

The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

October 2024

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

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Dear Readers,

The Chicago rendezvous was a hit! Learning about the fossil discoveries that have been made and the potential that lies ahead was a thrill. This was followed by an African feast back at our rental house and lots of fabulous conversations. For the board of FON the weekend was a welcome opportunity to get to know each other better and fine-tune our grant-making program. John Baird entertained us on the piano, Alhassan shared his plans to expand his family's farming in Niger, and a couple of us survived deflating-in-the-middle-of-the-night air mattresses. The only downside was that it was over in the blink of an eye and too soon we were all headed our separate ways.

As always we welcome the input and participation of our membership. Please contact us if you are tempted to get more involved.

Merci, Fofu, Mun gode, Tanimert, Foma, Thank you --

Amy Wilson & Scott Youngstedt

1) Chicago: Dinosaurs, Dinner and Discourse

The Friends of Niger Board enjoyed a productive, solidarity-building, and fun weekend retreat in Chicago from September 20-22. We arrived at diverse times at a house we rented on the Southside, but most of us were able to begin discussion of FON business on Friday evening before enjoying a wonderful Jollof rice meal prepared by Mary Abrams. The FON Board met formally on Saturday morning to discuss a wide range of issues, including our mission, finances, recently completed and ongoing grants, various committee procedures, and our plans to ensure the long-term sustainability of FON.

On Saturday afternoon, the Board was joined by roughly 40 FON members for a fascinating presentation by Paul Sereno of the University of Chicago on his cutting edge paleontological and archaeological



research in Niger and his plans to construct world class museums in Niamey and Agadez. Sereno will soon formally announce findings of many new species of dinosaurs, as well as heretofore undocumented human adaptations of c. 5,000 years ago. We were also impressed by his plans to repatriate to Niger all of the fossil remains that he and his team have collected. The event took place in his state of the art 7,000 square foot laboratory, and he graciously offered us a curated tour.



Then, the Board FON members and friends returned to our rented house where we savored conversations about Niger and a sumptuous meal catered by Yassa—a local Senegalese restaurant with cuisine similar to Niger’s. On Sunday morning the Board gathered for more discussion to conclude our retreat.



The FON Board reaffirmed our commitment to supporting locally initiated and supported, capacity building, sustainable projects that improve Nigérien lives, especially during these challenging times. We volunteer to serve because we care deeply about Niger. The tremendous support of volunteer board and reviewers keeps our overhead very low, in fact administration averages less than 4% of our total expenditures. The accomplishments of FON are due to the engagement of members, volunteer service, and your financial support.

Scott M. Youngstedt

Diaspora reacts to dinosaur lab visit—

« Sur le plan personnel, ce fut à la fois une expérience enrichissante et un privilège d’avoir eu la chance de voir ces patrimoines nigériens dont je ne savais presque rien. En grandissant, j’ai vu des squelettes de dinosaures exposés au musée de Niamey, mais je n’ai jamais été aussi proche d’eux qu’au laboratoire. La partie du laboratoire qui expose les outils, les bijoux et les restes squelettiques des anciens habitants de cette région d’Agadez m’a beaucoup émue car elle a fait surgir en moi de nombreuses questions éthiques autour de l’exposition de restes humains aussi anciens soient-ils. Cependant, l’amour sincère que Paul et son équipe ont pour le Niger me permet de penser que ce patrimoine nigérien est entre de bonnes mains. »

Alhassan Ali Souna, current FON board.

« J’ai vraiment apprécié comment Professeur Paul a décortiqué les objectifs du projet et surtout ses impacts sur la culture, l’éducation, l’économie, commerce et le tourisme au Niger. Pour lui, ce projet est unique au monde et une fois réalisé, il va faire du Niger un repère mondial. »

Rabiou Yari, former FON board member

2) EXTRA-Ordinary Generosity

This year we have been honored to receive 4 extraordinary gifts of \$10,000 each. Each has come from different generous donors, each came through different mechanisms: one through a donor-advised fund, one as a hand-written check with a post-it note attached, one completely anonymous check from a Charles Schwab Investment account, and one as a legacy in a will. Three of these have requested to remain anonymous, so even though we want to shout “woohoo” through a megaphone and publicly express our gratitude, we respect their wishes.

