

# The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

February 2000

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## Message from the President of FON

This edition of *The Camel Express* is dedicated as usual to the people of Niger but, in particular on this occasion, to Niger's return to constitutional democracy. The lead article on page one, and other stories inside the newsletter, provide a summary of election results and information on key members of the new government.

This issue also sports a new feature which will make a regular appearance in the newsletter - *Inside Peace Corps Niger*. The column, authored by PC Niger Country Director, Jane Bonin, appears opposite this column on page three..

Inside the newsletter you will find other news stories coming out of Niger and North America as well as updated information on the **Boston University/ Friends of Niger** chewable vitamin project; the still developing **FON Books for Niger** project; and on our quest for tax exempt status.

The kickoff to the year 2000 membership drive has gone well but we have a good distance to go before the actual membership base reflects the size of our contact list and of the number of people who receive *The Camel Express*. Enclosed with this edition of the hardcopy version of the newsletter, members of **Friends of Niger** will have received the President's Annual Report for 1999. Members who normally receive the electronic version of the newsletter will received the report in the same fashion.

The current issue of *The Camel Express* also marks the last edition that will be put out by the present Board of Directors of **FON** as the organization is due for elections in early spring. (Members will be receiving more detailed information in a separate mailing in March).

It is perhaps, then, not inappropriate for me to acknowledge and thank those who have been so helpful in the efforts

these past two years to get **Friends of Niger** back up an running - starting with Terry O'Leary, the immediate past Group Leader who almost single-handedly took **FON** out of the mothballs and put it back into circulation; and with Jai Evans who authored the **FON** website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org> - and who continues to manage the website and cope with my many demands. Valued contributions to this newsletter and to other **FON** projects have

website and cope with my many demands. valued contributions to this newsletter and to other FON projects have been made by Sue Rosenfeld, Chris Zoolkoski, Sue Bracken, Irma Sarata, Judd Lyon, Steve Lieberman, Jane Bonin, Tom Kelley, Kevin Ryan, Jim Martin, Sue Riesgraf, Ron Dube and others - most notably those of you have so generously contributed to the chewable vitamin project and who participated in [FON Reunion '99](#).

On an on-going basis, the special efforts of other Board members have been invaluable - Gabriella Maertens who, amongst other things, helped pull together the recent chewable vitamin appeal; John Soloninka who, in addition to his stellar work on Niger Net, helps manage our database and is busy launching the FON archives project; Larry Koff, who has managed against all the odds to keep the FON financial house in order; and, Maria Mar who is our point-person in D.C.

None of what has happened these past two years would, however, have been possible without the support of many of you. Thanks again.

Enjoy the newsletter. Stay in contact. And, please, join **Friends of Niger**.

Jim Schneider

President

**this is the peace corps**  
TODAY'S PEACE CORPS IS STILL THE TOUGHEST JOB YOU'LL EVER LOVE



## **INSIDE PEACE CORPS NIGER**

Dear Friends of Niger,

It's a privilege to have an occasion to be in touch with you and to know that so many people are united in our devotion to Niger and to the Peace Corps. Thanks to all of you for your continuing efforts to be helpful to the country that so many people have come to love.

I believe that the program here is in really good shape. We just took in 58 new Trainees, our one input for the year. If they all swear in, our total strength will be at 119, just about the right ratio of staff and resources to Volunteers and Trainees.

We are installed in a new building now, so when and if you return to Niger, you will not find us in the Industrial Zone. We moved last summer to a building on the road to Ouallam, just past the Stade. It's a commodious facility--bigger, brighter, cleaner, and SAFER than the previous one. In these increasingly troubled times, PC needs a building that is strong enough and has enough set-back from the perimeter wall to provide a greater measure of safety.

We are about to begin undergoing some major staff changes. Suzanne Zitmer, our APCD-Admin, leaves on March 12 for Madagascar where she will be the AO for PC there; Nelson Cronyn, APCD-Agriculture will move on in May or June, where exactly we don't know yet, probably as Director to another Francophone country. I myself, after 6 years in Africa (two in Malawi and almost 4 here), will be leaving in August. As a former professor of English, I may return to academia or I may write a book. I probably won't go overseas any time soon (except for visits to France--mon pays fêliche). I need to reconnect with my family and friends after such an extended absence. Maybe later I will apply to become a Volunteer myself!

As for Niger, the country is undergoing a surge of optimism. The new, democratically-elected president, Tandja Mamadou, is the hope of the future to many. Since his election, some of the fonctionnaires have been paid for the first time in many months, so there's a bustle about town that suggests a new sense of prosperity. The schools are also in session again.

A few words about the PC program: As you may know, we have three project sectors here in Niger--health, agriculture, and natural resource management, all operating under the general heading of Household Food Security. All our efforts are toward getting more food of the right quantity and quality on the table here. We would also like to begin thinking about restarting an education sector. When the school system broke down, Peace Corps withdrew its education Volunteers (in 1994); but now with the promise of stability and order, having teachers here again seems a more realistic possibility.

We are beginning to post PCVs further to the north. With the end of the Tuareg rebellion, the northern part of the country is largely pacified, and the Embassy has removed its restriction on official Americans traveling there. We put the first two PCVs up in Iférouane just recently. Both NRM Volunteers, they are attached to a project directed by IUCN. Maybe someday soon we can put PCVs back in Bilma, Agadez, Fergoun, Tahoua, or N'Guigmi, where so many of you ancien combattants served.

That's all the news for the moment. It's a pleasure to be in contact with you. If you have specific topics you would like to see discussed, just send them to Jim Schneider and he can pass them on to me if he thinks the the questions raised would be of interest to all of you.

Thanks for your continued support to Niger.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jane Bonin

Country Director/Niger

**Boston University & Friends of Niger Project  
- Chewable Vitamins for Niger's Children -**

**Project Update/February 2000**

In their last issue of *The Camel Express*, an appeal was made to readers of the newsletter - asking them to help fill a suitcase with bottle of children's chewable multi-vitamins. The response to that request was strong, allowing Chris Zoolkoski to carry 13,520 tablets to Niger in late 1999. The tablets were divided between the Pediatrics Ward of the National Hospital in Niamey and the SMI Hospital in Galmi.

**Project Will Be On-Going**

Because the response was so good and because additional contributions have arrived since Chris' December departure, FON and Boston University have decided to continue their cosponsorship of the project - on something of an on-going basis. The next shipment to Niger of children's chewable multi-vitamins is scheduled for April of this year.

Financial contributions, in the form of checks or money orders, should be made out to Friends of Niger and sent by mid-November to:

**Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger**

**P.O. Box 33164**

**Washington, D.C. 20033-0164**

All contributions will be earmarked for the bulk purchase of chewables. Sue Rosenfeld, Boston U's staff person in Niamey and the person whose initiative led to the creation of this project, will be responsible for carrying the April shipment.

**Other Project Updates**

**Books for Niger** - FON is seeking a North American Rotary Club to partner with the club in Niamey for the purposes of sponsoring this project. Interested parties should contact Jim Schneider at 810 827 4870 or [lschne3@msi.com](mailto:lschne3@msi.com)

or sponsoring this project. Interested parties should contact Jim Schneider at 614-261-7878 or [tolenzs@magi.com](mailto:tolenzs@magi.com).

**Tax Exempt Status** - Tom Keeley and Kevin Ryan have both volunteered to assist FON through this process. Look for another update in the next issue of *The Camel*.

**Info/Education Package on Niger** - FON is still looking for one or more people to help with this project. Please contact Jim Schneider at (see information above).

### RPCV Books & Stories

Over the past 38 years, there have been quite a few books and stories written by Niger RPCV's, particularly books written from the perspective of the experiences of their volunteer years. During the same period, other authors have also written books about Niger and its people. Here are two of the more recent.

[Stoller, Paul. \*Jaguar: A Story of Africans in America\*. University of Chicago Press, 1999. ISBN: 0226775283.](#)

[Beckwith, Carol & Marion Van Offelen. \*Nomads of Niger\*. Abradale Press, 1993. ISBN: 08109871254.](#)

### Mark Schneider Named New Peace Corps Director

On December 23, 1999, President Clinton named Mark L. Schneider as Director of the Peace Corps. Schneider is the agency's 15th Director and the second returned Peace Corps Volunteer (El Salvador 1966-68) to head the Peace Corps. He leaves his position as the assistant administrator of the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), where he has served since November 1993. Prior to his work at USAID, Schneider held leadership positions at the Pan American Health Organization and the Department of State.

### Peace Corps Stamp Commemorates the 1960's



[A new U.S. postal stamp](#), dedicated to the Peace Corps, is one of a series of 15 designed to portray the 60's and part of a larger series entitled "Celebrate the Century." Other stamps which commemorate the 60's include: Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, the peace symbol and the Beatles.

### FON Sets Up Photo Archive

FON Recording Secretary John Soloninka has taken responsibility for establishing a **Friends of Niger** Photo Archive - a depository for all those photos from Niger that need to be rescued from closets and drawers and basement storage areas - while they are still salvagible. The collection will be stored on CD's and Zip discs as well as in albums and made available for reunions and other events.

Contact John at **614-261-0578** (phone); [soloninka.1@osu.edu](mailto:soloninka.1@osu.edu) (e-mail) or via **FON**.

### News Briefs from Niger

A new Hausa-language publication, named *Sauyi*, made its debut early this year in Niger. The publication, edited by Moussa Tchangari, is scheduled as a bi-monthly. Tchangari is also the publisher of *Alternative*.

Two new private radio stations and one new independent television station were recently approved by the Observatoire National de Communication (ONC). Tambara FM, a radio station that will focus on women's issues will broadcast in Niamey on 107 MHz. Souda FM will air in Dosso on 104 MHz. The TV station, Ténéré TV, can also be found in Niamey.

**Source:** Le Républicain, Kakaki-News of Niger, Groupe Alternative

**Mamadou Names 8 New Préfets  
- Opposition Parties Excluded -**

On February 11, President Tandja Mamadou appointed new préfets to the top administrative post in Niger's eight regions.

The list of préfets is as follows, with profession and party affiliation:

**Agadez** –Yahaya Yandaka, teacher (MNSD)  
**Diffa** –Issakou Abdou, administrator (MNSD)  
**Dosso** –Mahamane Yahaya, administrator (CDS)  
**Maradi** –Ali Akilou, agronomist (CDS)  
**Tahoua** –Amadou Zéiti Maïga, retired (MNSD)  
**Tillabéry** –Ibrahim Belko, administrator (MNSD)  
**Zinder** –Alio Farka, teacher (CDS)  
**CU de Niamey** –Adamou Salifou, insurance agent (MNSD)

Both Amadou Zéiti Maïga and Yahaya Yandaka, were imprisoned during the Mainassara era. All of the préfets are civilians, even in the regions of Agadez and Diffa, centers of unrest in recent years.

In another development in mid-February, President Mamadou ordered a large number of tanks, cannon and other heavy weaponry to be transferred from the presidential guard to Niger's regular army (FAN).

