# Metsoalle ea Lesotho

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Metsoalle ea Lesotho FOL Newsletter 2801 Spencer Road Chevy Chase, MD 20815 Phone: 301-589-4236 www.friendsoflesotho.org

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# Peace Corps 40th Anniversary

# Friends of Lesotho, Lesotho Embassy Plan Fete Coinciding with 40th Peace Corps Anniversary

Saturday afternoon, Sept. 22, 2001 is the date set for a reception and update on Lesotho in the nation's capital co-sponsored by the Friends of Lesotho and the Lesotho Embassy in Washington, DC. It will be the first such large gathering specifically on Lesotho politics, development and other activities in over five years. Preliminary plans developed by representatives of FOL and the Embassy include:

- A reception for all members and their families, including traditional Basotho food and entertainment
- An update on Lesotho's current political situation by long-time independent analysts
- An update on Peace Corps and other development activities by program representatives
- An update on Lesotho government and Southern Africa regional activities by Embassy representatives
- Displays highlighting Friends of Lesotho's 15-year history of member support for self-reliance projects and other programs
- A Basotho handicraft exchange and/or silent auction

Activities will convene at one of several Embassy locations in the capital area. Members are urged to notify FOL by e-mail or letter of their intention to attend the event as soon as possible. The fete will be free to all registered attendees. Look for more details in the next newsletter issue this summer.

### Letter from the FOL President

In our last newsletter, you may have noticed that we had a new editor for our newsletter, Dorothy Holland. Dorothy and I were volunteers together in 1976—1978 and were both stationed in Pitseng, teaching at the high school. While we had lost touch over the last 20+ years, it is nice to be back in touch again and I look forward to working with Dorothy as she serves as editor of the FOL newsletter. The last newsletter looked great and I appreciate the fact that many of you let us know that you agreed by writing comments on your membership renewals!

While it is important to welcome Dorothy, I was remiss in not thanking our previous newsletter editor, George Fanelli, for his fine work editing the newsletter

(Continued on page 7)

# **Sleeping Dinosaurs**

Hale Tsehlana

The mountain towers above, like a giant Dinosaur asleep in the sun. Spiky trees grow on his back, like tufts of uncombed hair. Rivulets of sweat cascade softly, down the crevices on his body. He lies sweating after a hard day. He dozes in the warm sun and pretends not to see, civilisation crawl by at an alarming pace. He is a history on permanent display.

This giant dream and salvation of Lesotho.

I am fascinated by the gentle mountains. These bewitching elegant monsters that graze upon the green meadows, their feet open crevices in the barren land as they move across the once untainted plains. The ageless prehistoric beasts of Lesotho, stretch their limbs across the land. They whisper and laugh amongst themselves, about the ignorance of man, who comes to behold the beautiful green-grey beasts of the mountain kingdom. Men and women of the world. come to this heavenly black country, to see and hear these elegant black monsters, sigh and moan in their afternoon siesta. Come and see the trees on their tireless feet sway and dance, to the native melodies of Lesotho.

#### Tsehlana Halejoetse says:

There is a lot to be written about Lesotho, its landscapes, people and everyday things. There is a shortage of literature indeed. For this reason I felt challenged to tell its story and for this whole year I have been working on a collection of poems on Lesotho which I hope to publish soon.

Visit http://www.uwc.ac.za. Go to Academic, Faculty of Arts, English Department, Poetry corner. You can also go to www.poetry.com and type my full name Tsehlana Halejoetse.

Thank you for the latest donation for map painting at Tsoelang-Pele Community Primary School in Teyateyaneng. This time we painted the Standard 6 classroom wall with a huge world map...

