, and protein for children and their families; 3) Moringa is a promising source of food during the dry season when other foods are scarce.

Monsieur Kinda Boukary of APRODES sent FBF a proposal, requesting that we assist 35 women in the village of Darigma with establishing a garden cooperative through the purchase of irrigation equipment. Local interest in the project quickly grew. By the time the Committee had elected to support this new initiative, the number of women who had chosen to join the cooperative in Darigma had increased threefold! The Projects Committee will surely have much more to report about this fledgling enterprise in the next issue of *Burkina Connection*. The prospects for positive results are promising, given the success of our previous collaboration with APRODES in the villages of Loulouka and Koumbango!

The FBF Committee continues to review many proposals, some of which are very well-conceived, from interested parties in the field. We hope that these updates show you the value of your investments in our community outreach program and that you will support us again in the future.





FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO
LES AMIS DU BURKINA FASO



FBF BOARD UPDATES

Membership Update

Online payment is now live on the FBF website. Use the **Shop FBF** link on the FBF homepage or go directly to <http://fbf.tamu.edu/shopfbf.html>. You can now use a credit card or paypal account to renew your membership, purchase an International RPCV calendar, FBF T-shirt or make a donation for our newsletter, *Burkina Connection*. Please note that memberships are valid February 1 through January 31 every year.

Projects Committee Update

The Projects Committee would like to issue a call to those interested in submitting project proposals for possible funding in 2010. Guidelines for proposals can be obtained directly from the FBF website at <http://fbf.tamu.edu/projects.html>. The deadline for submissions is March 1, 2010.

The Projects Committee would also like to welcome its newest committee members:

- ❖ Shenandoah Sampson taught mathematics in the village of Tchériba in 2005-07. Each year he led four large classes (70 to 120 students per class) and developed curriculum emphasizing student participation. Currently, Shen is a Program Officer on the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program at the Academy for Educational Development.
- ❖ Michael Kolber served in Kongoussi working with the regional credit union (URCBam) as a Small Enterprise Development (SED) volunteer in 2003-05. This past May, Michael was awarded a M.S. degree in Urban Planning from Columbia University.
- ❖ David Noyes taught math, physics, and chemistry to 170 high school students in Ouahigouya in 2006-08. He was also instrumental in establishing an internet café with eight computers in a local school. Currently, David is coordinating education programs for the World Coca Foundation in Côte d'Ivoire.
- ❖ Drew Gower worked with an apicultural (beekeeping) cooperative to improve business practices and an association of artisans to develop new products and services in Fada N'Gourma from 2003-05. Drew completed a Master's degree in Geology at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. As part of his thesis research, Drew was able to travel back to Burkina Faso to study the effect of small reservoir construction on local groundwater quality.



 Left to right: Shenandoah Sampson, Michael Kolber, David Noyes and Drew Gower.

NEEED'S GIRLS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69

Lambs for School Project. NEEED (*Nimbus, Enfance, Environnement, Education et Développement*) has accepted 300 girls ages six and seven into the Lambs for School Project this school year, thanks to continuing FBF support. Contributions from our membership and donations through Global Giving enabled us to contribute \$25,120 to this project this year. Once these girls are enrolled in primary school, their lambs will support them through secondary school (13 years of schooling).

Changes at the middle and secondary school levels. *The College Moderne de l'Amitié* (the girls' middle school established by NEEED in 2005 to ensure an adequate middle school education for girls from villages in the region) became the *Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié* (LMA) at the



 NEEED participants eat lunch at LMA.

beginning of this academic year. The school is becoming a combined middle/secondary school in order to continue to serve middle school students while facilitating the continuation of girls' education through secondary school. Five hundred students, including students in their first year of secondary school, began classes at the LMA in October. This is an increase of nearly 100 over last year.

NEEED has completed the construction of a second block of classrooms, increasing its capacity to 600 students while maintaining a standard of 50 students per classroom. NEEED's construction of three additional municipal/public lycées (secondary schools - which will in fact be combined middle/secondary schools for the time being) in the region in the past three years will help to ensure that all qualified students will be accepted into middle and secondary school.