**Sources:** Les Internautes du Ténéré, PANA, Le Républicain, Kakaki-News of Niger.

**NIGER'S NEW CABINET**

**Prime Minister** –Mr Hama Amadou (MNSD)  
**Public Health** –Mr Assoumane Adamou  
**Rural Development** –Mr Wassalké Boukari  
**Equipment & Transport** –Mr Abdou Labo  
**Environment & the Fight against Desertification** –Mr Issoufou Assoumane  
**Water Resources, and Government Spokesman** –Mr Akoli Dawel  
**Commerce & Industry** –Mr Seïni Oumarou  
**Finance** –Mr Ali Badjo Gamatié

**Social Development, Population, Women's Issues and Child Protection** –Mme Nana Aïcha Foumakoye  
**Promotion of Small & Medium Enterprises** –Mr Souley Hassane  
**Tourism & Artisans** –Mr Rhissa Ag Boula  
**Interior** –Mr Mahamane Manzo  
**Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, & African Integration** –Mr Nassirou Sabo  
**Defense** –Mr Sabiou Dadi Gao  
**Planning** –Mr Baroumi Maliki  
**Justice, Parliamentary Liaison** –Mr Ali Sirfi  
**National Education** –Mr Ari Ibrahim  
**Communication** –Mr Amadou Elhadj Salifou  
**Higher Education, Research & Technology** –Mr Amadou Lawal  
**Labor & Modernization of the Administration** –Mme Ossey Mireille  
**Youth, Sports, & Culture** –Mr Issa Lamine  
**Privatization & Restructuring State Enterprises** –Mr Almou Oumarou  
**Mines & Energy** –Mr Yahaya Baaré

## **Animal Resources –Mr Koroné Maoudé**

**Sources:** AFP, PANA, IRIN, Kakaki

### **Standings in the Assemblée Nationale of the Fifth Republic**

MNSD Nassara, the party led by president-elect Tandja Mamadou, (with 38 seats) and CDS Rahama, the party led by the new Speaker, Mahamane Ousmane (with 17 seats) have joined forces in the new assemblée to form a legislative majority. The opposition is led by the PNDS Tarayya with 16 seats. The leader of the PNDS, Mahamadou Issoufou, was runner-up in the recent presidential elections. RDP Jamaa has 8 seats and ANDP Zaman Lahiya has 4

**Source:** CENI

### **Credits and Other Information**

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed via hardcopy, e-mail and website posting with the contributions of Sue Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jane Bonin, Jai Evans, Sue Rosenfeld, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff and Maria Mar. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses below,

**The Camel Express** is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**. **FON** can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164; by e-mail at [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com); and you will find **FON** on the web at the following Internet address: [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org).

#### **Board of Directors Friends of Niger**

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Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President

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## Message from the President

This special mini-edition of **The Camel Express** is being sent your way in recognition of both the realities and the potential of modern, electronic communication. In the past, since the debut of the **FON** website in January of 1999, we posted the electronic version of the newsletter on the site at the same time as we mailed out the hardcopy to those who do not have access to the internet - in other words, on a quarterly basis.

One of the things that this has meant is that it appears to many people, perhaps yourself included, as if the website sits there unchanged for three or four months at a time - even though changes and additions are often made to the material available via the site's many internal links. So, we will try to post at least a mini-version of **The Camel** every month or six weeks, with the usual full newsletter continuing to be released on a quarterly basis. The next full edition will be out in late May/early June. We'll try to get another mini-edition out to you in mid-summer, followed by a full edition in early September, etc.

The material in this edition also speaks to the potential inherent in the site for timely communications - that is, of its potential to keep you informed on recent developments in Niger (see **Meningitis Outbreak in Niger: Help FON & UNICEF Niger Respond to Vaccine Shortage**) and to elicit your support in times of crisis as well as for on-going projects (see **BU/FON - Chewable Vitamins Project - Update III: April 2000**).

You will be touched by the excerpt from Chris Zoolkowsky's journal and, we hope, both informed and excited by the other updates and additions to the site. We've kept Jane Bonin's letter on the front panel, for those of you who will be seeing it for the first time. There will be a new PC Niger piece along with the late spring edition.

Enjoy the newsletter. Stay in contact. And please, please join **Friends of Niger**.

Jim Schneider

President

**BU/FON Chewable Vitamins Project**

## - Project Update/April 2000 -

At the end of this month, Sue Rosenfeld - Boston U's staff person in Niamey and the person whose initiative led to the creation of this project - will be heading back to Niger carrying the second shipment of children's chewable multivitamins purchased with donations to this project.

Final figures are not in, but this shipment will likely be a bit larger than the 13,520 tablet shipment carried by Chris Zoolkowsky last December. As with the December shipment, the tablets will be divided between the Pediatrics Ward of the National Hospital in Niamey and the SIM Hospital in Galmi, near Madaoua.

The next shipment is scheduled for June of this year - when Sue again makes the round trip between Niamey and the States. Financial contributions, in checks or money orders, should be made out to **Friends of Niger** and sent to:

**Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger**  
**P.O. Box 33164**  
**Washington, D.C. 20033-0164**

As always, all contributions will be earmarked for the bulk purchase of chewables.

*Chris Zoolkowsky and his spouse Helene Warkentin, both Niger RPCV's 1988-'91, recently returned to Niger - along with their young daughter. Chris was going back to serve his medical iinternship at the SIM hospital at Galmi, near Madaoua. You may recall that when they went to Niger in December, they carried along a suitcase full of children's chewable multivitamins purchased with the donations of people like yourself. (See Chewable Vitamins - Update III for recent developments in this project which supplies vitamins to hospitals in both Niamey and Galmi).*

*Recently Chris sent me the following excerpt from the journal he is keeping during his stay in Galmi. I asked if he would permit me to publish the excerpt in **The Camel Express**. He agreed. As I explained to him when I asked for permission, I wouldn't normally ask but for me his experience served as a poignant reminder of the reality of much of life in Niger. It seemed to me that it was the kind of reminder that we all need from time to time - even those of us who love Niger and its people. Over time it becomes quite easy to mostly recall the good things from our time in Niger and to relegate the painful memoies to the often more comfortable depths of the subconscious.*

### **Joy, Despair, Hope, Defeat** **an excerpt from Chris Zoolkowsky's Galmi Journal**

This business can really put one's emotions on a roller coaster ride. Yesterday, it felt like they were on one of those rides at Disneyland that they won't let you go on if you're pregnant or have heart trouble.

The joy of hearing Aboubacar respond to my questions after admitting him 2 days earlier in convulsions and a near coma. He is a highly respected funtionaire who tested positive for HIV 5 years ago. We thought this might be the end for him. It looks like a CNS infection. Probably fungal. The Valium slowed down his convulsions, but the lumbar puncture was still difficult. Neither I nor Hyon, the Canadian doctor, could get a useful specimen of spinal fluid. Had we succeeded, we likely wouldhave seen streptococci or meningococci because he looks well on the road to going back to his teaching job since being on empiric IV chloramphenicol.



Then going to clinic and feeling my heart get heavy while seeing a young woman with several months of diarrhea, fever, and weight loss. I sent her to the lab and she came back with her card marked positive next to the HIV test. I asked where her husband is. She doesn't know and hasn't seen him in two years. I try to explain to her the meaning of her test result. The translator interrupts me and says I shouldn't tell her. She would just get upset. It's better if they don't know. But this is one time when I don't see any sense in conforming to cultural norms. "Wouldn't you want to know?" I ask my colleague. Turning back to the patient, I try to explain how the disease is transmitted. "You shouldn't sleep with men anymore," says the translator, who rarely translates what I say literally. The once attractive 22 year old asks how anyone would want to sleep with her when she is always sick like this. I tell her that we can try to help her feel better temporarily, but that we have no medicine to make her better. There are no anti-retroviral drugs or protease inhibitors here, but I don't tell her that because those words are not translatable. I send her away with Bactrim, aspirin, and the standard wish, "Allah shi ba ki sa'a."

I go back to the hospital to see Abdou. There's no medical reason for me to see him, I just want to see him and his son smile at me again as they do every time I walk by his bed. It works. Their grateful words and expressions lift my heart from the pain of that last episode. Abdou came in just 36 hours ago with 2 weeks of fever, cough, & dyspnea. I ushered him and his son into the exam room and took his card from him to read. The person who screens the patients before they see the doctor had written on it, "Abdou from Iskitta; 30 years old." I took a second look at him. "How many years do you have?" I asked. "Thirty," he said, as his adult son nodded. "During which year did your mother give birth to you?" I pressed him further. "Doctor, have patience," he said in a slow, tired-sounding voice. "In the days when my mother gave birth, nobody gave you a card to help you remember the year." "I have more than thirty years," I said, pointing to my robust youthfulness. "Do you think you are more of a youth than me?" They both laughed at that suggestion. "I think you probably have about 60 years. Could that be true?" "Yes," they nodded, looking at each other. "You're the doctor. If you say I have 60 years, then I must have 60 years." But that chuckle was strained.

Abdou was not comfortable. He was tachypneic, tachycardic, febrile, and had rales and increased voice transmission in his right upper lobe. TB was certainly a close second in the differential, but inconsistent with only two weeks of illness. He also didn't have that wasted TB look. I thought a right upper lobe pneumonia was more likely, but still unsure enough to justify taxing them with the burden of having to pay 10 dollars for a chest x-ray. That's about a week's salary for the average person. Understandably, some people complain when you order one. Ironically, some people protest when you tell them they don't need one, like the woman who insisted on an x-ray of her head because she'd been hearing voices in there. Neither Abdou nor his son complained. An hour later, feeling the satisfaction of seeing my diagnosis confirmed radiographically, I studied his film showing a complete white-out of the entire right upper lobe. The lab tech handed me a slip of paper with the results of the tests I had ordered. Malaria smear: negative. WBC 42,600. 95% neutrophils, 5% lymphocytes. Bad infection. They didn't complain, as some do, when I told them he should stay at least one night in the hospital. Yesterday morning, which was only 12 hours and two injections later of 2,000,000 units of penicillin G, he was comfortable, afebrile, and smiling at me like I was the smartest doctor in the world. Today I sent him home with a week's worth of penicillin and some iron tablets. Victory.

But a few beds over is Ibrahim, the 18 month old with kwashiorkor and possible nephrotic syndrome. He had been getting more and more edematous all week and none of our attempts to reverse the process were working. His weight had gone from 8 kilograms to 10 kilograms in 2 weeks. Yesterday it had gotten to the point where his skin was starting to break open in places due to the fluid pressure behind it. This morning I came in to find his bed empty and his death certificate waiting for me to sign. Where is his trusting mother? I'm sad she's not here for me to express my condolences. I'm glad she's not here so I don't have to face her.

Joy, despair, hope, defeat ... all within so short a time ... all in the same building ... all to the same person.

Like a roller coaster.

Christopher Zoolkoski  
Hopital de Galmi  
Galmi, NIGER

## **Meningitis Outbreak in Niger -Help FON & UNICEF Niger Respond to Vaccine Shortage -**

Recent reports of a meningitis outbreak in Niger have been confirmed by data released earlier this month by Niger's Ministry of Public Health and forwarded to Friends of Niger by UNICEF Niger. These reports suggest that the outbreak has reached national epidemic proportions, with the capital city of Niamey and nine neighboring health districts being the hardest hit.