Tara Loyd, Teyateyaneng



FOL member Steve Brushett reviewed material from a number of sources and provides the following summary of current events in Lesotho:

### Search for durable political solution goes on



An end is perhaps in sight for Lesotho's political limbo, but it is going to take a while longer to conclude. The March 1998 election returned the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) under Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili. All seats were won with a reported turn out of over 50% for LCD – a party that split the year before from the then governing Basotho Congress Party (BCP). While the underlying fairness of the poll was attested by international observers, there were substantial alleged irregularities and legal challenges. This spilled over into civil disorder in September 1998 involving death and destruction in a number of parts of the country, notably in Maseru. Some semblance of order was restored with the intervention of South African and Botswana troops (under a SADC mandate).

As part of the settlement to back an (uneasy) truce between the different factions, an Interim Political Authority (IPA) was set up early in 1999 with a mandate to prepare for elections within a period of 18 months. IPA had representation from all parties and was not intended to take over legislative and administrative responsibilities from the LCD Government and the National Assembly – hence "authority" is a misnomer. By setting the ground rules for a fresh election, it was hoped that the IPA would come up with an inclusive formula that would assure respect of the final decision, perhaps tinkering with the system to ensure one party could never get 100% of the seats, which was a clear issue with the March 1998 outcome.

### Moving slowly toward elections



This election has not taken place – it was due originally for May 2000. Word at this writing is that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) who have been working on a timetable, foresee voter registration starting in August this year and concluding no earlier than January 2002. IEC estimates it may then take another five months before the poll can actually take place. Voter registration – a complex and controversial business in the past – may be assisted this time by new processes to combat fraud. Nothing should however be taken for granted on the matter of an election date - bearing in mind that the IEC had solemnly announced towards the end of 2000 that the poll was definitely going to take place May 26, 2001!

One big issue that remained to be resolved by IPA until recently was this: how many seats were there to be in the new National Assembly and how were they to be filled? The IPA was edging toward a formula which would retain 80 seats for direct "first past the post" elections – as before – but now adding 50 seats to be filled on the basis of proportional representation. i.e. all parties that secured a minimum threshold of the popular vote would be entitled to the respective portion of these seats. The ruling LCD appeared to be pushing for a mix of 80:40 which is apparently what has now, as of March 2001 been accepted by all parties and formally ratified by the Senate. However the measure has yet to be enacted in law which it would have to be done before the new system could be adopted as a basis for the elections.

Party registration – with the Office of the Director of Elections (K.D. Ralitsie) - and appointment of members of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) are however

well in hand. Seventeen parties are registered for the elections including three new ones as of July 2000 for the first time. However with no major realignments in the recent past, or to our knowledge in the offing, it's hard to imagine any new force emerging. It is likely that LCD, BCP, the Basotho National Party (BNP) and possibly Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) will figure to capture more than 95% of the votes between them. This having been said, none of the main parties seems to be free of internecine strife and there are reports of spirited and oftimes controversial party congresses. All this might presage further party splits and a much more interesting – and difficult to call – election!

### Aftermath of September 1998 disturbances rumble on



The final accounting of the September 1998 riots remains to be achieved – the country may never seem the same, physically as well as psychologically. On top of the changes to the urban landscape of Maseru already being wrought by a major road building program, many familiar features on Kingsway have disappeared -Sanlam Center included. Destroyed or partially destroyed buildings are being razed, amounting to up to 80% of commercial infrastructure in the main town. The new feature seems to be the "container shop" as businesses in temporary housing have become established to fill the voids along the main street. Money is not in sufficient supply to effect a complete rebuilding program - a figure of US\$150 million was being talked about as the requirement - and thus many of these shops may be here to stay, an indicator of growing "informalization" that is affecting many parts of the country. Certainly outside private investors show no sign of flocking to Lesotho to invest in new commercial development. The (Leon) Commission of Inquiry into the "political disturbances' does not appear to have completed its hearings. Whereas some compensation payments have been ordered to be made to parties who were able to demonstrate physical losses, broader culpability and compensation have not vet been determined. It is to be hoped that this matter can be wrapped up in advance of the elections lest there be a carryover of political tensions into the poll there has been an indication that the revised timetable called for a final report to be tabled by the end of January 2001. One sign however that normalcy - of a sort may have returned to Lesotho is that SADC troops, provided by South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, finally left the country in May 2000.

