

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

March 2024

Please note new address:

Friends of Niger 4865 Hwy 234 Box 180, White City, OR 97503

In this issue:

1. Outreach to grantees and survey of non-profits
2. Board elections
3. ZOOM presentation:
 - April 29 4 pm Central **NigerHeritage: Realizing Niger's World-Class Patrimony**
4. Call for proposals- new grant applications due May 15
5. Niger-related News
6. In brief: African Festivals

Dear Readers,

The FON Board is a great team of volunteers who carry out the business of the organization fueled by our shared purpose to improve the lives of Nigeriens. This newsletter offers several opportunities for your participation: voting for directors, viewing a presentation on dinosaurs, volunteering to review grant proposals and sharing grant information with your contacts. Lastly we are sharing a list of African festivals around the country this year and we hope you will seek them out, dance, eat some great food and report back about connecting with Nigerien diaspora who may be vendors and participants. This issue welcomes Scott Youngstedt to our newsletter team and we look forward to his contributions which are informed by his anthropology background and his regular visits to Niger over the last 30 years. We'd like to remind readers that your contributions are welcome. Lastly---Keep your calendars open for a possible meeting in Chicago in the last half of September. The board is starting to plan a member meeting and visit to the fossil lab combined with a board retreat. Contact me if you want to help us organize this event.

Merci, Fofo, Mun godey, Tanimert, Foma, Thank you --

Amy Wilson

1) Outreach to grantees and survey of non-profits

Last fall we realized an opportunity and launched an effort to communicate with our grantees and potential grantees via a newsletter. In the past we would send out an email blast to our contacts announcing our grant opportunities. Now that our contact list has grown to over 140, it made sense to make the most of these communications by including more information. Our ***Nouvelles des Amis du Niger*** is aimed at grantees and those who apply for grants. It provides information about the upcoming grant cycle while also sharing updates about the work being accomplished with the grant funds. We hope this effort encourages networking among grantees and that learning more about successful projects will continue to elevate the caliber of proposals and planned activities.

This most recent *Nouvelles des Amis du Niger* included an invitation to Nigerien NGOS to complete a short survey. We developed this survey to learn a little more about our grantees and applicants. Our purpose is twofold. First, we'd like to make the Friends of Niger grant process as efficient and productive as possible with the resources we have. Some direct questions about timing and process will provide us with useful feedback. Second, we'd like to gather information about grantees and applicants so that we may advocate on their behalf and encourage other organizations to provide funding for grassroots efforts in Niger. Charitable activity in Niger is pretty sparse beyond the well-established big international development organizations. We think developing a profile of the types of grass roots organizations we are working with might encourage other philanthropic organizations to support Nigerien NGOs.

After gathering information from this survey, we plan to create a report to share with other organizations that may be interested in supporting grassroots efforts in Niger.

2) Dinosaurs in Niger – April 29, 4 pm Central

YOU ARE INVITED! Monday April 29 at 4 pm Central time.

Topic: NigerHeritage: Realizing Niger's World-Class Patrimony

Time: Apr 29, 2024 4:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting:

- <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83077825348?pwd=QlJadUVEEdStTcWhFYXJ1eW51UXFXZz09>
- Meeting ID: 830 7782 5348
- Passcode: 868703

Contact us or find your local number for dial up options: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kdAdxj01W>

Paleontologist Paul Sereno, has unearthed nearly 50 tons of dinosaur bones in Niger – potentially some of the most significant paleontological finds on the continent. He is a professor of paleontology at the University of Chicago and a National Geographic "explorer-in-residence" who has discovered several new dinosaur species on several continents, including at sites in Inner Mongolia, Argentina, Morocco and Niger.

He is bringing the Nigerien trove to Chicago with the plan to catalogue, study and analyze them, with the ultimate goal of helping establish a museum and where they can be displayed in Niger.

Dr Sereno has offered to give a virtual presentation to Friends of Niger members – Please tune in!

The fossils represent as many as 100 different species, some of them from ancient animals never seen before. Small animals, mammals, flying reptiles, turtles, a 40-foot crocodile and a dozen large dinosaurs that are new, including huge 60-footers.

See more at:

- <https://www.csmonitor.com/Science/2023/0524/Can-50-tons-of-dinosaur-fossils-help-hatch-paleontology-in-Niger>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAnbGpoGfH4>



3) Board Elections

Probably the coolest thing about the Friends of Niger is the super impressive talent pool embodied in our membership. As we carry out the mission of the organization, we try to keep that front of mind and make sure that we are creating lots of options for you, the talent, to plug in and participate. Being on the board is a great way to get involved. It is not too onerous—really! We have monthly meetings and ask board members to support ‘extracurricular’ activities as their time allows. We recognize that some busy people are less able to volunteer and still their contributions to the organization are truly valuable. We are always interested in talking to you about possibilities to get more involved. Contact us!

Amid all the progress on other fronts, we need to catch up on our elections process. Many of our current board members need to be re-elected and two recent board-appointed board members are in the running to be elected by the full membership.