The situation is worse in Niamey where the number of new cases in the first week of April (682) showed a dramatic increase from those reported during the last week of March (112). Nationally the increase from 1195 to 3097 new cases over the same period brought Niger to the epidemic threshold - 19 cases per 100,000 population.

The mortality rate is 8.6%.

UNICEF Niger is working with the Ministry of Public Health, WHO, French Cooperation, Belgian Cooperation, GTZ and the Muslim Association of West Africa to define needs and to respond. The original estimates - which called for one million doses of meningitis vaccine as well as syringes and chloramphenicol - now appear to be short and additional funds will be needed for the purchase of these supplies and to cover the cost of the social mobilisation necessary in order to successfully carry out the immunization program.

FON has been working with Mary Roodkowsky, Director of UNICEF Niger, and Julie Burke, former PCV and current UNICEF staff person in Niger, in an effort to set up a facility at the New York office of UNICEF which would receive contributions intended to go specifically to the purchase of vaccine and related supplies.

In the meantime, financial contributions, in checks or money orders, should be made out to **Friends of Niger** and sent to:


**Vaccine c/o Friends of Niger  
P.O. Box 33164  
Washington, D.C. 20033-0164**

**Friends of Niger** will ensure that donations for this purpose are passed along to UNICEF as lump sums and that the money goes toward this specific campaign.

## **Free Donations & Other Website Changes and Additions**

1. Click on the button at the top of the left-hand column on the FON home page, or click on the [On Line Donations](#) link which can be found further down the left-hand column under **Other Great Links**. Either action will take you to a page with information on how you can contribute - free - every day - to a number of

humanitarian causes related to world hunger, refugees, the ecology, the homeless, etc.

2. Click on the little goldfish  near the top of the right-hand column, and the content of the page will be translated - more or less accurately - into French. Our webmaster, Jai Evans, is working on an even better service. This one is passable and at least allows French-speaking people to get a better idea of what we are trying to say.

3. Patrick Thomas' site, with its focus on recyclable African tools, has been added to [RPCV Pages](#), which can also be found along the left-hand column.

4. Further yet down the left-hand column - under **fOn-Line** - check out the latest messages on the [FON Bulletin Board](#). Post a message yourself.

## Credits and Other Information

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

### **Board of Directors Friends of Niger**

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Jim Schneider, President  
& Editor

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Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President

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John Soloninka, Recording Secretary

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Larry Koff, Treasurer

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Maria Mar, Member-at-Large

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June 2000

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## Message from the President

Hopefully this message finds each of you enjoying at least some of the pleasures of early summer. Among those pleasures, we also hope, will be the reading of this edition of *The Camel Express*.

As you have probably already noticed, this issue of the newsletter is the largest ever - a full ten pages for the hardcopy version. In addition to the now regular column by PC Niger Country Director Jane Bonin, this issue features an update on the BU/FON Vitamin Campaign and how you can become involved in it along with stories on FON's involvement with UNICEF's meningitis vaccine campaign and Niger's effort to eradicate polio, PC Niger's new Girl's Scholarship Program, and the upcoming U.S. tour of the Taureg Group Tidawt. You'll also want to catch up on other activities of **Friends of Niger - FON Reunion 2001** and the **FON Archive Project**. Then glance at the announcement regarding the **FON** trip back to Niger in the year 2002.

The calendar year 2000 is nearly half over. And as the calendar year coincides with both the fiscal year and the membership year for **Friends of Niger**, it is timely that I touch upon matters related to both our finances and our membership base.

**Need for membership renewals.** Our Annual Budget is dependent upon financial contributions, primarily those made in the form of membership fees. This means that, in order to do even a bit of planning, the Board of **FON** must look - as it makes its annual financial projections - towards a strong membership renewal rate. It is not our practice to send out membership renewal notices on an individual basis. So I want to use this opportunity to ask each of you to take a peek at your checkbook and see whether or not you've renewed your membership for this year. At the same time, I very much want to thank all of you who have been so generous with your membership contributions and with your donations to both the vitamin and the vaccine campaigns.

**Need to augment and update our mailing list.** Since FON's reemergence a little over two years ago, we've been "working" essentially the same list of about 1200 names. Some people have disappeared and other people have been found, but by and large, it's the same list. We have something over 200 members and, while we are certain a few more of you will join, this probably means that the membership numbers derived from this list will not grow significantly. Given the inevitable attrition, we are faced with a dynamic that we want to change. We need your help to do this - to ensure that the FON membership base remains both vital and strong.

**We need your help in two ways.** The first is simple - please keep us informed each time that you change addresses, postal and electronic. While we ask for additional information, your address is the absolute minimum. We just cannot stay in contact if we don't know where you are located.

The second way that you can help is both more creative and more of a challenge. We need one or more person from each annual group of Niger PCVs to help us find more of the people from your group. (A couple of years back, two people from the 1964-66 group set out to do this. They were able to locate 95% of their group, of which number 45% are now members of **Friends of Niger**. With numbers like that - over 38 years of Peace Corps involvement in Niger - we would have not only a formidable financial base but, much more importantly, we would be in a position to make a more significant contribution to the people of Niger). To help FON with this initiative, please contact me via any of the means of communication listed elsewhere on the page.

**Hardcopy version of *The Camel Express*.** Presently FON distributes almost 400 hardcopies of this newsletter to non-members. We've done that now for more than two years. The cost is high. The Board has decided to limit this practice to two free issues per year, beginning with next year. This will not effect the electronic distribution of the newsletter nor the web edition. Nor will it effect new names added to the contact list for the first year that new people are on that list. Remember as well that we will happily switch anyone from the postal mailing list to the electronic mailing list.

Have a great summer.

Enjoy the newsletter. Stay in contact. And, please, join **Friends of Niger**.

**Jim Schneider**

**President**

## Early Warning!! FON Plans Trip to Niger - 2002 -

While it's way too early for details, the Board of Directors of FON has decided to begin the process of planning a group trip to Niger. The trip is targeted for the year 2002 - the 40th anniversary of Peace Corps in Niger.

The first step in the process is to invite reaction from the FON membership and others interested in being part of the trip as well as to get a sense of how many people are interested.

Send comments to FON or Jim Schneider at any of the addresses listed below under **Credits and Other Information**.

## FON Slates Reunion 2001 for Washington, D.C.

The Board of Directors of Friends of Niger has announced that **FON Reunion 2001** has now been officially scheduled to be held in Washington, D.C. during the summer of next year.

Early plans call for a series of social events and information sessions designed to update FON members and contacts - as well as their families and friends - on happenings in Niger while providing lots of opportunity for RPCVs and others who have lived and worked in Niger to catch up with each other and trade stories from their time in Niger.

More detail will be available in the fall edition of *The Camel*. Meanwhile, FON President Jim Schneider has put out the call for "volunteers" willing to help organize what is expected to be a 3-4 day weekend oriented event.

Input in the form of ideas and comments - as well as an indication of willingness to help pull together **FON Reunion 2001**

- should be sent to Jim at [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com) or via the other FON addresses listed under **Credits and Other Information**.

# Inside Peace Corps Niger

Dear Friends of Niger,

Greetings to all who follow the progress of Peace Corps/Niger. Someone told me that a person who has been a PCV in Niger always wonders at this time of year whether the rains have started. Niamey got a nice, soaking rain during the night, the first significant one. People out in the countryside are beginning to plant. I just returned from a tournée of Agadez and Iférouane. It hadn't rained in either place, and we stopped a number of times to give water to people standing on the side of the road holding out their cups. I hope that for them too relief is in sight.

PC/Niger is approaching a time of staff turnover. APCD/AG Nelson Cronyn is assuming his duties as Country Director in Burkina this week. The selection process for his replacement is taking place right now. My replacement has already been named. He is James Bullington, former Ambassador to Burundi and a retired career Foreign Service Officer. He also served in Chad and Benin, so he is an old Africa hand. He is scheduled to come out on August 27, and I will leave on September 4.

We have had several big events lately that might interest you. One was the third annual National Woman's Work Fair, held up at Hamdallaye, the PC training center. The fair brought together fifty-one women in order to provide skills training, information sessions and a forum for the exchange of experiences and ideas. Volunteers from across Niger worked with their host communities to select motivated women who are both leaders in their communities and active in small income-generating activities. Our able Gender and Development coordinator, Assalama Dawalak Sidi, helped Volunteers design a program that focused on income-generating activities but also included topics such as Women's Rights under Islam, HIV-AIDS prevention, and family planning. The event was a big success, as the two earlier ones had been. There will be follow-up in all regions for the participating women who participated to communicate what they learned to their fellow villagers. By the way, PC/Niger is a torchbearer in Gender and Development activities.

Another inspiring event was the Young Girls' Conference. These young students were selected on the basis of an essay contest, the title of which was "Educate a Woman; Educate a Nation." The winners were gathered at Hamdallaye and welcomed by the U.S. Ambassador, the Secrétaire Générale of the Ministry of Education, and me. I think our presence as women on the dais was a good image for the beginning of the conference. After preliminary activities, each girl was introduced to her mentor or *tutrice*, a professional or successful business woman.

The highlight of the Conference was the kickoff of the Girl's Scholarship Program, about which you will be hearing a good deal more as there will be an opportunity to contribute to this vital work. The essential thing for now is that 90% of Niger's women and girls are unschooled. Girls in Niger who are lucky enough to go to elementary school often drop out in middle school because their families cannot afford the tuition, room, and board for them to go away to school - as is the custom here. A modest sum of money - around \$200 - could sustain a young woman for one year of middle school. The scholarship committee proposes, as a modest beginning, to support one girl from each of the 13 regions of Niger for four years of schooling, for a total cost of \$10,400. The committee made up of teachers, members of the Ministry of Education, and PCVs, will select girls with a demonstrated need, an excellent scholastic record, and a real chance of academic success. Given the importance of female literacy as a factor in development, I believe that contributions to this initiative will be highly-leveraged money that will make a major difference in the future of Niger.

We are also experiencing an explosion of activity in the area of HIV/AIDS Awareness. Volunteers in Gothèye, Ballayera, and Konni have all had or are having educational events, drawing large and attentive crowds. Maybe AIDS prevention is an idea whose time has come. As you may know, the Health sector in Niger now invites males to participate in the formerly all female project. We currently have six men posted *en brousse*. Due to their easier access to the male population, they have been successful in reaching men to discuss sensitive topics such as AIDS/STD prevention, child spacing, and other health issues.

That's it from Niger at the moment. I will suggest to Jim Bullington that he continues to communicate regularly with FON. Thank you for all your support of this program and of our Volunteers.

Peace.

Jane Bonin

Country Director/ Niger

## PC Niger Sets Up Girls' Scholarship Program

As part of its ongoing effort to promote the continuing education of young girls in Niger, Peace Corps Niger's Gender and Development Committee has established the **Girl's Scholarship Program**(GSP).