In 2010, NEEED plans to sign an agreement with the Government of Burkina Faso, Ministry

of Secondary Education. This agreement will facilitate both the functioning of the *Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié* as well as the ability of the government to ensure acceptance into a local *lycée* for all qualified students.

How will this serve NEEED? In the agreement with the government, the *Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié* (LMA) will retain its private status and NEEED will continue to control the educational environment and standards. NEEED will negotiate with the government on a yearly basis to accept a number of qualified students identified by the government - and the government will pay NEEED 60,000fcfa per student per year which will help pay for the cost of running the LMA. When NEEED began supporting girls' education ten years ago, most of the initial donors (from Germany and Austria) committed to sponsor and support individual girls

through primary, and then middle, school. Their contributions enabled NEEED to pay teachers and other costs at the *College Moderne de l'Amitié*. With these initial students finishing middle school now, NEEED can no longer depend upon such support from outside donors. And though our Lambs for School Project enables families to cover their costs associated with sending their six-year old daughters through 13 years of school, it unfortunately does not cover the teaching costs at the middle school for these girls. Therefore, NEEED is exploring other options to continue operating.

How will this agreement serve the government? The government currently lacks sufficient capacity in the public lycées, to accept all qualified students and is, therefore, negotiating agreements with a number of private *lycées* in order to ensure an education for all who qualify.

Mosquito net project for middle school students. For the past several years, NEEED has identified ways in which to honor students with

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MORE PROJECT UPDATES





Peace Corps Collection on Display cont'd
consciously collect – that is they did not acquire items with the intention of building a collection – but instead collected stories embodied within the acquired items. Mollie explains that, “The stories accompanying objects...add to, and create, the character of a collection. Objects tend to inspire recollection and reminiscing - they are the starting point for RPCVs to delve into specific and detailed stories... Objects mean nothing without understanding each RPCV as an individual, and each individual’s unique experiences related to the Peace Corps.”

Among the nearly 40 items in the collection are bronze statues, clothing, jewelry, instruments and a few distinct items including a 5-foot tall wooden equestrian statue, an ornamental ceremonial pipe and four images created from butterfly wings. Each of these items is undoubtedly unique when paired with its collector’s story. Here, Mollie shares a story of a necklace from her father’s collection, “This necklace is made of leather and metal, and has a 1917 French 50-centime coin as the centerpiece. It was a gift from a Bella woman (the Bella are a nomadic people) who would pass through his village every couple of months. He would give her any tin cans or scrap metal he had, and in return she once brought him a fresh gourd...of goat’s milk - he thanked her and took a sip then placed it in his house until he could

boil it. Another time she gave him this necklace.”

Despite not yet being a PCV herself, Mollie is an avid traveler and is in the habit of picking up souvenirs or mementos from every place she travels to. She hopes that through her exhibition, other non-RPCV visitors can begin to understand and appreciate the relationship between Peace Corps service and the meaningful mementos that are too often boxed up or brushed aside. A small section of the gallery space will provide an introduction to the Peace Corps and profiles of lenders to help visitors better understand the Peace Corps experience.

Collecting the Peace Corps: Tangible Memories of the Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love is on display through December 11, 2009 in the Haas Concourse & Lobby, Watson Fine Arts at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts. For those of us unable to attend the exhibition, perhaps this is a reminder to hold exhibitions of our own. Whether our service was four or 40 years ago, it is never too late to dust off those boxes and rediscover those items and memories from our unforgettable service in Burkina. And perhaps, each of these items and their corresponding stories can once again be the journal we never got around to writing, the visual aid we use to explain two years of service that often seems inexplicable and the reminders of why Peace Corps was in fact, the Toughest Job We’ll Ever Love.



NEEED’s Girls’ Educational Programs cont’d
the highest achievements at the *College Modern de l’Amitié*. This past year, with the help of FBF, NEEED provided each student with a mosquito net to take home during the school vacation (also the rainy season in Burkina when mosquitoes are most numerous and people at highest risk for malaria). The students were given instruction on the use of the mosquito nets and were asked to use them for themselves and younger siblings in the family – those who are most vulnerable to malaria. Feedback to NEEED indicates that the nets were well used. And fewer college students failed to show for the first day of school this year because of malaria sickness.