The most recent gift came in the form of a legacy from Franceen Fallet. We would like to extend our sincere condolences to her family and friends. We had noted Franceen’s passing in June and now welcome the opportunity to share the link to her full obituary.



<https://www.news-herald.com/obituaries/franceen-faith-fallett-ojai-ca/>

Franceen was one of the Peace Corps Niger pioneers, serving in 1967-69 at the tender age of 19. Working in the PC office she was also one of those who gave English lessons to President Diouri. Her family was not surprised that Franceen thought of leaving a legacy to help her friends in Niger knowing what a big impact it had on her life, and we are honored that she trusted Friends of Niger to carry out her desire.

If you are doing any estate planning and are interested in leaving something to the Friends of Niger there are several options available. Your legal professionals are of course your primary resource and if you are just beginning to consider the possibility, here are some general recommendations and options from AARP, a widely trusted source.

<https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/info-2023/how-to-donate-to-charities-in-your-will.html>

3) Rotary Connections & Possibilities

We recently learned of a Rotary Club in Colorado that is partnering with a Niamey club to improve science education in Niger. The connection to us was through John Baird's cousin—it is a small world!

We got to wondering, how many of our readers have Rotary connections? And how can we mobilize some of these great efforts to the greater benefit of Niger?

Moustapha Tidjani the Global grants coordinator for the Niamey-Gaweye Rotary Club was eager to speak via Zoom. The biggest and oldest Rotary Club in Niamey, they have typically completed one global grant each year. Global grants are larger scale projects, more than \$30,000, that utilize the leverage of Rotary International Foundation funding matched with local and partner groups. There are also many smaller partnership activities that occur in collaboration among individual clubs which tap into Club or District level funding; these are usually less than \$5,000.

Moustapha said there are currently 10 Rotary Clubs in Niamey and some Rotaract Clubs which are created to sponsor the charitable activities of college-aged young professionals.

FUN FACT—during our chat we discovered that Mustapha's wife was from my village – Boula!

Stateside the Pagosa Springs Club in Colorado has one member, David Smith, who has enthusiastically led his club into a partnership with West African Clubs to improve science education. Starting in Senegal and then taking lessons learned to Niger, they focus on introducing hands-on science lab curriculum and equipment to teachers. To date, they have trained 70 teachers, working with the Niamey Gaweye Club, who has proven itself an effective on the ground partner. Some of the teachers trained have already been doing outreach to other teachers who are eager to have more interesting and engaging curriculum and labs.

They have plans to expand the program to more teachers and to include some Maradi and Zinder schools. They are looking for partners for more funding and there is a possibility of an internship-type position to help with training and curriculum adaptation. See more at: [Rotary Science](#)

David's desire to volunteer and promote science has introduced a Rotary Club in Colorado to Niger in a meaningful way.

Rotary Clubs are everywhere! Our readers may have local clubs who are looking for new international club connections and opportunities. They are often eager for speakers at their weekly meetings. Find a club near you: <https://my.rotary.org/en/club-search>

Amy Wilson



2023 Science Training

4) Project Briefs

COMPLETED – Fatabadje Well Hamdallaye region: A 66 meter borehole was drilled to provide drinking water. Additional funding from a Belgian NGO allowed them to add solar panels and a holding tank. *“The greatest success of the project is the quality of the water from the borehole and the joy of the population regarding the completion of this project.”*



IN PROGRESS -- the Simplified Cooperative Society (KOKARI) in the village of Bargouma is providing 45 women members with goat kits (goats and initial feed and medicines). The women will also receive training in goat husbandry to maximize production. Initial meetings, animal purchase and training is underway.