The need is clear. Niger's illiteracy rate among women is more than 90%. Currently, the highest drop-out rate of young girls in the school system is between the elementary school and middle school level. According to PC Niger and recent studies, this is largely due to the fact that most students are required to move from their homes to the location of the middle school. Their families cannot afford the cost of room and board in the home of a host family.

The goal of the GSP is to support one girl for the first four years of middle school from each of the thirteen regions currently represented by Peace Corps Volunteers serving in Niger (Guidimouni, Matamaye, Madarounfa, Mayahi, Konni, Gaya, Boboye, Kirtachi, Kollo, Ouallam, Balleyara, Gotheye, Iferouane).

In each region, Volunteers will work with local primary school directors and teachers to encourage girls to apply to the program. A local selection committee made up of PCVs, teachers and representatives of the Ministry of Education will chose the successful candidate based on need and scholarship.

Cost per student per year of schooling is estimated at \$200. The total cost for four years schooling for 13 students is \$10,400. Since the GSP hopes to provide this opportunity on a yearly basis, \$10,400 is the amount that will be needed each year - at a minimum because GSP hopes that the program will expand.

Donations in the form of checks should be made out to **Peace Corps Partnership-Niger Girls' Scholarship Fund** and sent to **Peace Corps Partnership Program, Room 8301E, 1111 20th Street NW, Washington, DC, 20526**. Additional information is available at the Niger desk - 1-800-424-8550.

## **BU/FON Chewable Vitamins Campaign**

**- Project Update/June 2000 -**

### **Third Shipment Heads for Niger in July**

In early May, Sue Rosenfeld - Boston U's staff person in Niamey and the person whose initiative led to the creation of this project - returned to Niger carrying the second shipment of children's chewable multivitamins purchased with donations to this project.

The shipment was a bit larger than the 13,520 tablet shipment carried by Chris Zoolkoski last December. As with the December shipment, the tablets were divided between the Pediatrics Ward of the National Hospital in Niamey and the SIM Hospital in Galmi, near Madaoua.

The next shipment is scheduled for July of this year - when Sue again makes the round trip between Niamey and the States. Financial contributions, in checks or money orders, should be made out to **Friends of Niger** and sent to: **Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger**

**P.O. Box 33164**

**Washington, D.C. 20033-0164**

As always, all contributions will be earmarked for the bulk purchase of chewables.

## **From the Creative Responses Department**

As reported above, many individuals have been generous with their financial donation to the BU?FON chewable multi-vitamin campaign.

Since the joint program began last fall, a number of individuals have taken initiatives of their own - to either raise funds or collect bottles of vitamins. These initiatives have added significantly to the overall amount of resources that the campaign has generated.

**Natasha Copeland**, a graduate student working at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, "sent an email out to the Africa email list ... so that anyone ... with an interest in Africa, from any department, could donate. I left a box at the French department office (where I am working on my PhD in contemporary Sahelian literature), explained what was needed, and sent out one reminder notice..." When Sue Rosenfeld arrived in Charlottesville, Natasha was waiting with a large bag filled with bottles of vitamins.

**Julie Doughty** teaches World History at Highline High School in Burien, WA. Julie recommended the campaign to her tenth grade class who "were very enthusiastic in their response." Result another couple thousand vitamins. Julie is heading for Niger in August as the Resident Assistant for the BU/Niger program.

**Laurel Branstrator** put the same idea to her church youth group and they raised \$250 for the campaign. *Three ideas - thousands of vitamins for kids in Niger!!.*

## Dr. Degbey Thanks FON & Individual Contributors

### French

Niamey le 24 05 00  
Hopital National de Niamey  
Service de Pédiatrie A  
Docteur Herbert DEGBEY

Monsieur Jim Schneider

Monsieur

Je voudrais vous remercier au nom de tous les enfants des services de Pédiatrie de l'hôpital de Niamey, pour le don en vitamines que votre association vient de faire. C'est un geste que nous apprécions beaucoup étant donné le très grand dénuement dans lequel se trouve notre hôpital.

Je voudrais tout particulièrement remercier Mademoiselle Julie Daughty dite Agaisha qui enseigne dans l'état de Washington, et Madame Natasha Copeland du département de Français à l'université de Virginie.

Salutations sincères.

Docteur Herbert DEGBEY

### English

Niamey 24 05 00  
National Hospital of Niamey  
Pediatriy Service  
Doctor Herbert DEGBEY

Mr Jim Schneider

Sir, I would like to thank you on behalf of all the children in the Pediatriy Service of the Hospital of Niamey, for the gift of vitamins which your association has just made. It is a gesture which we appreciate much being given the very great destitution in which is our hospital.

I would like particularly to thank Miss Julie Daughty known as Agaisha who teaches in the state of Washington, and Mrs Natasha Copeland for the French department at the university of Virginia.

Sincere greetings.

Doctor Herbert Degbey

## UNICEF Signs Protocol with Association of Traditional Chiefs in Niger

Earlier this year, an historical Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Association of Traditional Chiefs in Niger (ATCN).

The overall goal of the accord is to commit both parties to collaboration related to "the survival, protection, and development of the child and woman."

The chiefs specifically undertake to "use all of the communication resources given to them to inform, sensitize and stimulate behavioral change, in order to promote: basic education, especially for girls; actions in the interest of children's and mothers' health, notably observed in the reduced level of mortality and particularly in child immunization; and, the



target campaigns on certain diseases such as malaria, mumps, and STD/AIDS."

- translation provided by UNICEF Niger.

# Niger Launches Campaign to Eradicate Polio by End of this Year

In mid-June, Niger began the second phase of an ambitious, four-part campaign the primary objective of which is to eradicate polio from Niger by the end of the year 2000.

The first phase- carried out between May 19-23 - was highly successful in its attempt to vaccinate all children five years of age and under. Phase two (June 16-20) aims to distribute vitamin A tablets to all children 6 months to five years of age and to 75% of lactating women, as well as to distribute iron tablets to 75% of pregnant women.

The third and fourth phases, set for the months of October and November 2000, will involve additional steps aimed, according to UNICEF Niger, to "interrupt, indefinitely, the transmission of the polio virus."

In commenting on the success of phase one, UNICEF Niger staff person Julie Burke said "it was the involvement of the government, religious leaders, traditional chiefs, and development organizations, which made this first phase a success."

The tone for this collaborative effort was set by the National Assembly which unanimously declared the first National Immunization Day (NID) to be a national holiday.

President Mamadou Tandja initiated the NID by beginning the house-to-house vaccination campaign; religious leaders preached the need for polio vaccinations; the traditional chiefs helped alleviate problems that have plagued volunteer vaccination teams in the past - such as families not allowing male and female teams into the compound, because of the mix of both sexes. Other features of the campaign have included the use of town criers to pass along messages and the use of public, private and international radio and television spots.

The National Inter-Agencies Coordination Committee for the campaign includes UNICEF, WHO, Helen Keller International and Rotary International.

UNICEF has expressed an interest in an active campaign role for **Friends of Niger**. Details of an active **FON** involvement in phases three and four are under discussion and will be announced by early fall.

## Meningitis Epidemic Hits Niger FON Helps UNICEF Respond to Vaccine Shortage

Reports in March of a cerebro-spinal meningitis outbreak in Niger were later confirmed by data released in April by Niger's Ministry of Public Health and forwarded to Friends of Niger by UNICEF Niger. Those reports suggested that the outbreak had reached national epidemic proportions, with the capital city of Niamey and nine neighboring health districts being the hardest hit. Subsequently the epidemic spread east, eventually striking close to 900 people with a mortality rate of over 8%.

UNICEF Niger teamed up with the Ministry of Public Health, WHO, French Cooperation, Belgian Cooperation, GTZ and the Muslim Association of West Africa to define needs and to respond. The original estimates - which called for one million doses of meningitis vaccine as well as syringes and chloramphenicol - were found to be short and additional funds were needed for the purchase of these supplies and to cover the cost of the social mobilization necessary in order to successfully carry out the immunization program.

**FON** worked with Mary Roodkowsky, Director of UNICEF Niger, and Julie Burke, former PCV and current UNICEF staff

person in Niger, in an effort to set up a facility at the New York office of UNICEF which would receive contributions intended to go specifically to the purchase of vaccine and related supplies intended for the immunization campaign in Niger.

At the same time, FON launched an appeal for financial contributions via e-mail and web posting (<http://www.friendsofniger.org>). Donations received have been set aside and will be passed along as soon as UNICEF finishes putting in place the facility referred to above.

Since then, FON and UNICEF have begun discussion concerning an active role for FON in the polio immunization campaign currently underway in Niger (see article above).

## Nomad Foundation Sponsors US Tour for Group Tidawt



Leslie Clark is a painter who spends several months every year in Niger, mostly with the Wodaabe and Tuareg nomads--painting them. She and the Nomad Foundation, a non-profit organization founded by Clark and dedicated to the preservation of African cultural and artictic traditions, are sponsoring a U.S. tour by four Tuareg musicians .

The musicians, known as Group Tidawt, will perform in Ojai and Santa Barbara, California as well as in Cave Creek, Arizona and Washington, DC between July 14 and August 12. In addition to their live performances, the trip will give the musicians access to recording facilities and afford them the opportunity to collaborate with North American musicians. The visit will also allow the group to build support for a fund designed to help the Tuareg community with efforts to rehabilitate in the week of the rebellion of the past ten years.



The basic schedule of appearances is as follows:

July 14 - Ojai, California  
July 22 - Cave Creek, Arizona  
July 27 - Santa Barbara, California  
July 29 - Ojai, California  
July 30 - Ojai, California  
August 1- Ventura, California  
August 5 - Ojai, California  
August 12 - Washington, D.C.

For more information on location and costs related to the various tour appearances contact Leslie Clark at [leslie@nomadgal.com](mailto:leslie@nomadgal.com) or visit her website at <http://www.africasart.com>.

A visit to the website will also provide detail regarding the projects of the Nomad Foundation as well as a view of Leslie's extraordinary artistic achievements - two of which are reproduced above (*Indigo* at the top and *Desert Crossing*).

## FON Archive Project Off to Great Start

According to FON Recording Secretary John Soloninka, the organization's archival project is off to a great start. Major donations - in the form of photographs, slides, audio tapes, correspondence and newspaper clippings have been received from Geraldine St. Onge (1966-68), Ken Gibbs (1973-74) and former US Ambassador to Niger Robert J. Ryan (1964-68).

The collection will be stored on CD's as well as in albums and made available for reunions and other events (including the much anticipated FON Reunion 2001 in Washington, D.C. next summer - see story above). Some of the material will eventually be accessible from the FON website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org>.

# Free Donations & Other FON Website Changes and Additions

1. Click on the button at the top of the left-hand column on the **FON** home page, or click on the On Line Donations link which can be found further down the left-hand column under Other Great Links. Either action will take you to a page with information on how you can contribute - free - every day - to a number of humanitarian causes related to world hunger, refugees, the ecology, the homeless, etc.
2. Click on the little goldfish near the top of the right-hand column, and the content of the page will be translated - more or less accurately - into French. Our webmaster, Jai Evans, is working on an even better service. This one is passable and at least allows French-speaking people to get a better idea of what we are trying to say.
3. Patrick Thomas' site, with its focus on recyclable African tools, has been added to RPCV Pages, which can also be found along the left-hand column.
4. Further yet down the left-hand column - under fOn-Line - check out the latest messages on the **FON** Bulletin Board. Post a message yourself.