## Leading political figures under a cloud

Meanwhile local news sources have been covering stories that do not shed favorable light on some of the leading political figures in Lesotho, including some past national leaders. The most serious allegations concern former Military Council head Major-General Phisoana Ramaema, remanded on bail and due for an appearance in court in relation to the murder and robbery of an Irish national in Maseru in June 1999. He has also been linked to a further murder and car theft from an Irish national in January 1999. Police are seeking a son and daughter-in-law who have also been linked to the two crimes. His predecessor and now leader of the BNP, Justin Metsing Lekhanya has come under a cloud for a less serious offense — but it still amounts to contempt of court as Lekhanya stands accused of having failed to pay a Lesotho Bank loan for the purchase of two vehicles. Former Minister of Finance

Leketekete Ketso meanwhile beat a culpable homicide rap related to his involvement in a car accident on Kingsway in Maseru in July 1999 which resulted in the death of the driver of the other vehicle involved.

### Lesotho in Guinness Book of Records?

Lesotho for the Guinness Book of Records?? This is a potential curious end note to the long running trail of 31 police officers on high treason and related charges which concluded in July 2000, 978 days after the proceedings had commenced November 24, 1997 – quite likely to be the longest known criminal trial in history according to local sources. The trial had arisen from events in February 1997 in which a number of police officers rebelled against their superiors and temporarily took control of Maseru Central Police Station. The outcome has been fairly tame in comparison to this record setting process however – five out of 31 were fully acquitted and the rest sentenced to various terms no greater then three years — most of which the parties had already served while in gaol during the trial.

### Economy takes dive in last two years



Lesotho's political difficulties have not helped the economy – all the key numbers continue to slide from 1998 onwards. The growth that was experienced on the back of the Highlands Water Scheme construction, surges in relation to the mining sector in South Africa, and the growth of the textile industry in Lesotho has not been sustained. Growth in Gross Domestic Product registered negative 5% in 1998 and is estimated to have rebounded to positive 0.2% in 1999. The forecast for 2000 is only marginally encouraging, 2.2% growth. Per capita this represents a shrinking of about 10% over that period of time. Unfortunately this trend may well continue into the future as. Aside from the next stage of the Highlands Water Scheme, there seem to be precious few domestic sources of opportunity in Lesotho's increasingly marginalized economy. Added to this is the declining contribution of migrant income to Lesotho's coffers. This counts for Gross National Product which has been declining even more steeply on average than GDP. With more Basotho becoming domiciled in South Africa, reported migrant mining employment has fallen to only 69,000 by 1999, about half the level it attained some time years earlier. This income has been, and still continues to be, critical to the economic well being of Lesotho rural inhabitants. Unemployment looks set to become an ever more serious problem with an estimated 20,000 new job seekers entering the labor market every year.

#### Bad news on the HIV/AIDS front ...



Economic performance will face further pressure – as unfortunately will almost all countries on Southern and Eastern Africa – from the impact of HIV/AIDS. The government of Lesotho is quite prepared to admit now – as was not the case two or three years ago – that the country is suffering from very high and growing rates of HIV infection bringing higher mortality rates from AIDS related maladies. No matter what is done now, it will take time to arrest and reverse the trends. At least public expenditure and health sector programs are being used to fight the rate of further infection. Numbers we have seen put infection rates for women at 26% and men at

12%. The latter figure should probably be higher than that but it is likely that women are suffering more – and that transmission through childbirth is a major worry (prenatal women screened are testing at about 35%). This is a growing culture and gender issue as well as an economic and social nightmare in the making.

... And not too much more to be encouraged about on poverty.

