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The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea

Advocacy, Information, and Networking for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea



November 1, 2003

FOG Officers Recalled; Schwarzenegger Not to Run

Apparently inspired by political events in the state of California, the entire board of directors of Friends of Guinea recently launched a successful petition campaign to recall itself from office under the assumption that actor Arnold Schwarzenegger could be induced to run for election as president of the organization. As explained by Membership Director Megan Wilson, "We thought that by bringing his high public profile and considerable personal fortune to bear on Friends of Guinea, Arnold could help us build on past successes and take the organization to the next level of development. Besides, unlike the United States, we have no constitutional obstacle to a foreign-born person becoming President."

However as in the California recall campaign, those who initiated the Friends of Guinea drive were not able to maintain control of the process. Contrary to their expectations, Mr. Schwarzenegger has not so far been induced to throw his hat into the ring. Contacted for an official response in his



Sacramento office, the Governor said: "What? Who is this? Can't you see I'm busy here?"

Brian Farenell, Advocacy Director of Friends of Guinea, said, "At first I wasn't too concerned. I felt sure that, if Arnie bowed out because of his new job, we could get Sylvester Stallone. He's not governor of anything yet, I don't think." The Stallone plan seems however to have been no more fruitful than the Schwarzenegger initiative. Contacted at his home in Beverly Hills, Mr. Stallone's commitment was ambivalent at best. Informed sources quoted him as saying, "Friends of...what?"

Marilyn Pearson, Director of Listserv Administration, undertook simultaneous back-channel negotiations with the staff of Hillary Clinton. However, as Pearson ruefully admitted, "As soon as she understood I was not talking about

Please note that Friends of Guinea is about to hold its annual elections to officer positions. Really. More information is available at www.friendsofguinea.org, or by emailing to fogelections2003@yahoo.com.

'Friends of Bill,' the receptionist hung up on me."

Not all members of the FOG board have entirely washed their hands of the organization. Jody Sites, Financial Officer, commenting on his announced intention of running for the same

What is...

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ÇaVa is the quarterly newsletter of Friends of Guinea and seeks to maintain contact and community among members as well as inform them of the official activities of the organization.

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office again, said: "Ouch! Let go of my arm! That hurts! Ow! Okay, okay! Uncle! I'll do it! Just let go!" Stallone partisan Brian Farenell, on his continuing as Communication Director, said: "What! I never...wait a minute, let me see that...I thought Steph said 'Remuneration Director'." Some FOG members-at-large were also reported willing to re-enlist in their current positions. Woody Colahan, Newsletter Editor, had this to say: "Lansana Conté is my political inspiration. I'll be dipped in #@%\$ if I'll quit my job before he quits his."

Stephanie Chasteen, the former volunteer who has guided the organization since its inception and presently serves a dual role as Secretary and Director of Web Administration, downplayed the sense of an impending crisis. "I don't know what you guys are talking about. We have an election every year to renew the board. It's in our bylaws. Honestly." Chasteen went on to outline the situation: "The last year as secretary has been great, and I feel I've accomplished a lot. Now I think it would be good for me to serve as Membership Director, and help out with that position."

"I'm also leaving the Web Admin position open for someone else. Brian Farenell is leaving his position as Advocacy Director but is willing to take on the job of Communication Director which means he will be even busier than before. Jody Sites relented and agreed to continue to serve as Financial Officer. Marilyn is doing a great job administering the Guinealist

listserv on the one hand and the various GPS parent listservs on the other, and is willing to continue.

"Woody wants to keep doing the newsletter until he gets it right. Brian has agreed to take over the vacant post of Communication Director, but that means he will leave the post of Advocacy Director so we need to find someone to step into his shoes there. Megan is super-busy with grad school and Cherif is getting married. I'll be taking over for Megan in membership but we need somebody to take over for Cherif in Projects."

Stephanie warmed to her subject as she outlined the Projects position. "Cherif Diallo has been incredibly dynamic as projects director and has initiated a lot of great stuff. We want someone in that position who can continue to field project proposals, establish project priorities and generally coordinate all of our projects efforts. It should definitely be someone with projects experience and experience on the ground in Guinea. Cherif was ideal but the right RPCV could also do the job."