**All this & Much, Much More at - <http://www.friendsofniger.org>!!**

5. Check out the revised NPCA website at <http://www.rpcv.org>.
6. New Niger sites include the Rotaract Club of Niamey at - <http://www.gsi-niger.com/rotaract/> and the National Museum of Niger (go to - <http://www.cfn.ne/> and click on "musée").

## Credits and Other Information

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed with the contributions of Jai Evans, Jim Schneider, Sue Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jane Bonin, Sue Rosenfeld, Chris Zoolkoski, Julie Burke, Natasha Copeland, Julie Doughty, Leslie Clark, Gaston Kaba, Carrie Regan, Penni St. Hilaire, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff and Maria Mar. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses above.

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

**FON** can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164;

by e-mail at [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com); and you will find **FON** on the web at the following Internet

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

# Board of Directors Friends of Niger

\*

Jim Schneider, President  
& Editor

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Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President

\*

John Soloninka, Recording Secretary

\*

Larry Koff, Treasurer

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# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

August 2000

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## **FON Joins UNICEF & Others in NIDs Campaign to Eradicate Polio in Niger**

Discussions last month between Friends of Niger and representatives of UNICEF Niger - and subsequently between Isselmou Boukhary of UNICEF Niger and Niger's Ministry of Health - have resulted in agreement regarding a specific role for FON in Phases III and IV of Niger's National Immunization Days (NID) campaign.

FON has been asked to assist with funding related to campaign activities which focus on reaching Niger's highly mobile nomadic population during their annual gatherings primarily in the north of Niger. Phases III and IV of the campaign will take place in October and November of this year.

The NID campaign has as its goal, the eradication of polio in Niger before the end of the year 2000, by vaccinating all children 0-5 years of age. Phases I and II took place in March and June of this year. Indications from Niger are that 100% of the polio vaccine target populations were reached and that these phases were also highly successful in terms of their secondary goal of distributing vitamin A to breastfeeding women.

Those involved in the NID effort include the Government of Niger, The Association of Traditional Chiefs of Niger (ACTN), UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International and Helen Keller International (HKI). The participation of Friends of Niger is via UNICEF.

According to Julie Burke of UNICEF Niger, "We feel that Friends of Niger could be of vital importance to the success of the National Immunization Day campaign and are looking forward to further collaboration on this matter."

### **FON Launches Appeal for Donations**

With this announcement, Friends of Niger is launching an appeal for donations to the NID campaign against polio. Contributions should be made payable to Friends of Niger and sent to:

**NID**

**Polio**  
**c/o Friends of Niger**  
**P.O. Box 33164**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**20033-0164**

## **The Camel Express Receives Newsletter Awards at National Peace Corps Association Annual Meeting**

When Friends of Niger President Jim Schneider attended the Awards Dinner at the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) Annual General Meeting last month, he was looking forward to a pleasant evening and received a pleasant surprise as well.

The Camel Express, newsletter of the Friends of Niger and edited by Schneider, was recognized by NPCA with the first place award for Newsletter Design. FON also tied the Friends of Burkina Faso (FOBF) for the second place award for Editorial Content. FOBK President Bob Osborne and newsletter editor Denny Fitzpatrick were also in attendance at the meetings which took place at Shawnee-on-the-Lake, Pennsylvania.

## **Haoua Diatta Launches New Book at Reception in Washington**

Haoua Diatta launched her new book - **Shadow of Africa: Life of an African Ambassador's Wife** - at a reception/book signing on August 27 in Washington, D.C. The book is described as a "first hand glimpse into contemporary African culture and a rich reservoir of stories and images about African folklore and history."

Madame Diatta is the spouse of Joseph Diatta, Niger's Ambassador to the United States.

## ***The Graduate School Guide* Now Available through Returned Volunteer Services**

The Peace Corps recently announced the release of its publication, *The Graduate School Guide*. Formerly entitled the *Continuing Education Guide*, the work "highlights the latest education resources available for returned Peace Corps Volunteers around the world." The publication includes information regarding programs that offer special consideration to RPCVs and includes the latest information on the Fellows/USA Program and other educational opportunities and services.

RPCVs interested in obtaining a copy of the guide should send their request on a 3x5 or larger card (including name, U.S. address, and COS date) to: **The Peace Corps, 1111 20th Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20526.**

# The Camel Express



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October 2000

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## Message from the President

Greetings to each of you. Hopefully this message finds you well.

As I write this, I can't help but be drawn to the beautiful scene that is visible from the window in my work room. The leaves of the trees seem to change color before my eyes. But almost as they change color, virtually as they reach the height of their beauty, they die and fall to the ground. Part of the cycle of the seasons. A cycle that I reluctantly accept - not being much of a winter person - knowing as I do, that each autumn is part of a longer process that leads to renewal and rebirth each spring.

Not all cycles lead to renewal or rebirth; nor do all cycles lend themselves so readily to the sustenance of hope. This is the case with polio, transmitted in annual cycles to countless children around the world, including many in Niger.

In Niger, the ray of hope can be seen not within the cycle, but in the national effort to eradicate polio by the end of this year. As you can see from the story below, early stages of the effort have been successful. You will also see how you can help. And in a departure from my normal practice, I want to encourage you to be financially supportive if it is at all possible. Imagine Niger's children polio free. And please remember all of it counts, or none of it does.

In that context, I want to thank all of you who gave so generously to the campaign earlier this year to respond to Niger's meningitis epidemic and to those of you who continue to support the FON/BU chewable vitamin project.

Elsewhere in this issue, you will find Jim Bullington's first column (*Inside Peace Corps Niger*) and Jane Bonin's

farewell; information on how you can get your hands on one or more of **FON's** beautiful new T-shirts ; updates on ***FON Reunion 2001: A Celebration of Niger*** and on ***Return to Niger 2002***; and much, much more.

Regarding next year's reunion and the projected trip to Niger the year after that - a personal note. While I have tried to get back to each and every person who has responded to our call for input and ideas, I know that from time to time I have fallen a bit behind. Please don't give up on me. I will get back to you. And please believe that your responses are not only appreciated, they are important. Keep them coming.

Pentultimately, this issue also kicks off the 2001 FON membership drive. It looks as if we will end the 2000 membership year somewhere in the vicinity of 225 members, maybe a few less. To each of you who has formally joined **FON**, our very sincere thanks. To each of you who didn't quite get around to doing that - please jump on the camel express this year (see **FON 2001 Membership & Order Form** below for details).

Enjoy the newsletter and please stay in contact.

Jim Schneider, President

## ***Introducing - Friends of Niger T-Shirts You're gonna love this T-Shirt!!***

Based on a design originally created by our neighbors at Friends of Burkina Faso, **FON** had produced its first shirts in plenty of time to meet holiday gift giving needs. The short-sleeved shirts are 100% cotton, pre-shrunk beefy-T, natural muslin-colored fabric. The design (above) is four color: brown, black and the orange and green of the flag of Niger. You'll notice a nifty proximity map of Niger within the map of Africa which appears in the branches of the baobab tree. The shirts are available in Medium, Large and Extra Large sizes and sell for \$18 each, shipping included. Use the **FON Membership & Order Form** or send a check made out to Friends of Niger (indicating the number of shirts by size), along with your name and address to: **Shirts. c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**

<b>You're Gonna Love This T-Shirt</b>		
<b>Available in 3 Sizes</b>		<b>Makes a Great Gift!!</b>
<b>- M, L, XL</b>		<b>It'll Look Good on You as Well!!</b>

***... and the International Calendar 2001  
from RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison***

**And this Calendar as well!!**

Since 1987 the RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison have been producing and distributing one of the finest quality calendars on the market - the **International Calendar**. This year the calendar is available through **Friends of Niger**. The calendar is open size, 12 1/4" x 18 3/4", features 13 color photos along with information from past and present Peace Corps service countries, and is printed with soy-based ink on recycled paper. Each day of the year is annotated with holiday and event information; each month includes information on lunar and celestial



events; and each photo is complimented by material related to the country portrayed. A photo of the Maradi Grand Marché graces the month of September courtesy of Tori Paide (Niger RPCV '94-'96). The calendars are priced at \$12 each, shipping included. Use the **FON Membership & Order Form** on page 9 or send a check made out to Friends of Niger, along with your name and address to: **Calendars, c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**



Cover  
Photo  
-2001



**International Calendar**

**Tori Paide Photo**

**September 2001 Grand Marché**

**- Maradi**



## **INSIDE PEACE CORPS NIGER**



Dear Friends of Niger,

My initial impression after two weeks in Niger is simple and straightforward: This must be the best Peace Corps program in the world! I've been highly impressed by the staff, the facilities, the support from the Nigerien government and people, and most of all by the quality of the Volunteers I've met. Their enthusiasm is contagious; their dedication is inspiring.

The excellence of this program is the result of Jane Bonin's outstanding leadership over the past four years combined with the hard work of a first-class staff and great Volunteers, both those who are here today and all those who have gone before. My challenge is to keep the program functioning at this level, and if possible to take it even higher.

In the immortal words of Calvin Coolidge, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." This program certainly ain't broke," and I have no intention of setting out to fix it. That doesn't mean, however, that there won't be changes. The pace of change in the world today, even in Niger, is increasingly fast, and if we don't adapt to meet new challenges and new opportunities, we'll soon be left behind. Also, there may be some things we're doing now that could be done even better.

Although I've had considerable experience working in developing (in some cases, undeveloping) countries of Africa and Asia, I'm new to Niger and to the Peace Corps. My first priority, then, is to learn. After a few more days to get myself and family settled and to meet some of our Nigerien government hosts and partner agencies, I plan to spend much of my time outside Niamey visiting Volunteers at their sites, learning about them and from them, and listening to their ideas and plans and problems. Later this month, I expect to travel to Agadez for a COS conference, to visit Volunteers in the region, and to explore potential new programming opportunities. Over the course of the next few months, I hope to meet with all the Volunteers at their sites.

In spite of the valiant efforts of more than 2600 PCVs who have served in Niger, and the hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign assistance provided by many donors, according to a recent World Bank study the people of Niger are even poorer today than they were three decades ago. And a UN-produced poverty index," which measures both income and a series of social indicators, ranks Niger 173 out of 174 countries in the world. (Sierra Leone is 174.) All the indicators remain grim: life expectancy 47; infant mortality rate 123/1000; adult literacy 14%; only 800 km of paved road for a country nearly twice the size of Texas; and the list goes on and on.

Why has Niger failed to develop? There's no single answer, but only a list of contributing causes: the terrible drought of the 70s; the collapse of uranium prices in the 80s; political instability in the 90s; creeping desertification for decades; and this list too could go on and on. Whatever the causes, the challenges remain daunting.