A major new poverty study (*Poverty and Livelihoods in Lesotho* 2000) was reported issued in August 2000, with John Gay and David Hall as the principal authors for the Lesotho based Sechaba Consultants. The study provides a time series dating back to 1991 as data is compiled on the same group of households – 3200 in 130 different villages – for a number of different years. One of the main findings – unsurprising in the light of what has been happening in the mines – is that unemployment is an evergrowing phenomenon. Gay and Hall report unemployment levels in excess of 80% in each of the areas studied. The number of destitute families (less than M40 or 65 cents per household member per month) is as high as 86% in the Eastern Mountains and still quite high at 25% in the relatively better off Maseru district. The decline in mine employment taken together with the lack of any growth prospects in commercial agriculture is condemning rural Lesotho to an ever bleaker future.

Ray of sunshine comes from performances of national soccer team Likoena Crocodiles rock!



And now for some good news! Soccer mad Lesotho has something to cheer about and that could certainly help country morale that has been sagging under the weight of many social, economic and political problems. The national team Likoena (the Crocodiles) has been turning in an increasingly impressive series of results against traditional stronger opponents. This started with a first ever appearance in the final of the COSAFA Castle Cup for southern African national teams. It ended in defeat in the home and home final - a 3-0 reverse to Zimbabwe at Setsoto Stadium in Maseru and defeat by the same score in Bulawayo. This still represented a lift after Lesotho has gone out of the World Cup qualifying competition – to South Africa in April 2000. However better was to come in the qualifying tournament (round robin) for the biennial Africa Cup of Nations. At this writing with half the fixtures completed Lesotho stands top of the group containing perennial power Ghana as well as Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe. The stand out result to date? - a 2-1 win in Zimbabwe, sweet revenge indeed!



Anais Alexander says:

You have helped to create this library, assisted in giving choices and opportunities for people who would otherwise never had them. This project would have never been possible without all of the donations from people in the US. On behalf of Moleko Naha, Maboee Maboee, and the surrounding communities, I thank you! Kea Leboha

# Pres Letter, continued

(Continued from page 1)

over the last few years. George and I were in the same group that went to Lesotho in June of 1976 – he taught at Cana near TY. We have remained close friends since and until this year, had managed to meet every fall with some other volunteers and staff from that era for a Columbus Day weekend in either Lake George, New York or the Pocono's in Pennsylvania. The first few years, the reunions were as childless couples staying up half the night reliving old times; the more recent reunions have seen the children of some of the group off to college and the parent's in bed or asleep on the couch at 10 p.m. But the memories are just as good – highly exaggerated but just as good!

Anyway, thanks George for all of your efforts. Hopefully you will wax poetic from time to time about the obvious connections between Lesotho and the New York Yankees.



This issue of the Friends of Lesotho (FOL) newsletter contains a ton of good information – we hope you enjoy reading it. I do want to comment on a couple of things. Many thanks to Steve Brushett for summarizing information from a variety of sources for our News section. While one can find much information on the web about Lesotho, it is nice to see it all in one place. If any of you have additional information you would like to share (obviously from reliable sources) please do not hesitate to pass it on.

As you can see from our front-page article, we are planning to have an event in Washington DC in September as part of Peace Corps 40th anniversary celebration. We will continue to firm up the details and we certainly encourage everyone to attend. The Lesotho Embassy has kindly offered to serve as host for our event scheduled for the afternoon of Saturday, September 22, 2001. We would

like to know as soon as possible how many of you might be attending so please let us know. Write a note on the membership renewal form if you plan to come and list how many might be attending with you. This will enable us to give some preliminary estimates to the Embassy. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible – these functions are always a good time.

One of the things we hope to accomplish at the event is to find volunteers to serve on the Board of FOL. As I have written before, we really need an infusion of energy from some of the more recently returned volunteers. The September event will mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FOL. Please come with the thought of helping FOL remain a strong and viable organization.