Projects Director is an important position in Friends of Guinea because that person has some of the most direct influence on FOG's impact on the ground in Guinea. The Projects Director has help, too: "Five members-at-large work with the Projects person," according to Chasteen. "Steph Mullen as Health Projects Member-at-Large advises, researches and coordinates on health related projects. Helen Thouless does the same for education-related projects. We have similar member-at-large positions open in environment-related projects and small-enterprise related projects. These are excellent opportunities for volunteers to remain involved with the kind of work that made their Peace Corps experience so meaningful. In addition, Anne Redmond has a special member-at-large position coordinating fundraising. She does an awesome job."

She also described the activities of the Advocacy Director, saying, "The Advocacy person has to keep their finger on the pulse of policy needs in Guinea by staying in touch with FOG members, Peace Corps/Guinea and local and international NGO's working in Guinea. Then they coordinate with FOG board members and others on the development and implementation of a yearly Advocacy Action Plan, throwing FOG's weight behind the selected lobby efforts in cooperation with PC/Guinea, PC/DC, NPCA, Guinean ministries and NGO's. It's very important work because it has

to do with managing the moral capital of the organization.”

The other major positions needing to be filled for the coming year are Secretary and Director of Web Administration. As noted, Chasteen has been both for the last year. “Basically what I do as Secretary is to maintain FOG records and keep minutes of meetings, as well as coordinate Board meetings and elections. It’s not rocket science (although it does take an ability to be organized and keep track of things) and Nancy Fleisher and Marilyn Pearson help out a lot. Of course, I’ll be there to hold the hand of whomever takes over next year.”

FOG’s website was recognized by the NPCA this past year as “Best Country-of-Service-Group website.” The web administrator mostly updates the webpage as necessary, keeping information current and responding to occasional requests for changes or additions from the rest of the board. Here again there is help from member-at-large Scott Sackett, who maintains the online directory of Friends of Guinea members. Obviously some experience with web-development techniques is necessary for this position, although on the other hand Guinean experience is not important.

One anomaly of FOG’s organizational structure is that the group has neither a president nor a vice-president. Asked whether this represented a extreme commitment to democratic inclusiveness and consensual decision-making, Steph said, “We tried but we couldn’t get anyone to take the job. Then it seemed like we got along just fine without a president so we don’t worry about it anymore.” She noted that FOG might find it necessary to name a president as the group moves closer to filing for 501(c)(3) status but “We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.”

Chasteen said that Friends of Guinea was farsighted enough to avoid the possibility of lawsuits due to the use of obsolete punch-card type voting machines in its upcoming election. “No hanging chads for us. All members will receive an electronic ballot by email and will vote by email between November 15 and November 21. If they are not currently on our email list, they should please contact us and provide us with an email address that we may use for the board election as soon as possible. We also hope people will consider serving in one

of the open positions. Of course, all positions are open. Just because someone has been nominated to a particular office doesn’t mean someone else cannot equally run for the same job.”

She continued, speaking earnestly but with a twinkle in her eye: “Friends of Guinea is holding its annual elections from November 15 to November 21. We need especially to fill the positions of Projects Director, Advocacy Director, Secretary and Web Administrator. There are also several member-at-large positions where people can serve in a smaller role. All positions are open to nomination, and nominees need not be FOG members, although if elected they will need to join the group before they can take up their post. Anyone can get more information on the positions and the people involved by going to our newly-updated elections webpage at <http://friendsofguinea.org/elections2003.shtml>. If they are interested in serving in some capacity, I hope they’ll contact us at fogelections2003@yahoo.com.”

Friends of Guinea Delivers Books to PQG

On Saturday 11 October, Friends of Guinea financial officer Jody Sites drove to Quebec from his home in Center Barnstead, New Hampshire to deliver 110 French-language books to our friend Claude Lescan, who operates Partage Québec-Guinée, a modest NGO devoted entirely to supplying books to schools and libraries in Guinea.

“We think PQG is a really good organization to partner with,” says FOG Projects Director Cherif Diallo. “Their goal is to provide at least two books for every Guinean student between elementary and high school. This year they plan to send school utensils and clothing in addition to several tons of books, which they receive from donations made by ordinary people throughout Canada.

“PQG has established some important connections. Companies such as Alcoa Mining and CBG (cie. de Bauxite de Guinée) have agreed to ship all books to Guinea at no charge for PQG. The Guinean customs in Kamsar have agreed to allow the entry of those books to Guinea duty free. Guinean workers in Kamsar and Conakry have agreed to distribute the books throughout Guinea.”