I'm fortunate, however, to arrive at a time of renewed hope on the part of the Nigerien people and the foreign donor community. The new government that came to power as a result of last November's free and fair election is off to a promising start. Stability and peace have been restored. Donors are again interested in beginning new projects and are again searching, along with the government, for new answers to the development puzzle. When President Clinton visited Nigeria last month, President Tandja traveled to Abuja (the new Nigerian capital) for a meeting with him that lasted over two hours and was described as cordial and productive. Overall US-Nigerien relations are currently very warm, and Peace Corps is highly regarded by the people and government alike.

Eventually, I hope this renewed optimism and our strengthened bilateral ties will translate into growth for the Peace Corps program here. For the new fiscal year beginning October 1, however, it looks as though we will be hard-pressed to maintain the current number of Volunteers and level of Volunteer support.

Such development challenges and financial constraints are of course not new. Peace Corps has long ago learned to press on and take pride and satisfaction in the day-to-day triumphs the Volunteers achieve at the village level. We are candle-lighters, not darkness-cursors.

I'm more than happy - I'm absolutely delighted - to be in Niger and to have the opportunity to lead and serve the Peace Corps program and our Volunteers here. I welcome the support of Friends of Niger in promoting Peace Corps' three goals in this most interesting country.

**Jim Bullington**  
**Country Director**  
**Niger**

## **Message from Jane Bonin**

### **Greetings, Friends of Niger!**

I wanted to take this opportunity to salute all of you and to let you know that I'm back. My last day as Directrice was Sept 2. I'm back in Washington, moving back into my apartment tomorrow, and interviewing for a job at the same time. If I'm lucky, I will continue working with young people who are committed to enhancing their skills so they can make a bigger difference in the world.

I was content to leave the program in Niger in Jim Bullington's capable hands. I predict that he will be a really good director. He's solid, knowledgeable about Africa, and eager to get his hands around the job.

Working with Peace Corps has been one of the high points of my professional life. It is, as all of you know, an organization unlike any other, with a spirit that's hard to define in words but one that a person can pick up instantly, both from currently serving PCVs and from veterans as well.

To those of you that I have met, I hope we can stay in touch, at least via email. To those of you that share the bond of loving Niger and the Nigerien people, congratulations on your good works, whenever it was, and good luck. La vie continue!

**Sincerely,**  
**Jane Bonin**

**BU/FON Chewable Vitamins Campaign  
- Project Up-date/October 2000 -**

As reported in the last issue of *The Camel Express*, the third shipment of children's chewable multivitamins - purchased with donations to this Boston University/Friends of Niger project - was carried back to Niger in late July by Sue Rosenfeld. Sue is a member of FON and a long time resident of Niamey, where she is the BU staff person.

While the third shipment was smaller than the first two, donations continue to come in. The Board of Directors of FON has decided to treat the project as on-going. All contributions will be earmarked for the bulk purchase of chewables which will, in turn, be sent along to Niger. The vitamins are divided between the Pediatrics Ward of the National Hospital in Niamey and the SIM Hospital in Galmi.

Financial contributions, in checks or money orders, should be made out to **Friends of Niger** and sent to: **Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, D.C. 20033-0164**

**From the Creative Responses Department**

Andrew Younger is a freelance producer/journalist who works out of Prince Edward Island, Canada. Under contract to Canada's Vision TV network, Younger was seeking information on Niger before making a trip there to do a story on Etruscan Resources Limited - a Canadian gold mining company headquartered in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

He found FON on the web and had an exchange with FON President Jim Schneider. In the process, Jim persuaded Andrew that, since he was going to Niger anyway, he should do a story on the BU/FON project - "a great example of a people-to-people initiative." Younger, in turn, convinced Vision that the idea was worth pursuing and is in the process of getting footage at the National Hospital and at Galmi. The feature is due to air this winter.

Before going, Younger convinced several pharmaceutical chains to donate to the project, then filled all the loose spaces in his baggage and in that of his cameraman with bottles of chewables.

## **FON Joins UNICEF & Others in NIDs Campaign to Eradicate Polio in Niger**



Discussions last month between Friends of Niger and representatives of UNICEF Niger - and subsequently between Isselmou Boukhary of UNICEF Niger and Niger's Ministry of Health - have resulted in agreement regarding a specific role for FON in Phases III and IV of Niger's National Immunization Days (NID) campaign.

FON has been asked to assist with funding related to campaign activities which focus on reaching Niger's highly mobile nomadic population during their annual gatherings primarily in the north of Niger. Phases III and IV of

the campaign will take place in October and November of this year.

The NID campaign has as its goal, the eradication of polio in Niger before the end of the year 2000. by vaccinating all children 0-5 years of age. Phases I and II took place in March and June of this year. Indications from Niger are that 100% of the polio vaccine target populations were reached and that these phases were also highly successful in terms of their secondary goal of distributing vitamin A to breastfeeding women.

Those involved in the NID effort include the Government of Niger, The Association of Traditional Chiefs of Niger (ACTN), UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International and Helen Keller International (HKI). The participation of Friends of Niger is via UNICEF.

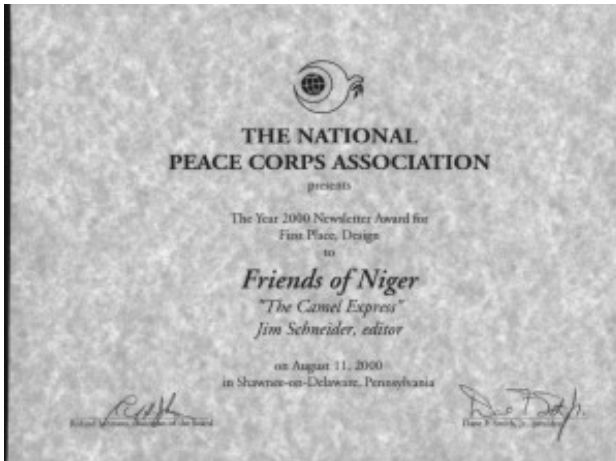
According to Julie Burke of UNICEF Niger, "We feel that Friends of Niger could be of vital importance to the success of the National Immunization Day campaign and are looking forward to further collaboration on this matter."

### **FON Launches Appeal**

With this announcement, Friends of Niger is launching an appeal for donations to the NID campaign against polio. Contributions should be made payable to Friends of Niger and sent to:

**NID; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, D.C.20033-0164**

## **The Camel Express Takes First and Second at NPCA**



### **Newsletter Awards Ceremony**

When Friends of Niger President Jim Schneider attended the Awards Dinner at the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) Annual General Meeting in August he was looking forward to a pleasant evening and received a pleasant surprise as well.

The Camel Express, newsletter of the Friends of Niger and edited by Schneider, was recognized by NPCA with the first place award for Newsletter Design. FON also tied the Friends of Burkina Faso (FBF) for the second place award for Editorial Content. FBF President Bob Osborne and FBF newsletter editor Denny Fitzpatrick were also in attendance at the meetings which took

place at Shawnee-on-the-Delaware, Pennsylvania.

## **FON Reunion 2001: A Celebration of Niger**

### **Target Dates Tentatively Set for Niger's Independence Day Weekend in August**

The **Friends of Niger Reunion 2001** has now been given a thematic designation and is being called *A Celebration of Niger*. This name is intended to reinforce the hope of FON's Board of Directors that next year's

event involve Niger's Embassy as well as the Nigerien community in Washington, D. C. - the site of the reunion.

On a recent trip to D. C., FON President Jim Schneider met with Mr. Joseph Diatta, Niger's Ambassador to the United States. Mr. Diatta expressed support for the reunion and has agreed to work closely with FON on the organization of the event.

FON's Board has tentatively scheduled *A Celebration of Niger* for the weekend of August 3-5, 2001. August 3 is Niger's Independence Day and a national holiday in Niger itself.

Tentative plans call for social gatherings on the nights of August 4 and August 5; exhibits and displays which highlight Niger, its culture, and the activities of FON - archives, multi-media shows, etc.; films from Niger; Peace Corps and NPCA material; readings by authors of books on Niger and by RPCV Niger authors; as well as events related to the nation's capitol - such as a memorial service at the John F. Kennedy grave site. Additional information regarding alternative accommodation and other details will be released via the FON web site - <http://www.friendsofniger.org> - and the next issue of *The Camel Express*.

The theme of the reunion, according to Schneider is "a celebration of Niger and its people as well as of our time in Niger and our experiences while we were there. We are hoping that people who care about Niger - and who fondly remember each other and the time that they spent in Niger - will bring their families, their photos, their scrapbooks and help make the weekend a very special occasion."

## 2002 Trip to Niger Sparks Interest & Ideas

### - 40 Years of Peace Corps in Niger -

The last issue of *The Camel Express* carried a brief announcement of FON's plan to sponsor a trip back to Niger in the year 2002 - for many reasons, including the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Peace Corps presence in Niger.

That brief announcement has stimulated considerable response from people interested in participating in such a trip - in some cases along with members of their family: spouses, parents, children. The amount of interest expressed at such an early date, means that the trip is now a likelihood.

When the trip first went onto the FON drawingboard, it was assumed that most everyone interested in the trip would be primarily attracted to the idea of returning to the community in which they served. While this is, indeed, true for many - others have expressed interest in two other kinds of activity or itinerary.

Some - especially those who served in the earlier years and who lived in the larger urban areas like Niamey - have expressed an interest in visiting locations that they were never able to get to before, like Agadez - for example. Others have expressed an interest in being involved in some manner of 'work project.'

Because of these and other inputs the Board will now be 'exploring' a wider range of potential activities. Both the timing of the trip, the content of the trip itinerary, and trip options are still open to input from anyone who might be interested. The current plan is to take the process to a second phase - involving research on more specific details regarding timing, content and cost - this coming winter.

Meanwhile, early and very tentative discussions have begun with Peace Corps Niger.

Please continue to send input, comments or questions to **Jim Schneider**. Jim is most easily reached at either his e-mail address - [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com) - or by telephone - **819-827-4870**. He can also be reached by surface mail at the FON address (see page 2).

# Niger PCVs Organize HIV/AIDS Bike-a-Thon

On November 11, members of Niger's Club du Cyclisme along with some 50 of Niger's Peace Corps contingent will begin a 520 kilometer, eight-day bike-a-thon. The objective - to build awareness regarding HIV/AIDS: how it is transmitted, how people can protect themselves against the disease, and how people can educate others about the disease.

The bike ride will follow two routes through high risk HIV/AIDS areas. Zarma speaking participants will start in Tillabery and end in Dosso, while Hausa speaking participants will begin in Konni and also finish in Dosso. Riders will bike all day, hold education sessions in roadside villages each evening, and sleep in the villages at night. The bike-a-thon is scheduled to end on November 18 with a celebration in Dosso.

## Joe Gallegos

*The message below was posted by Chris Fabian (Niger 90-93) to the Bulletin Board at the FON web site. It is reproduced exactly as submitted - Jim Schneider*

Danny Gallegos (Joe's brother) wanted to let friends of Joe and Laura's know of Joe's unfortunate passing. Danny submitted this note:

Joe Gallegos, RPCV Niger ('86-'89) passed away on Sept. 28th, 2000. He touched the hearts of nearly all he met; and will be remembered for his kindness, generosity and boundless love of life. He is survived by his wife, Laura and his son, Andre.