PLEASE CAST YOUR BALLOT TODAY: <https://forms.gle/Rs46WSLL4Qby6Y8C7>

Voting closes April 15, 2024

Candidate brief bios:

Mary Abrams, Tucson, AZ

Mary served in Niger from 1979-1981 in Maradi as an Agricultural Extension volunteer (Peace Corps) and then returned to work for USAID on the Niamey Department Development project from 1982-1984. Almost 30 years later she served as the Peace Corps Country Director in Niger from 2006-2010. Mary spent most of her career working in natural resource management in research, policy setting and implementation, and in environmental regulation and compliance. Mary has been a great addition to the grants management team. As committee co-chair she has coordinated the review process, managing the team of enthusiastic volunteers. Her involvement has been essential in development and fine-tuning the new project selection process which features greater transparency and accountability in FON grant funding.

John Baird, Decatur IL

John was a Peace Corps Volunteer 1968-70 at a farm school south of Maradi and 70-71 in Chadakori. He has returned to Niger twice and sponsored a friend’s son to study in the US. John has donated lots of time and energy to Friends of Niger since joining the board. He has served as president, has filled in as temporary treasurer and has acted as membership committee chair for many years. He currently maintains the membership list and sends out donation acknowledgements with a personal touch.

Paige Pihl Buckley, Manchester, NH

Paige participated in the last Boston University group study abroad program in the fall of 2010 and returned to visit the friends and family made in May 2011 and again for New Year 2013. She is an attorney with a background in print journalism and marketing. Paige organized a GoFundMe campaign that raised approximately \$12,000 for some of Sue Rosenfeld’s former employees. She is a reviewer of grant proposals and project champion, acting as liaison for implementation of projects. She has applied her expert writing skills to our annual appeal letter.

Nafissa Salihou, Atlanta GA *Interim appointment by the Board in January 2024.*

Nafi was born in Niamey, Niger, and lived there until the age of 19 when she relocated to the USA. She is an RN and an entrepreneur starting a home health business in Atlanta. She has connections with

influencers in Niger, and believes these can help FON achieve its mission. She said, “I have always wanted to be part of an organization that supports and promotes development and humanitarian activities FON will give me the opportunity to do something that will have lasting impact for my brothers and sisters in Niger.”

Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souna, College Park, MD

Alhassan was born in Arlit and grew up in Niamey. He came to the US for college, has married and lives with his wife and a little boy in Maryland. He is interested in sustainable development, agricultural production and marketing, while currently working as a manager for Whole Foods Market. He regularly visits Niger with his family. Alhassan is an active participant in the grants management committee and helps with the project review process. He has acted as project champion and while vacationing in Niger has conducted valuable site visits to evaluate grant implementation.

Douglas Steinberg, Hyattsville, MD

Doug did Peace Corps training in Dosso, before serving as a volunteer in northern Cameroon. In 1986 he was project manager for a CARE agroforestry project in Maradi (until 1988) and returned again in 1998-2002 as CARE country director. He was awarded the Merit of Order Chevalier from the Republic of Niger in 2002. He continues to work in the field of international development, based in Washington DC with frequent travel, and has been back to Niger many times since 2002. Doug is an active member of the Grants Management and Finance committees and participates in the grant application screening and review process.

Amy Wilson, Central Point OR

Amy was a volunteer in Zarma country from 82-84, returned to do graduate research and work for Africare in 1986 and was then APCD for agriculture programs/AFSI from 1990-93. She sponsored the education of a young Nigerien man after helping him get surgery through Shriners in the US as a small child. She has returned to Niger numerous times to visit and participate in Rotary projects and activities like polio vaccination campaigns. She facilitated several small projects in Niger through Rotary. Since joining the board Amy has helped with the newsletter, website, member surveys, board retreats, revising the grant review process and organizational development.

Scott M. Youngstedt Saginaw, MI *Interim appointment by the Board in January 2024.*

Scott is a cultural anthropologist who chairs the Department of Sociology at Saginaw Valley State University. Having first visited Niger in 1988, he has returned almost every year since to study migration, water, health and healing among other themes. He has published four books and two dozen scholarly articles and is competent in Hausa and French. Scott has also served on the board of the West African Research Association

Before joining the board, Scott helped with grant review and conducted site visits to funded projects in Niger.

CONTINUING BOARD MEMBER BRIEF BIOS

Brandon Bragato, Silver Spring, MD

Brandon served in two posts near Gaya and Parc W. from 2005-2007. Working as a Natural Resource Management and Agriculture Volunteer, he implemented several projects focused on environmental education. He played a key role in the development of environmental awareness youth camps in Parc W and hosted a show at a local radio station. In both roles he worked closely with Nigerien educators and tour guides. He has experience in non-profit development and fundraising as well as broad

experience in communication and public relations. He has been active in his local Returned Peace Corps Volunteer group supporting immigrants. Brandon is interested in working on the implementation of community based projects with a direct connection to Niger and continuing to help FON build capacity and increase member outreach and awareness.