One of the areas we could use some help (other than a new President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.!!) is in the area of book donations. We have received a number of requests from current volunteers as well as their family and friends to assist in mailing books for use in schools and libraries in Lesotho. While we do help out when we can, mailing can be expensive and there is always an issue about what types of books to send. While we wish to encourage this type of effort, our resources to support it are pretty thin. We would really like someone to step forward and become our book donation coordinator. This person would handle the requests we receive and hopefully be able to work out some of the logistics involved to ensure that we can provide as much ongoing support as possible. Please let us know if this would interest you.

Finally, we continue to receive letters and pictures from Basotho and volunteers thanking FOL for the support they have offered for various projects. Those are the letters I look forward to opening. We have included some in this newsletter and have a backlog to include in our next newsletter. Thanks to all of you for your continued support. Your generosity allows us to continue to send funds. The results are obvious.

# **New Members and Address Changes**

Since the August 2000 Directory

### **DELTON ALLEN**

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#### **EDNA BOORADY**

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#### **JODY CROLLA**

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#### SCOTT EHRSAM

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Teacher of Math Education, husband Doug, children Dylan & Cheyenne, ph: 901-751-6860 kgrabia-otto@lausanneschool.com

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#### DAVE RUCH

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#### **CATHERINE ZANDONELLA**

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1990-93 Seforong, Education Gred Student, Environmental Health, Univ. of CA Berkeley, ph: 714-870-7243

### Letters of Thanks



Thanks to FOL, we were able to purchase materials necessary to paint and erect a sign along the main road, showing where our school is located. Since the sign was put up, we have gotten recognition—finally people know where we are!

Jennifer Orenic and Courtney Wheeler, PSV's, Kananelo Centre



We are very greatfull of the gifts the volleyball and the football, that Craig Buscher gave to us from you. We thank you for your participation in the development of our community concerning sports. We wish you good luck for your life. May God Bless You. Thank You Linotsi Football Club, Mokhotlong

## FOL Web Page: www.friendsoflesotho.org

The FOL web site now contains an audio section of Se-Sotho phrases. A PCV from the May '01 group recently requested information from FOL about pronunciations. After many attempts to sound out words in writing, the audio section was created. We hope it helps give a head start to new volunteers in their language training. About one third of the web site visitors are believed to be new volunteers preparing to go to Lesotho.

Over the last few months more and more letters from current PCVs have been received and posted on the site. Many of these were published in the last newsletter, but more are coming all the time. Please visit the site from time to time for the latest.

Additional material for the site is greatly appreciated. If you have pictures, artwork, stories, or news you'd like to share, please contact Bill Dunn via the site. The average number of pages viewed per month has increased to about 1,500 with visitors from such diverse places as Australia, Bulgaria and Namibia, as well as Lesotho itself. Bill Dunn



Some recipients of the Tuition Assistance Program to which FOL contributes: Abuti Mothae, Ausi Ntsoki, Abuti Teboho at Ribang High School.

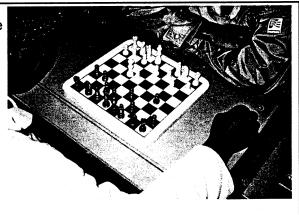
FYI: A Lesotho web site well worth the wander is: http://www.morijafest.com/morijafest. Great pictures.

### More Letters of Thanks

Special Education School called Thuso e tla Tsao kae? (The help will come from where?) has 26 disabled students and no government funding. The FOL grant Pamela Stutz, PCV, received paid for soccer balls, tennis balls, playing cards, scissors, glue, markers and other art supplies.



I would like to thank you for the generous contribution your fund made towards the purchase of chess boards at Thaba-Tseka Technical Institute. The Chess Club is one of the most popular clubs at school, with 8-10 boys attending our weekly meeting. It has been remarkable how quickly students have picked up the nuances of the game. I was



considered a good chess player back in America, but there is a first year student at TTI that consistently bests me.