Laura and Andre can be contacted at [laurawhitefeather@yahoo.com](mailto:laurawhitefeather@yahoo.com) or 65 Columbine Rd., P.O. Box 1524, Idaho Springs, CO, 80452-9998.

## Haoua Diatta Launches New Book at Reception in Washington



Haoua Diatta launched her new book - **Shadow of Africa: Life of an African Ambassador's Wife** - at a reception/book signing on August 27 in Washington, D.C. The book is described as a "first hand glimpse into contemporary African culture and a rich reservoir of stories and images about African folklore and history."

Madame Diatta is the spouse of Joseph Diatta, Niger's Ambassador to the United States.

The publisher is Alpha Publishing Company (Joseph Tucker), Springfield, Virginia. The book may be ordered from the author. Send \$23.95 (includes shipping & handling) to Shadow of Africa; c/o Mrs. Haoua Diatta; 3900 Argyle Terrace, NW, Washington, DC

20011.

Proceeds from the book will benefit MICA, Inc., (the Oxcart Project) a nonprofit NGO, tax deductible organization.

## People Changes at Peace Corps

Dan Reilly is the new Country Desk Officer responsible for Niger at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington.

Dan replaced Marjorie Copson who has gone to Accra as the PC Administrative Officer in Ghana.

Leanne Johnson remains the Country Desk Assistant for Niger. Dan and Leanne also work with Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauretania.

## ***The Graduate School Guide Now Available thru Peace Corps DC***

The Peace Corps recently announced the release of its publication, The Graduate School Guide. Formerly entitled the Continuing Education Guide, the work "highlights the latest education resources available for returned Peace Corps Volunteers around the world." The publication includes information regarding programs that offer special consideration to RPCVs and includes the latest information on the Fellows/USA Program and other educational opportunities and services.

RPCVs interested in obtaining a copy of the guide should send their request on a 3x5 or larger card (including name, U.S. address, and COS date) to: Peace Corps, 1111 20th Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20526.

## **FON Board Extends Free Membership to Peace Corps Volunteers in Niger**

Beginning with the 2001 FON membership year, the Board of Directors of Friends of Niger has decided to extend free membership to all current Niger Peace Corps Volunteers. At present, Niger's returned Peace Corps Volunteers are given one free year of membership upon completion of service. This practice will continue.

The number of Peace Corps Volunteers in Niger is currently 110, with approximately 20 scheduled to COS in late December of this year. A month later, in January 2001, 56 new volunteers will head for Niger.

## **FRIENDS OF NIGER**

### **2001 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM**

**Name(s)**

---

**Address**

---

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

**Zip** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (w)** \_\_\_\_\_

**E- Mail Address**

---

**Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.)**

---

**Dates in Niger** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location in Niger** \_\_\_\_\_

## Program or Involvement in Niger

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\*\*\*\*\*

*Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund FON Activities, including The Camel Express*

\*\*\*\*\*

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

- Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON
  - \$45 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA
  - Enclosed is \$35 for a Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)
  - \$67.50 to cover Family Membership in both FON & NPCA
  - I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership
  - Please send me a Copy of FON's Bylaws (Members Only)
  - In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
  - Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
  - Please send \_\_\_\_\_ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$18 each (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_
- T-Shirt Sizes: M \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_\_\_ Year 2001 Internation Calendars at \$12 each (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_

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

\*\*\*\*\*

Make Check or Money Order Payable to **Friends of Niger** and mail to:

**P. O. Box 33164, Washington, D. C. 20033-0164**

(Please Enclose Membership Form)

### ***FON Participaction Menu***

Indicate your interest with a check mark. Or add something new at the bottom. Tell us how to reach you on the **Friends of Niger 2001 Membership & Order Form** (see above).

- × \_\_\_ Will help set up local FON group
- × \_\_\_ Would participate in local FON group
- × \_\_\_ Reunion 2001 in Washington, D.C.
- × \_\_\_ Trip back to Niger in 2002
- × \_\_\_ Will be local FON contact person
- × \_\_\_ Will help with BU/FON Vitamin Campaign

***Other*** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Credits and Other Information**



This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed via hardcopy, e-mail and website posting with the contributions Sue Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jim Bullington, Jane Bonin, Sue Rosenfeld, Jai Evans, Don Bracken, Julia Burke, Carrie Regan, Penni St. Hilaire, Tori Paide, Meghan Maguire, Andrew Younger, Chris Fabian, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff and our friends from Friends of Burkina Faso and from RPCVs of Madison, Wisconsin Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses below.

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

FON can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164;  
by e-mail at [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com); and you will find FON on the web at the following Internet  
address  
[www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org).

## **Board of Directors Friends of Niger**

\*

Jim Schneider, President  
& Editor

\*

Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President

\*

John Soloninka, Recording Secretary

\*

Larry Koff, Treasurer

\*

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

December 2000

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- [Introducing FON T-Shirts](#)  
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## Peace Corps Bike-a-Thon is Huge Success 20,000 Villagers Reached with HIV/AIDS Message



- photo compliments of Jim Bullington -

- extracted from a report by Jim Bullington, PC Country Director, Niger -

The PC/Niger HIV/AIDS bike-a-thon November 11-18 was a huge success, exceeding even Peace Corps/Niger's high expectations. Some 20,000 people in 64 rural villages along Niger's principal highway heard

the HIV/AIDS prevention message, many of them for the first time. Government and partner agencies were pleased with the results.

The HIV/AIDS bike-a-thon was conceived, organized and led by three PC Niger Volunteers - Carrie Allen, Elisa Bosque-Oliva, and Laura Stevens. The PC/Niger staff provided advice, encouragement and logistic support; but it was very much the Volunteers' show from start to finish.

Two groups of Volunteers set out on November 11 to ride along the principal east-west highway through the most populous area of Niger. One group of 17 Hausa speakers rode west from Konni through Hausa villages, and another group of 19 Zarma speakers road east from Tillabery through Zarma villages. The two groups met in Dosso on November 18. Each leg of the tour was approximately 300 km.

Both groups were accompanied by skilled male and female "animateurs" provided by CARE, who presented the HIV/AIDS message. PC Volunteers provided back-up and participated in the presentations as a sort of Greek chorus, showing pictures and demonstrating condom use as well as delivering part of the message in Hausa or Zarma. They also passed out a supply of condoms (donated by Lux Development) to each village.

At the end of the bike-a-thon, November 18 in Dosso, the Volunteers organized a dinner attended by local and national Nigerien officials and partner agency representatives as well as US Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick and PC Niger Director Bullington.

FON hopes to play a more active support role in any future HIV/AIDS bike-a-thon.

## *Introducing - Friends of Niger T-Shirts You're gonna love this T-Shirt!!*

Based on a design originally created by our neighbors at Friends of Burkina Faso, FON had produced its first shirts in plenty of time to meet holiday gift giving needs. The short-sleeved shirts are 100% cotton, pre-shrunk beefy-T, natural muslin-colored fabric. The design (above) is four color: brown, black and the orange and green of the flag of Niger. You'll notice a nifty proximity map of Niger within the map of Africa which appears in the branches of the baobab tree. The shirts are available in Medium, Large and Extra Large sizes and sell for \$18 each, shipping included. Use the **FON Membership & Order Form** or send a check made out to Friends of Niger (indicating the number of shirts by size), along with your name and address to: **Shirts. c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**

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**And this Calendar as well!!**

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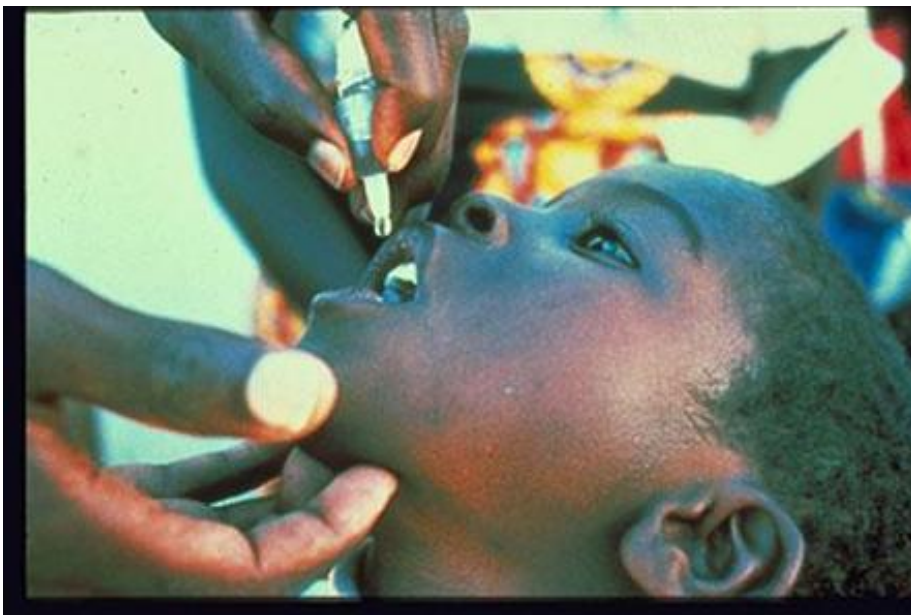
**International Calendar**

**Tori Paide Photo**

**September 2001 Grand Marché**

**- Maradi**

**Appeal & Campaign Updates  
FON/UNICEF Polio Appeal  
Nets Generous Response**



With a few donations still arriving, responses to the Friends of Niger appeal for financial contributions to Niger's National Immunization Days campaign to eradicate polio have topped the \$3000 mark. This makes the polio (NID) appeal the most successful of FON's several appeals during the year 2000.

While the polio campaign is officially over - for the year 2000 - and final results from Niger are still incomplete, any NID or polio contributions that arrive in the future will be set aside and specifically earmarked for future immunization activities in Niger - whether UNICEF or other. For more details regarding the campaign, see past

articles from the October 2000 edition of **The Camel Express**, available via the newsletter's archives at the FON website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org>.

## **Chewable Vitamin Campaign Continues to Receive Support**

Friends of Niger continues to receive donations for the purchase of children's chewable multivitamins. As before, these donations are used for the periodic bulk purchase of vitamins as part of the FON/Boston University project which began last year. The vitamins are then carried to Niger and passed along to BU's Resident Director in Niamey - Sue Rosenfeld. Sue, in turn, makes sure that the vitamins are forwarded to the National Hospital in Niamey and to the SIM Hospital at Galmi, near Madaoua.