Congratulations to the primary and middle school students:

Finally and most importantly, again this year, both primary and middle school students supported by NEEED and FBF did extremely

well in their studies and consequently in national year-end exams in May/June:

- At the primary level, 86% of students supported by the Lambs for School project passed national exit exams in their last year of primary school, allowing them to go on to middle school.
- At the College Modern de l’Amitié (girls’ middle school), 79% of students passed national exams qualifying them to go on to the next class level. Seventy two percent of students in their final year of middle school passed the BEPC (Brevet d’Etudes du Premier Cycle), allowing them to go on to secondary school. This is nearly double the 39% of students in all other middle schools in the region who passed this exam.

Our sincere thanks for your past, and continuing, support for the educational resources and environment that have contributed to the impressive achievements of these exceptional girls!

President's Yiri cont'd

the projects committee has several dedicated volunteers in place, we always seek capable and willing volunteers to both replace those who leave the committee from time to time and in practical terms, to spread the work out among many. Once assigned, an LC takes on the oversight of a project from receipt of proposal through funding the project and final reporting (with the main project manager(s) actually implementing the project on the ground). When possible, the project is assigned two LCs—ideally, a Burkinabe and American—so that the proposal review process benefits from the two perspectives and to improve communication with our applicants. We would love to have more FBF members involved one-on-one in our community outreach efforts!

If you are interested in putting your project management, financial management, or even fundraising and event planning skills to good use and support the on-going efforts of our volunteer-managed organization, please contact Tom Vollrath or myself for more information at fbfprojects@gmail.com and fbfpresident@gmail.com. We greatly appreciate your consideration

of this request to make a contribution of time to FBF—something we honestly need more of to keep our organization vibrant and responsive!

And last but not least, have you purchased your 2009 RPCV calendar yet? For the second year in a row, FBF is selling these beautiful calendars as an organizational fundraiser to cover the expenses we incur to effectively run FBF. You can't beat the beauty of these calendars with captivating photos from all over the world where Peace Corps serves or has served over the past 50 years. If your travel plans won't take you abroad in 2010, let our calendars do it for you! And as of just two months ago, the FBF website now has an online payment option so that you can easily order these calendars, our t-shirts, pay for your annual membership, or make a donation. Please visit us at: <http://fbf.tamu.edu/shopfbf.html>

Thank you again for all that you do for Burkina Faso, especially for the trust and support you give to FBF, and best wishes for a safe, happy, and memorable holiday season with family and friends.

Kristie



RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2010

Name _____
Mailing Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____ E-mail _____

- I would like to renew my FBF membership for 2009 (\$15 a year*).
 - I would like to join the National Peace Corps Association (\$35 a year*).
 - I would like to make a FBF Project Fund contribution of \$_____.
 - I would like to make a FBF Newsletter Fund contribution of \$_____.
- Total amount enclosed \$_____.**

Save time and a stamp - renew online at:
<http://fbf.tamu.edu/shopfbf.html>

To renew by mail, please mail this entire page with payment to:
Suzanne Plopper, Treasurer - FBF, P.O. Box 395, Chester, CA 96020

Make checks payable to FBF. ❖ Contributions are tax-deductible. ❖ Puus baarka wusgo!

Memberships are valid February 1 through January 31 every year.

CALL FOR CONTENT

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 U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso, and a chance for RPCVs to reconnect.

One way you can contribute to the commemoration of Peace Corps' 50 years of service is to write an article about your experience as a Volunteer in Upper Volta/Burkina Faso for an upcoming issue of the *Burkina Connection*. We plan to feature at least one RPCV per decade since the 1960s to show the evolution of Peace Corps' presence in Burkina. What has changed? What has stayed the same? What impact did your service have on Burkina? What impact did it have on you? If interested in sharing your story, please contact fbfnewsletter@gmail.com for more details. The deadline for the next issue is March 1, 2010. Photos are welcome and must be 300 dpi and include a caption.



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 Peace Corps Collection curator Mollie Denbard, her mother Flory Denbard and father George Denbard in front of an equestrian statue.

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



C/O Suzanne Plopper
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