

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Volume 25 Issue 2



August—September 2010

## Peace Corps Niger Welcomes New Director Valerie Staats

### New Director Valerie Staats sent the following letter to Friends of Niger

Orange-headed lizards ... red dust ... goats of all sizes ... laundry hanging on barbed wire ... quiet calls to prayer ... much greener than I expected ... *Bonne arrivée* ... these are among my first impressions, as I recently shared in the Peace Corps Niger newsletter, of this marvelous, challenging, and heart-tugging land called Niger.

Thrilled to be here in Niger and already loving the Niger volunteers, trainees and staff, I arrived on the auspicious date of July 4<sup>th</sup> and had a helpful nine-day overlap with outgoing Country Director Mary Abrams. As you already know, RPCV Niger Mary moves on to be Country Director in Rwanda after four years in the role in Niger. She will be missed.

This is my second time living in a Muslim country, the first as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco. There I experienced three full Ramadans, and we are now into the first week of Ramadan in Niger. Islam seems to be practiced in a quieter way here. There are of course the five daily calls to prayer coming through sound systems from many neighborhood mosques. But perhaps because there are many non-Muslims in Niger, the overall effect is somewhat muted.

Much has happened in my first weeks on the job, including the arrival on July 8<sup>th</sup> of a wonderful group of 33 trainees in the youth, education, and municipal development programs. They are installed at Hamdallaye and, as I write this, about to leave for two weeks of language immersion in either Hausa or Zarma. We're also exploring with PC headquarters the possibility of some French immersion training being made available to PC posts in West Africa.

We've had three warden messages (if you know that lingo, it's an advisory or warning from the State Department) since I've been here, the latest one also resulting in a "stand fast," when we require some or all of our Volunteers and Trainees, depending on the circumstance, to stay put where they are and keep out of potential harm's way by not traveling. I'm pleased to report that not only did we have 100% compliance from our Volunteers, but also everyone remained safe and there were no incidents. This is due to great Volunteers and great Staff.



You may have heard in the news media about drought, floods, famine, and diverse food availability in Niger. All are true, and interconnected. The ground is so bone-dry that when we do get the quick, heavy rains of this rainy season, it doesn't sink in. Food is available – fruit, vegetables, grains, some meat, dairy and eggs – but the prices are very high, often more costly than the same foods in the States. As Niger is cash poor, we have a domino effect with dire consequences. One runs out of adjectives when trying to convey the situation. (Continued on page 3)

**Valerie Staats sent this photo of PCV Sarah Conway works with girls in a day-long workshop in Dogondoutchie in July.**



### Message from the President - 8/23/10

Dear FON Members,  
We want to sincerely thank Mary Abrams for her years of service to Niger, and wish her well on her new assignment; at the same time we want to officially welcome Valerie Staats as the new Niger Peace Corps country director. We look forward to working with Valerie and her staff.  
Unfortunately, we again find our Nigerien family and friends confronted with a food shortage and have witnessed over the past several months the international response albeit more needs to be done. The entire Friends of Niger community extends our heartfelt prayers and tokens of support during this difficult time. And as Ramadan is upon us, we remember our many obligations and ask forgiveness for those obligations we have left undone and unfulfilled. While the hope that springs forth from those tiny millet seeds nourished with the late arriving rains helps our Nigerien friends keep their faith for better days ahead, we are reminded by the passing of one of our members, Jane Huser Maxwell, that the small contributions we made when traveling through Niger will also nurture and sustain those tender millet seedlings and the will of a village to a bountiful harvest. Please join with me in celebrating Jane's life and the life of the several other Niger RPCVs who are no longer with us by supporting Jane's memorial fund to address the current hunger crisis and future development initiatives in Niger. Peace. John

### Celebrate 50 Years Of Peace Corps In Niger With A Trip Back To Niger

2012 marks the 50th year of Peace Corps' service in Niger, and we are in the early stages of planning a trip back to Niger. The specific dates are yet to be determined, but if you have any interest in joining us, or would even like to get involved and help organize a trip to Niger in 2012, please send an email to [trip@friendsofniger.org](mailto:trip@friendsofniger.org) telling us who you are and how many might like to join us. If you have specific ideas about what you'd like to see or do while in-country, send them along!