Alix Barstow Fedoruk, Dummerston VT

Alix was an agroforestry volunteer in Bouza arondissement from 89-93, speaking mostly Hausa but also using some Tamacheq. She returned to Niger for a month in 1999 to do a health-related research project in Tahoua department, including clinic and home visits in Illela and Bouza arondissements. She is a board certified family physician.

Alix is currently Vice President of FON and co-chairs the grants management committee. She played a key role organizing a board retreat (online) and is active in reviewing grant applications.



4) Call for grant proposals – Due May 15 [only one cycle in 2024]

Please share this information with potential grant applicants.

FRIENDS OF NIGER GRANT PROGRAM 2024

Applications must be received by May 15 to be considered for funding. Notification of results will follow by the end of July. Guidelines and forms are available in English and French on our website <http://www.friendsofniger.org/grants/>

Our grant-making program is designed to support locally identified projects which demonstrate community support, are likely to succeed and have an enduring positive impact. Board members and volunteers thoughtfully review grant applications and serve as project champions.

Maybe your host village has projects they would like to take on. Successful projects include some that have been mentored and supplemented by our members. Members are encouraged to spread the word and get involved. While we firmly believe that projects need to be deeply rooted in locally identified ideas, we recognize that for some communities applying may be a bit daunting. You might be able to help bridge that gap. Members have helped their host communities identify local partners to work with and have done supplemental fund-raising to augment the funds provided by FON.

Please share this information with your contacts in Niger.



5) Niger-related News

Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso to form joint force to fight jihadists [Alliance of Sahel States (AES)]

- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68498472>

Niger Ending Military Cooperation with the U.S. and Forging Closer Ties with Russia:

- <https://apnews.com/article/niger-junta-us-military-base-b70bfba835a567d5f3439a32c9c82836>
- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/nigers-junta-ends-cooperation-with-u-s-putting-military-operations-at-risk-across-sahel>
- https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2024/03/19/les-putschistes-du-sahel-felicitent-vladimir-poutine-pour-sa-reelection_6222861_3212.html
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiD24uEvY1U>



ECOWAS Lifts Sanction on Niger

- <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/24/ecowas-lifts-sanctions-on-niger-amid-tensions-in-west-africa-bloc>

Ramadan in Niger

- <https://www.africanews.com/2024/03/12/nigerians-struggle-with-soaring-prices-as-ramadan-begins>

6) In Brief – African Cultural Festivals in U.S. 2024

- Macon, GA, April 27-28: <https://tubmanmuseum.com/event/pan-african-festival-2024/>
- Seattle, WA, May 11: <https://www.seattlecenter.com/events/featured-events/festal/spirit-of-africa>
- Durham, NC, May 18: <https://www.dprplaymore.org/281/Bimbe-Cultural-Arts-Festival>
- St. Louis, May 25-27: <https://stlafricanartsfest.com/>
- Philadelphia, June 2-9: <https://www.instagram.com/odundefestival/?hl=en>
- Inglewood, CA, June 7-9: <https://www.sponsormyevent.com/africa-in-america-festival-inglewood>
- Brooklyn, NY, July 4-7: <https://www.nyctourism.com/events/international-african-arts-festival/>
- Columbus, OH, Jul 27-28: <https://www.instagram.com/columbusafricanfestival/>
- Detroit, MI, Aug 10-12: <https://festivalnexus.com/african-festival-of-the-arts/>
- Saginaw, MI, Aug 10-12 ? : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/132204603483774/>
- Seattle, WA, Aug 23-25: <https://www.seattlecenter.com/events/featured-events/festal/festival-sundiata>
- Portland, OR, Aug 31: <https://www.panafricanfestivalor.org/>

- Chicago, IL, Sept 1 (labor day weekend): <https://festivalnexus.com/african-festival-of-the-arts/>
<https://aihafa.squarespace.com/>
- Nashville, TN, Sept 20-22: <https://www.africanstreetfestival.com/>
- Montgomery County, MD, Sept 21: <https://panafestusa.org/>

Thanks to Scott Youngstedt for compiling this list!

YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

Friends of Niger is an organization to initiate and support activities related to Niger and its people. We pursue three main purposes:

1. Connecting and engaging people who have connections to Niger including diaspora, and those who have worked or are working in Niger,
2. Supporting development and humanitarian activities in Niger, and
3. Advocating for and educating about Niger

To donate write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to

NEW ADDRESS: Friends of Niger 4865 Hwy 234 Box 180, White City, OR 97503,

OR go to www.friendsofniger.org to use PayPal.

Board of Directors

Officers: Amy Wilson/President, Alix Barstow Fedoruk/Vice President, Mary Abrams/Grants Management Committee, John Baird/Past President; At Large Board members: Brandon Bragato, Paige Pihl Buckley, Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souna, Douglas Steinberg

For more about Friends of Niger:

- Our website <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: [\(Friends of Niger\) FON](#)
- Submit news topics and articles: camelexpress@friendsofniger.org
- Contact President Amy Wilson, president@friendsofniger.org

“There is no way to peace; peace is the way.”