Jody accordingly left home in Center Barnstead Saturday morning and went to Montpelier, Vermont to pick up the books from Sally DeCicco, a former volunteer in Ghana who had offered to donate them to FOG. "After that I swung by Burlington to pick up a friend who is in school there. Then it was off to the border. We didn't have any trouble crossing the border into Canada, which surprised me a little because we had 12 sealed cartons in the back of the car. But they waved us right through."

Once in Canada, however, things went less smoothly for Jody. "We got to the town of St. Jerome and I started asking where Rue Eva was. That was when I was reminded how badly my French has deteriorated since I was in Guinea. This was sad, because I thought it couldn't get much worse than it was when I was in country." Jody tried resorting to Franglais and hand gestures, but to no avail. Finally he telephoned Mr. Lescan from a service station but could not ask for directions because he no longer knew where he was. "The gas station lady got on the phone with Claude and said that Claude would come and get me. Very nice."

Lescan and his wife Julie came to the service station to get Jody and Jody followed them to the warehouse they use as a storage facility. After admiring this, they showed Jody the site where the sorting and shipping of books to Guinea takes place. "It was very impressive," said Jody. "Here is a man who essentially works alone, who has collected, sorted and shipped over 300,000 books to Guinea, and has many thousands more in process."

Lescan showed Jody the extensive documentation he keeps of his operations to date, and some souvenirs for his trip. After saying goodbye, Jody had an uneventful drive back to Burlington and then finally home to New Hampshire. He said, "It was a long trip – over 800 miles – but I learned a lot, and had a great time."

We invite you to visit <http://www.pqg.qc.ca> for photos and more information on the activities of Partage Quebec Guinea. FOG encourages support for PQG, whose continued existence means thousands of good books for Guinean students every year. You can send your support either directly to PQG or to FOG's financial officer, Jody Sites

(18 Waterville Ln., Center Barnstead, NH 03225).

FOG Funds PCV Projects

Friends of Guinea is pleased to announce that we have recently provided assistance to two volunteer projects in Guinea.

PCV Carrie Mitchell in Boké is coordinating the **Landouma Translation Public Health Project**, which involves translating public health information into the local language of Landouma and playing the tapes for local villagers. She requested a \$100.00 donation from FOG for a bicycle (\$75.00) and some cassette tapes (\$25.00). FOG has pledged \$150 to this project.

PCV Ann Clayton in Koliagbe, Kindia is in charge of the **Koliagbe Basic Hospital Materials Project**. She requested a donation from FOG to purchase a few basic hospital materials for a village hospital from UNICEF in Conakry, including a pediatric stethoscope (\$10), an adult stethoscope (\$8), a blood-pressure meter (\$20), a baby scale (\$40), a baby bathtub (\$5), linens (\$10) and a scissors/forceps kit (\$15), for a total of \$108. FOG has pledged \$120.00 to this project.

FOG Wins First Place

Friends of Guinea has been awarded first place for the year 2003 in the NPCA Country of Service Website Award Competition. This award honors those who have labored to create and maintain these effective tools for "bringing the world back home" and enhancing the RPCV community.

In the Country of Service Group category, first place went to Friends of Guinea. Second place went to Friends of Morocco. Third place went to Friends of Lesotho.

Congratulations to FOG's founder, secretary, webmistress and resident Wonder Woman, Stephanie Chasteen!

Financial Report

Jody Sites ('94-'96), Financial Officer
finances@friendsofguinea.org

In the past year, Anne Redmond led the team of volunteers in raising almost \$10,000 for last year's Girl's Conferences, which was more than our goal. And this year's conferences are already fully funded, which is fabulous news.

FOG also served as a gathering place for funds for the family of Hawa Barry, the victim of a tragic shooting on the Boston subway last February. We hope that the family is doing well.

Most recently, Amanda Galton ('96-'98) has agreed to help FOG investigate the matter of incorporation as a non-profit organization, so that all your generous donations would be tax deductible. She's making excellent progress.

Listserv Report

Marilyn Pearson (Parent)
listserv@friendsofguinea.org

The Guinea List is active with 303 members. Guinea Parent Support groups have 106 members trading emails, phone numbers, and tips. A new group will be forming in January 2004 when the next batch of PTVs goes to Guinea. The general parent group has 24 members who seem to be communicating psychically because they aren't using the listserv! For more information or to join a one of these listservs, visit <http://friendsofguinea.org>. The big news this quarter is the instigation of the Message Corner in this newsletter where family and friends in the US who are FOG members can place personal messages for their PCVs in Guinea.