If we get enough people, we can make this happen just like we did in 2002 for the 40th anniversary, when a diverse group of RPCV's, plus some of their family and friends, toured the country, visited their posts, camped in the desert, and was lauded by the US and Nigerien governments for their service over the years.

### Board of Directors Friends of Niger

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The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of Friends of Niger (FON).

FON can be contacted via the post at  
P.O. Box 5823

Washington, D. C. 20016-9998

Or by e-mail at  
[president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)  
and you will find FON on the web and this newsletter in FULL COLOR at:

[www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org).

Editor: Jude Andreasen

Please send address changes and corrections,  
as well as any queries to The Camel  
Express at the address above.



## Peace Corps Niger Welcomes New Director

(Continued from page 1)

So far I've been able to visit Volunteers in Dosso, Birni N'Gaouré, Guéchémé, Dogondoutchie, Tibiri, and of course throughout Niamey and numerous visits to the Hamdalleye training site. The Volunteers are just like you were: excelling in language skills and integration into the community, living beyond spartan, bonding tightly with each other and with their host families. They may have cell phones and jump on the Internet when they're in Niamey, but otherwise, [la plus ça change](#) ...

As you can see from these short notes, I have lucked into a challenging and inspiring set of circumstances. Thank goodness for the wonderful Volunteers, past and present, and all the support we are getting from Friends of Niger, Peace Corps Washington, and others. Please keep Niger close to your heart this year.

Valerie Staats  
Country Director

### Call for Nominations

The Board of Directors of Friends of Niger is pleased to announce FON Board member elections 2010. The members of the board are elected by the FON members every two years. 2010 is an election year for Friends of Niger. **See page 2 for list of current board members.**

In 2008, all the FON members who submitted their names for election were placed on the board by acclamation. This year we are seeking your participation in the election process and encourage you to submit your name for board membership. If you would like to nominate yourself for the FON Board, please complete a brief resume following the guidelines in the form below. Please submit your nomination by September 30, 2010. (If submitting electronically, submit by September 30<sup>th</sup>; if submitting by mail, please have your nomination post marked by September 30<sup>h</sup>.)

Please send your nomination to FON by post or email to:

Friends of Niger

PO Box 5823

Washington, DC 20016-9998 Email: [President@FriendsOfNiger.org](mailto:President@FriendsOfNiger.org)

#### NOMINATION FORM

Friends of Niger \* Board of Directors \* Elections 2010

**I.** I am a member of Friends of Niger, and I would like to stand for election to the Board of Directors:

Please Print Contact Information. Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**II.** Tell us about yourself. (This information will be shared with the FON voting membership).

Dates you lived, worked, or served in Niger and location: \_\_\_\_\_

If you worked in Niger, for which organization did you work? \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about your experiences in Niger or life experiences that you would like to share.

**III.** What experiences, ideas, service, or vision would you be willing to bring to the table as a member of the Board of Directors of FON? (Please limit your response to one-half a page).

## Peace Corps Niger Welcomes New Partner: The Jane Huser Maxwell Memorial Fund



**Jane wrote: "I was born**

**Friends of Niger has partnered with a group of Niger RPCVs who support grassroots projects in honor of their deceased "sister," Jane Huser Maxwell. The Sisterhood submitted the summary below.**

Jane (1944-2009) served as a PCV in Filingue 1967-69. She worked in maternal and child healthcare, and came to love the desert landscape and the warm and wonderful Nigerien people. Jane returned to Niger twice in recent years. She supported various Nigerien initiatives which sought to better the lives of Nigerien women and children, including village-based women's micro-credit groups, girls' education projects, and work with handicapped children.

Jane had a passion for young children. Her life work was in the field of early-childhood education. She died on June 24, 2009 after a short battle with cancer, and is survived by her two adored daughters, Alia and Sahara, her beloved grandson Anthony, and scores of loving friends.