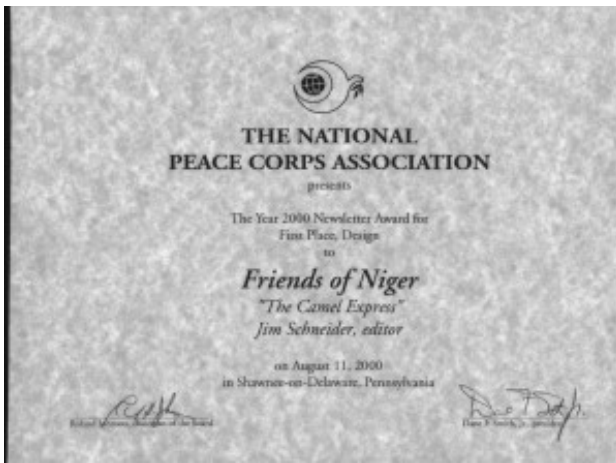
Financial contributions should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to:

**Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger**  
**P.O. Box 33164**  
**Washington, D.C. 20033-0164**

Individuals and groups also continue to take initiatives of their own - to either raise money for the project or to collect bottles of vitamins. Recently, Jen Burt Davis - ACPD/NRM - carried two boxes of vitamins to Niamey on her return from the States. The boxes contained nearly ten thousand vitamins collected by Our Saviour Lutheran Church Youth Group from Lafayette, Indiana. This is the same group of young people who, working with Laurel Branstrator, collected \$250 for the project earlier this year.

FON will continue to liaise between people going to Niger and anyone or any group wanting to make a contribution to the campaign. *Remember - it all counts.*

## **The Camel Express Takes First and Second at NPCA**



## Newsletter Awards Ceremony

When Friends of Niger President Jim Schneider attended the Awards Dinner at the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) Annual General Meeting in August he was looking forward to a pleasant evening and received a pleasant surprise as well.

The Camel Express, newsletter of the Friends of Niger and edited by Schneider, was recognized by NPCA with the first place award for Newsletter Design. FON also tied the Friends of Burkina Faso (FBF) for the second place award for Editorial Content. FBF President Bob Osborne and FBF newsletter editor Denny Fitzpatrick were also in attendance at the meetings which took

place at Shawnee-on-the-Delaware, Pennsylvania.

# FON Reunion 2001: A Celebration of Niger

## Target Dates Tentatively Set for Niger's Independence Day Weekend in August

The **Friends of Niger Reunion 2001** has now been given a thematic designation and is being called *A Celebration of Niger*. This name is intended to reinforce the hope of FON's Board of Directors that next year's event involve Niger's Embassy as well as the Nigerien community in Washington, D. C. - the site of the reunion.

On a recent trip to D. C., FON President Jim Schneider met with Mr. Joseph Diatta, Niger's Ambassador to the United States. Mr. Diatta expressed support for the reunion and has agreed to work closely with FON on the organization of the event.

FON's Board has tentatively scheduled *A Celebration of Niger* for the weekend of August 3-5, 2001. August 3 is Niger's Independence Day and a national holiday in Niger itself.

Tentative plans call for social gatherings on the nights of August 4 and August 5; exhibits and displays which highlight Niger, its culture, and the activities of FON - archives, multi-media shows, etc.; films from Niger; Peace Corps and NPCA material; readings by authors of books on Niger and by RPCV Niger authors; as well as events related to the nation's capitol - such as a memorial service at the John F. Kennedy grave site. Additional information regarding alternative accommodation and other details will be released via the FON web site - <http://www.friendsofniger.org> - and the next issue of *The Camel Express*.

The theme of the reunion, according to Schneider is "a celebration of Niger and its people as well as of our time in Niger and our experiences while we were there. We are hoping that people who care about Niger - and who fondly remember each other and the time that they spent in Niger - will bring their families, their photos, their scrapbooks and help make the weekend a very special occasion."

## Happenings!!

The Camel doesn't make a habit of reporting on matters of this nature - mostly because John Soloninka, FON Recording Secretary and NigerNet administrator, does such a thorough job via NigerNet. But these just came in

and the Camel decided to make an exception.

\* Congratulations to Julie Burke, RPCV Niger and staff of UNICEF Niger and Boubacar Ide, Peace Corps Niger Admin staff, on their recent marriage. Boubacar is the son of Ide Oumarou, former OAU President and author of several books, including 'Le Gros Plan.'

\* Congratulations also to Jen Burt Davis, APCD/NRM (natural resource mgt) and John Davis, US Embassy Niger, on the birth of their son, Zachary Gibson.

\* And congratulations to Ayou & Elise Moumouni Abdoulayou on the recent birth of twin daughters. Ayou will be remembered as BU Niger Resident Assistant for some five years.



## **Dreamweaver Travel Announces Saharan Odyssey**

**- Trip Planned for February/March 2001 -**

Dudley Parlinson of Dreamweaver Travel has passed along the word that there are still several spots open for Dreamweaver's Saharan Odyssey, scheduled for the period February 18 - March 2, 2001.

The trip will combine time spent in both the Air Massif and the Tenere. Most of the trip will be by Land Cruiser, but several days will be spent in the desert on camel.

### **Highlights:**

Camel Trekking; Desert watching; Nomadic Tuareg and Fulani villages; Exploration by Toyota Land Cruisers and Camels of Air Mountains and Tenere Desert; Comfortable Mountain and Desert Camping; Ancient Petroglyphs; beautiful scenery, wonderful people, family homestays(optional). A portion of every trip fee is donated to community development projects in the areas visited. These projects are designed and run by local community leaders.

### **Departure Date:**

**February ?, 2001**

**Cost: \$2500**

Excludes airfare to and from Niamey, passport and visa, immunizations, and miscellaneous expenses. Included are lodging, 3 meals per day, Park, museum, and craft center entrance fees, all in-country transportation, community contributions, and all gratuities. We provide all necessary camping equipment, although you may want to bring your own sleeping bag.

For the full itinerary and other details, contact Dreamweaver Travel through any of the following:

**DreamWeaver Travel**  
**1185 River Drive**  
**River Falls, WI 54022**  
**Tel: 715-425-1037**  
**Fax: 715-426-0829**

**email: [dudley@dreamweavertravel.net](mailto:dudley@dreamweavertravel.net)**

**web: [www.dreamweavertravel.net](http://www.dreamweavertravel.net)**

## **Crisis Corps Openings in Africa - Work with PC HIV/AIDS Initiative -**

As part of its HIV/AIDS initiative, Peace Corps is sending RPCVs to Africa via Crisis Corps. The effort includes a range of volunteer assignments including the development of AIDS curriculum and activities related to capacity-building within local HIV/AIDS NGOs.

The Crisis Corps is looking for RPCVs who have completed two years of PC service, who have some HIV/AIDS experience, who have at least one year of experience in sub-Saharan Africa and who preferably would be available for a six-month assignment.

Additional information about this and other Crisis Corps programs is available on-line at - <http://www.peacecorps.gov/crisiscorps>. Crisis Corps can also be reached by the following means:

**Peace Corps - Crisis Corps**  
1111 20th Street NW, 7th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20526  
[crisiscorps@peacecorps.gov](mailto:crisiscorps@peacecorps.gov)

**1-800-424-8580 ext 2250 - or - 2020-692-2250**  
**Fax: 202-692-2251**

## **World Wise School - Download Resources for Teachers -**

In an effort to enhance the value of their materials and to meet the growing needs of teachers, Peace Corps' World Wise School program has upgraded its materials with the goal of providing high-quality content and an integrated curriculum.

The new resources, readily accessed and/or downloaded via <http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/>, include the following:

- \* **Culture Matters** - downloadable primary resource tool. Originally developed by the Peace Corps as a self-guided workbook for volunteers in order to assist them in crossing cultures, exercises are available along with an accompanying trainer's guide.
- \* **CyberVolunteer** - allows teachers to sign up for monthly e-mail messages from PCVs in service around the world. An organized schedule details the names and locations of each Volunteer and is sent in advance, allowing teachers to integrate information into the lesson planning process.
- \* **Water in Africa** - an online learning module which integrates technology with national standards in social sciences, language, arts, geography, health and science. The module is based on resources gathered from 90 PCVs in 25 African countries. 24 standards-based learning units are designed to reflect the connection between water and all aspects of life on the continent.

## **2002 Trip to Niger Sparks Interest & Ideas**

**- 40 Years of Peace Corps in Niger -**



The last issue of *The Camel Express* carried a brief announcement of FON's plan to sponsor a trip back to Niger in the year 2002 - for many reasons, including the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Peace Corps presence in Niger.

That brief announcement has stimulated considerable response from people interested in participating in such a trip - in some cases along with members of their family: spouses, parents, children. The amount of interest expressed at such an early date, means that the trip is now a likelihood.

When the trip first went onto the FON drawingboard, it was assumed that most everyone interested in the trip would be primarily attracted to the idea of returning to the community in which they served. While this is, indeed, true for many - others have expressed interest in two other kinds of activity or itinerary.

Some - especially those who served in the earlier years and who lived in the larger urban areas like Niamey - have expressed an interest in visiting locations that they were never able to get to before, like Agadez - for example. Others have expressed an interest in being involved in some manner of 'work project.'

Because of these and other inputs the Board will now be 'exploring' a wider range of potential activities. Both the timing of the trip, the content of the trip itinerary, and trip options are still open to input from anyone who might be interested. The current plan is to take the process to a second phase - involving research on more specific details regarding timing, content and cost - this coming winter.

Meanwhile, early and very tentative discussions have begun with Peace Corps Niger.

Please continue to send input, comments or questions to **Jim Schneider**. Jim is most easily reached at either his e-mail address - [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com) - or by telephone - **819-827-4870**. He can also be reached by surface mail at the FON address (see page 2).

## FRIENDS OF NIGER

### 2001 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Name(s)

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Address

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

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (w) \_\_\_\_\_

E- Mail Address

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Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.)

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Dates in Niger \_\_\_\_\_ Location in Niger \_\_\_\_\_

Program or Involvement in Niger

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*Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund FON Activities, including The Camel Express*

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Please Check Appropriate Boxes

- Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON
- \$45 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA
- Enclosed is \$35 for a Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)
- \$67.50 to cover Family Membership in both FON & NPCA
- I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership
- Please send me a Copy of FON's Bylaws (Members Only)
- In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
- Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_\_\_ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$18 each (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_
- T-Shirt Sizes: M \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_\_\_ Year 2001 Internation Calendars at \$12 each (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_

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

\*\*\*\*\*

Make Check or Money Order Payable to **Friends of Niger** and mail to:

**P. O. Box 33164, Washington, D. C. 20033-0164**

(Please Enclose Membership Form)

***FON Participaction Menu***

Indicate your interest with a check mark. Or add something new at the bottom. Tell us how to reach you on the **Friends of Niger 2001 Membership & Order Form** (see above).

- × \_\_\_ Will help set up local FON group
- × \_\_\_ Would participate in local FON group
- × \_\_\_ Reunion 2001 in Washington, D.C.
- × \_\_\_ Trip back to Niger in 2002
- × \_\_\_ Will be local FON contact person
- × \_\_\_ Will help with BU/FON Vitamin Campaign

***Other*** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Credits and Other Information**

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed via hardcopy, e-mail and website posting with the contributions Sue Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jim Bullington, Jane Bonin, Sue

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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 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164;  
by e-mail at [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com); and you will find FON on the web at the following Internet  
address  
[www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org).

## **Board of Directors Friends of Niger**

\*

Jim Schneider, President  
& Editor

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Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President

\*

John Soloninka, Recording Secretary

\*

Larry Koff, Treasurer

\*