It is remarkable to think that so much good has been done for this community because of a three hundred Maloti donation (\$50). Thanks again! Matt Diver, PCV



Tara Loyd used FOL supplied materials to create a communication book for severely hearing impaired Palo in Standard 6. He has different choices of sentence strips in the front of his book that he can choose to combine with the different picture cards and verbs that are part of each page. He takes his book with him everywhere. He is definitely excited and very proud of his book and options for communication.

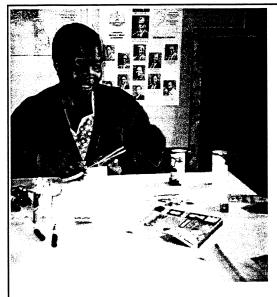
On behalf of Early Childhood development teachers and my office may I thank you for your support in making our workshop a success. We really appreciate your support. Both teachers and children will benefit a lot from the things they have done.

The ministry of Education ECD unit was very much impressed with the materials we made. They thanked Peace Corp office for their great support. We also thank our Peace Corp Volunteer who made it possible by organising and supervising the workshop.

We wish you the best of luck in your work and also making other projects a success.

Thank you 'M'ampe M Moeletsi, ECCD Officer, NTT

### More Thanks



I received an FOL Grant for assisting in mini Saturday morning workshops that I am holding for local teachers. I had workshops showing teachers how to make books, puzzles and puppets. The teachers who have attended these workshops are excited to learn these new skills using materials that they have available in the villages.

The grant money was used to buy glue sticks, scissors, wool, markers and other art supplies that are not readily available to teachers in the area. These items have helped make the workshops go more smoothly, as now 5 teachers do not have to share one pair of scissors and a single glue stick. The photo is of one of the teachers, 'Me Manchee, using the items bought with the grant money.

Thank you again for the grant money that has assisted in bringing new ideas to local preschool, primary and secondary school teachers.

Pamela Stutzman, PCV

November 15, 2000

Dear Don Spicer,

On November 2, 2000, I conducted an HIV/AIDS workshop for my five primary schools' teachers. The workshop focused on the immune system and how HIV attacks it. It also taught the teachers about the disease progression and how HIV develops into AIDS. This workshop was very informative to them, as the information mainly being taught is how HIV is transmitted and how to prevent yourself from getting it. The five teachers who participated in this hand-on workshop benefited greatly from the information being presented.

FOL contributed to the success of this workshop by donating R122 for photocopying the immune system, disease progression, and cure or treatment lesson plans. The lesson plans came from the new Peace Corps Life Skills manual. It was necessary to have funding for photocopying since the Peace Corps office is unable to provide this service due to the large quantity needed and the unreliableness of their machines. Unfortunately not as many teachers came as I had expected. Therefore the left over copies were donated back to FOL (Lesotho) for another PCV to request and use.

Thank you so much for FOL's contribution. Because of your support my teachers now have the materials and lesson plans to re-teach these lessons to their students.

Yours gratefully,

Melinda Daugherty, PRT Volunteer



Metsoalle ea Lesotho, Friends of Lesotho Newsletter

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Dorothy Holland: Newsletter. 21 Paseo de Angel South, Santa Fe NM 87505, 505 474-9041

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#### Metsoalle ea Lesotho

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#### 01/01

I am writing this letter to thank FOL for the kind donations which supported a "lipopi" workshop for my environment club and local pre-school teachers. KEY (Khukhune Environment and Youth) Club wanted to learn how to make lipopi, or dolls in an environmentally friendly way. Each student and each pre-school teacher that attended the event took home two lipopi. A total of 50 lipopi were made that day. What made these lipopi unique and eco-friendly was the way we went about stuffing the dolls.

Each participant had to bring at least 10 plastic bags to the workshop, and I had collected many in preparation for the day.

We stuffed all 50 dolls with cut up plastic bags, thereby re-using plastic which often litter the towns. The KEY Club, pre-school teachers, and myself would all like to thank FOL immensely for supporting our workshop and helping to teach other community members about eco-friendly arts and crafts projects. Kea Leboha!!!

Sincerely, Amy Franklin, Environment PCV / 1999-2001