When Jane traveled in Niger in 2002, a life-long bond was formed with six other fellow-RPCV's- henceforth the Sahara Sisterhood\*! This group of seven women became fast friends and subsequently met and traveled together several times a year. The tradition continues, minus our beloved Jane.

In Jane's memory, we have established the JANE HUSER MAXWELL MEMORIAL FUND under the auspices of the Friends of Niger. The impetus for this fund was the one-year anniversary of Jane's death, and the current on-going hunger crisis in Niger, brought on by sparse rains in 2009 and the resulting crop failures. The first contribution from the Fund, in Jane's name, was to an FON-selected project addressing this hunger crisis. The Sisterhood hopes to establish a more sustainable fund to support Nigerien initiatives in Jane's memory, and welcomes your contributions. We plan to allocate funds to projects and initiatives at the grass-roots level in Niger - initiatives which support Jane's life-passions for the Nigerien people, and most especially children, women and education.

The Sahara Sisterhood consists of seven women - Jane (now deceased), Linda Hager Bailey (Jane's Peace Corps roommate and lifelong friend), Elizabeth Griffin, Ricki Hall, Charlene Pratt, Pamela Britton White, and Kyle Hording. All, save Kyle, were PCV's in Niger at one time or another - Kyle 's love of Niger came later, during our shared 2002 sojourn in Niger.

Donations to the Fund may be made payable to the Friends of Niger. On the memo line, direct the contribution to the "Jane Huser Maxwell Memorial Fund." All contributions are tax-deductible. We will continue to use the Camel Express to report on the various initiatives supported by this Fund.



**Jane as a proud Cal graduate in her luxury suite.**



## The Jane Huser Maxwell Memorial Fund (continued)



*The Seven Sisters of the Niger Sisterhood, left to right: Kyle Hording, Jane Huser Maxwell, Charlene Pratt, Linda Hager Bailey, Pamela Britton White, Ricki Hall, Elizabeth*

## Unique Opportunity to Help a Worthy Niamey School

**The April 2010 Issue of the Camel Express Showcased  
The Hampaté Bâ Middle School Competition to Win GlobalGiving's Open Challenge  
It's Up to Us!**

"Les Amis de Hampata Ba", the non profit supporting the Amadou Hampata Ba Middle School in Niamey, has been selected to participate in the Global Giving Challenge for September 2010. During the month of September, the association needs to prove that it can raise funds, and if it succeeds, it will have the privilege of appearing permanently on the GlobalGiving Web site, providing continual revenues from International donors and benefiting US donors on their tax returns.

Collège Amadou Hampaté Bâ is a private, coeducational, non-denominational secondary school in a popular neighborhood in Niamey called Dar-es-Salam. The school has a **bottom-up professional development** approach and a **process of self-transformation to a progressive teaching/learning experience within a supportive, happy school atmosphere.**

**Now it is up to us all to help out with the challenge!** Here are some important guidelines: Each of us needs to find about 10 people who are willing to give at least 10 dollars each. **The challenge consists of raising a minimum of 4000 US dollars in one month (September 2010), which means the association needs to aim for at least 200 donors if each donor gives between 10 and 20 dollars.**

**The donations for the "Les Amis de Hampata Ba" project must be submitted by Internet on GlobalGiving's Open Challenge page between Sept 1st and Sept 30th.**

**This is a fabulous way for us to raise money for the Amadou Hampata Ba Middle School and at the same time help the association gain international recognition.**



So, get ready and set to go! All it will take is a few clicks on the computer. Start thinking of family or friends who would be willing to help out with this kind gesture that could make such a difference in the life of secondary students in Niger by giving them equal access to affordable, quality secondary education. Just go to <http://>



## **FON Has Another New Partner: Boston University (BU) Niger Project**

**The following letter was transmitted by Sue Rosenfeld, former FON Board Member and current Director of the Boston University Study Abroad Program in Niger.**

Fofo! Sannu! Hello!