COMPLETED : Installation Mini Adduction d'Eau Potable- Agadez by NGO AFAA

« En fin de compte, le village disposera d'un point d'eau moderne, salubre et sécurisé avec un débit d'eau qui subvient aux besoins de tout le village. Il suffit juste à ce jour de comparer la situation déplorable du puits et celle d'aujourd'hui pour conclure qu'un pas a été vraiment franchi dans la salubrité du puis, la quantité et la qualité de l'eau servie. Ainsi, trois bornes fontaines ont été installées pour les habitants, la case de santé et ses usagers et l'école pour les élèves et les maîtres y logeant L'organisation des populations à travers le comité de l'eau qui peut aujourd'hui initier des collectes et des contributions qui pourraient dépanner les installations voire remplacer les pièces défectueuses. »



5) Niger-related News

Historic Tuareg Diaspora Meeting

The Tuareg Diaspora of America and the Organization of the Tuareg Diaspora in Europe met in September 2024 in Laurelville, Ohio. This inaugural gathering of the Tuareg diaspora in Americas drew Tuareg from and the world to discuss deteriorating security in Niger and Mali, and to celebrate Tuareg culture, music, and food. See the link below for an official press release. Photos of the event can be found on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=8542765182411812&set=pcb.8542779899077007>

Congressman Austin Scott Led Bipartisan Visit to Niger

State Department News Release September 9, 2024

The U.S. Embassy in Niamey hosted a bipartisan U.S. Congressional delegation led by Representative Austin Scott (R-GA) from the House Armed Services Committee and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to Niger. Representative Jimmy Panetta (D-CA) from the House Armed

Services Committee and House Committee on Ways and Means and Representative Ronny Jackson (R-TX) from the House Armed Services Committee and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence were on the delegation. During the visit from September 4-5, the Congressional delegation met Nigerien government officials to strengthen the partnership between our two countries.

USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator traveled to Niamey,

State Department News Release September 30, 2024

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Deputy Assistant Administrator Jacqueline Musiitwa traveled to Niamey, Niger from September 25 to September 28 to meet with USAID staff on Agency priorities, and with development and humanitarian partners. The visit emphasizes the United States government's dedication to collaboration on shared objectives in Niger. Additionally, during her visit, Deputy Assistant Administrator Musiitwa announced that earlier in the month, the U.S. committed \$1 million to aid those affected by the recent floods in Niger.

Devastating Rainy Season in Niger

This year's rainy season brought devastation to Niger. At least 339 Nigériens died, more than 1 million have been displaced, and Niger suffered extensive destruction of infrastructure and loss of food stores. The commencement of the school year, originally scheduled for October 3, has been pushed back to October 28.

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20241009-at-least-339-dead-over-1-million-displaced-due-to-niger-floods>

6) Tee shirts

The Chicago meeting gave us the push we needed to do a new tee-shirt. Borrowing from the greeting cards made and sold by Pam Toh in Niamey (anyone know her?) we came up with this cute design in two colors: yellow and sand. They are 100% cotton. We have some remaining tees and we are willing to have more made once a demand has been established.



We plan to sell these for \$20 each, plus shipping (approx. \$5).

If folks are interested we would consider ordering more of the caravan design, artist unknown.

Please write to president@friendsofniger.org

7) In Brief

Readers write--

"Of particular interest to me was the notice that former PCV Franceen Fallett (Niger 1967-69) passed away recently. You mentioned that she 'gave English lessons to President Hamani Diori during her term'. I too served as Diori's English teacher from 1965 to 1967. In 1968 President Diori made a state visit to the U.S. His trip included a visit to San Francisco where I was attending university. While in S.F. Diori invited myself and my fiancé to dinner. During that event, I mentioned to one of his Secret Service detail that the President was fluent in English. The agent was absolutely mortified at hearing this. It seems things were said by agents, unbecoming to the President. Oops!"

William V. Timmons RPCV, 1965 - 1967

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.

Friends of Niger is an all-volunteer tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. EIN 65-1267451. 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, Nafissa Salihou, Scott Youngstedt, Soufiane Younoussi

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."