Videotape Gala

A bunch of Friends of Guinea recently mustered their efforts and reached out to those poor underprivileged souls in Guinea...the Peace Corps Volunteers, deprived of the best assets of American culture. And so we sent out a total of 13 videotapes for the Conakry house, including Bowling for Columbine, Spirited Away, Lord of the Rings, and American Pie. And a big thanks to:

- Shad Engkilterra (RPCV '98-'00) who donated many tapes
- Carol Mermey (mother of PCT Elinor Lichtenberg) for donating the money to purchase Bowling for Columbine
- PCV parents Lee & Nancy Fleisher for donations for more tapes

- Meryl Kiuttu (mother of PCV Ben Augustine) for donating tapes
- Stefania Pizzirani (friend of PCV Ben Augustine) and PCV Sonya Starr for carrying tapes over.

DR Congo Rape Crisis Benefit Fri 14 Nov in DC

An evening of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and Congolese art and music will be held at Tryst, 2459 18th Street N.W., from 6:30—8:30. Keynote speaker John Prendergast, of the International Crisis Group. Afterparty with Congolese DJ Patrick at Mezè Restaurant and Bar, 2437 18th St. N.W., \$35.00. Proceeds to benefit Centre Olame, helping Congolese survivors of rape by warring parties under the most difficult conditions. More info at <http://www.en-avant-congo.org/>.

Le Griot Nous Dit...

In September, Jody, Anne, and Aidan Sites went to visit Scott, Ellie and Baby Jack Turner in the Bahamas, where they are stationed with the State Department. "It was a great week of beaches, pools, naps, good food, and good cheer. We were lucky enough to be there when Baby Jack took his first steps! The Turners will be returning to the States in the fall, to begin training for their next post, which is Naples, Italy. They've got a rough life, huh?"

Lesli Griffen writes: "I was able to briefly visit my PCV, Kylie, in Paris last week. Not nearly enough time to catch up, but I was able to transfer some items to her for her Guinean-American hybridized Thanksgiving dinner. After two weeks of vacation she indicated she was feeling as if she didn't know with what culture she belonged anymore. I'm wondering if this kind of disorientation is a common experience for other PCVs."

Ibrahim Bah (ibrahim_bah@dell.com) has written to say that he is looking for his RPCV teachers from Pita: Jane Park (87-90) and Stephanie Muller (90-91). Ibrahim is from Pita Timbi-Touni.

If you have any news to share about yourself, your family or your friends from your days as a Guinea PCV, please pass it along to the griot at newsletter@friendsofguinea.org.

Message Corner

All members of Friends of Guinea can place one free personal advertisement per year in CaVa?. These advertisements are limited to 21 words and are intended primarily as a way for families and friends to send messages of support and encouragement to volunteers serving in Guinea, although they might equally be used to broadcast other messages. We encourage you to take advantage of this free service by emailing your message of 21 words or less to the Newsletter Editor at newsletter@friendsofguinea.org. Please note that this service is available only to current members of Friends of Guinea, so please submit your advertisement under the name in which your membership is listed so that we may verify your status.

To Jenni Pearson - Loved our visit to Chez Jenni en Afrique. We're so proud of you! Love, Mom and Dad.

Hai Keita a Sanacia. We are so proud of you! Love, Mom, Dad and Caren.

To Elizabeth Arlotti: Beth, We love you. Be careful and behave! See you soon. Love, Mom, Dad, Linda, Grandma, Uncle Pete.

Elinor Lichtenberg: Hope you're settled in to your

brand new house, and doing well. We're so proud of you! Love, Mama and Daddy.

Anne, Woman of Steel, we are very proud of you and the work you are doing. Love, James, Mom, Dad, Dan.

Friends of Guinea

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for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea**

Friends of Guinea is a non-profit organization made up of former and currently serving Guinea Peace Corps Volunteers, Guineans inside and outside of Guinea, and others interested in promoting the cause of Guinean development in the world at large. We are a country-of-service affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association. Dues are \$15 annually for individuals, and \$23 for families.

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Visit us at: <http://friendsofguinea.org>