My name is Jonathan Remple, or as my Nigerien friends call me, Betoji. As you may well know, a food crisis is gripping the Sahel. Currently **80% of Nigeriens face food shortages** (defined as not having more than 10 days of food). That is 12 million people and 400,000 children face the potential for starvation within the next month to 4 months. Realizing the necessity for action, I and two fellow alumni of the Boston University Study Abroad Program created Niger Food Relief to motivate BU Niger Alumni and anyone connected with this amazing country to act. Within 24 hours, we collected over \$1,000. So far, 368+ Nigeriens will have food supplies for at least one month. I say this statistic with confidence because of our partnership with The Nomad Foundation (recommended to us by Sue Rosenfeld), which is a Nigerien, grassroots, 501(c)(3) non-profit. You can find more details about their accomplishments here: ([www.nigerfoodrelief.org](http://www.nigerfoodrelief.org)). 100% of the money we raise is used to purchase 50 kg sacks of grain, distributed to Northern Niger where drought is most severe.

We are contacting Peace Corps partners and reaching out to RPCVs and our extended community to ask for your help. As Sue reminded me: *No donation amount is too small. If **everyone** connected to Niger gives **\$10**, we have such a large network of Niger Alumni, Peace Corps Volunteers, and the organization Friends of Niger, that we can **save thousands of lives**.* Since our donations go directly to the purchase of emergency food relief (not one cent goes to administrative costs or advertising):

**\$10 Feeds a Family of 8 for One Week.**

**To Donate:** please go to our website at [www.nigerfoodrelief.org](http://www.nigerfoodrelief.org), click on the 'chip-in' button on the home page, and follow the instructions. All donations through the chip-in account go directly into The Nomad Foundation's pay-pal account. As The Nomad Foundation is a 501c3 Non-Profit, all gifts are tax deductible.

## **FRIENDS OF NIGER T-SHIRTS**

**There is still time to get  
your new Friends of Niger T-  
Shirt .**

They are available in beige, which would have the design as 3-colors, or brown which would mean the 2-color design would be on a brown shirt background. To order yours, send your size (S, M, L, XL) and **specify brown or beige**, Send \$15 to FON at the address on the ORDER FORM (p. 7).

## FRIENDS OF NIGER 2010 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/ State \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (h) \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (work/cell) \_\_\_\_\_

E- Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Dates in Niger \_\_\_\_\_ Location in Niger \_\_\_\_\_ Program/Involvement \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

*Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund FON Activities - including The Camel Express,  
the FON website, the FON Archives, and Projects such as Those Listed Below.*

**The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3).**

**Membership and contributions to Friends of Niger are fully tax deductible.**

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Please Check Appropriate Boxes

☐ Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON☐ \$55 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA☐ Enclosed is \$35 for a FON Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)☐ I am a current Niger PCV, entitled to Free Membership☐ I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership☐ In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed

a General Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed

a General Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I want to support FON's Young Girls' Scholarship Program (YGSP) activities with

a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I want to support grassroots projects through the Jane Huser Maxwell Memorial Fund, **a NEW PARTNER.**☐ I want to support FON's Microcredit in Niger activities with

a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I want to support FON's Youth Education activities **through a NEW PARTNER, AAWEL**

with a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I want to support the FON Chewable Vitamin Campaign with a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

at \$20 (2 for \$35) (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please send \_\_\_\_\_ Friends of Niger T-Shirts **SPECIFY BROWN OR BEIGE**

at \$15 each (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt Sizes: S \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

Make Check/or Money Order to Friends of Niger and mail to: P. O. Box 5823, Washington, D. C. 20016-9998

### **Funds Needed for Children's Vitamins**

**FON requests members to contribute to the Children's Chewable Vitamin Program. This program, made possible by the travelers and PCVs who transport the vitamins on their journeys back to Niger, is only possible with your contributions. Galmi Hospital is among the few hospital distribution points.**

**Celebrate 50 Years Of Peace Corps In Niger  
With A Trip Back To Niger in 2012  
See Page 2 for details**



Friends of Niger

P.O. Box 5823

Washington, D.C. 20016-9998



Address Correction Requested

There is no way to peace.  
Peace is the way.

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can be accessed at  
<http://www.friendsofniger.org>

