



FRIENDS OF LESOTHO

METSOALLE ea LESOTHO

Third Quarter 2014
Newsletter

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FOL President Appointed Honorary Consul



Scott Rosenberg (R) with Lesotho Minister of Protocol Moshuli Leteka, Summer 2014, Maseru. Photo Credit: Thabo Moseunyane

Friends of Lesotho President Scott Rosenberg was appointed Honorary Consul by the Lesotho Embassy in Washington, DC. He will represent Lesotho in Ohio and the Midwest and help facilitate greater cooperation between the two countries to promote Lesotho's trade, tourism, investment, and cultural activities to Americans, and he will also assume protocol responsibilities for visiting Basotho dignitaries. The current Ambassador to the US, serving in the Washington DC consulate, is Ambassador Molapi Sepetane.



Photo Credit: Linda Henry, RPCV

Was There a Coup or Not?

By Ella Kwisnek, RPCV 92-94, Lesotho Agricultural College, kwisnek@duq.edu

A quarterly newsletter is not an ideal place for fast-breaking news, so thanks to RPCV Ella Kwisnek for compiling this log of events that made front pages on world newspapers during August and Sept 2014. ~ Ed.

What happened? On Saturday, August 30, 2014, there was a reported "coup d'état attempt by the military" in Lesotho. Soldiers reportedly disarmed police and one police officer was killed as the result of an exchange of gunfire between soldiers and police.

Prime Minister Motsoahae Thomas Thabane fled to South Africa and accused his deputy Mothetjoa Metsing of being behind the army's actions. Foreign Ministers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) States met with the leaders of the three political parties that made up Lesotho's Coalition government in an attempt to resolve the conflict.

The army stated that they were not staging a coup, but rather working to prevent police from arming a political faction in advance of a demonstration planned for Monday, September 1, 2014, which was protesting Thabane's suspension of Parliament.

Peace Corps Volunteers were consolidated in nearby South Africa locations. Consolidation is a precautionary safety measure that Peace Corps deploys in times of emergency, and does not necessarily lead to evacuation from the country.

What Led to This? After the May 2012 elections failed to produce an outright winner, the All Basotho Convention (ABC) of Thomas Thabane, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) of Mothetjoa Metsing, and the Basotho National Party (BNP) of Thesele Maseribane formed an "uneasy" coalition.

In late spring, the LCD asserted that Thabane was making crucial government decisions without consulting the two coalition partners and called for mediation by the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL). The LCD warned that the Prime Minister's conduct could lead to the disintegration of the three-party coalition government.

Indeed, in June 2014, the coalition began to dissolve as Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) leader and Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Mothetjoa Metsing left the coalition pact to form a new alliance with the rival Democratic Congress (DC) of former Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili. The LCD asserted that "...we

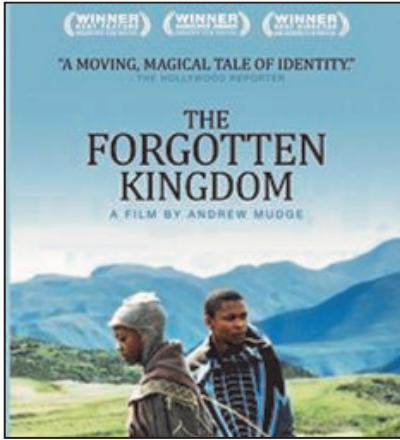
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METSOALLE ea LESOTHO

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www.forgottenkingdomthemovie.com



Was There a Coup or Not?

(Continued from page 1)


cannot continue to be party to such a coalition where the powers and offices of the people are becoming tools to persecute, purge and instill fear to the citizenry.”

After Metsing’s departure, Thabane suspended Parliament. As long as Parliament is not in session, Thabane does not have to face a no-confidence vote.

Through SADC interventions led by Namibian President Hafikupunye Pohamba, Metsing agreed to rescind his deal with the Democratic Congress (DC), if Thabane would move to end the prorogation of Parliament. But Thabane reportedly suspected that this was a ruse and that as soon as he reopened Parliament he would face a no-confidence vote.

With Parliament still suspended, LCD planned the demonstration noted above. It was alleged that the police, who support Thabane, were going to arm a political faction to disrupt the demonstration. The army, which is reportedly loyal to Metsing, seized weapons from the police to prevent them from arming a political faction.

What’s next? As a result of the peace talks in South Africa, the leaders of the Coalition Government committed to working together to restore political normalcy and law and order, in the Kingdom and issued a joint statement appealing for calm. They agreed on a roadmap toward these goals, to be submitted to the King, with clear timelines for removing the Parliament prorogation.

When he initially returned to Lesotho from South Africa on September 1, Thabane pledged to re-open Parliament on September 19. However, on September 8, he indicated that the re-opening would be postponed in order to ascertain who is in charge of the Lesotho army. Thabane insists that Maaparankoe Mahao, whom he appointed, is in charge because he removed Army Commander General, Tlali Kamoli. However, an army spokesperson said Kamoli is still in charge. There were rumors that Kamoli fled with a group of soldiers to the mountains in preparation for war against the government. South African President Jacob Zuma travelled to Lesotho on September 9, 2014, in an effort to defuse tension, and worked with leaders to move up the date of elections, scheduled for 2017, “as soon as possible.” 

On-line sources 8/30 – 9/8/2014: <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6192>; <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6101>; <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6098>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29010132>; <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6863>; <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6878>; <http://allafrica.com/stories/20140910969.html>; http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2014-09/10/c_126968159.htm; http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2014-09/08/c_126962914.htm; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201409090739.html>

Shopping?? Please use Smile.Amazon.com. Be sure to select Friends of Lesotho as the organization. Amazon donates part of your purchase to Friends of Lesotho year round, with no extra charge to the customer, if you use Smile.Amazon.com. So, SMILE while you shop!



Meet Michelle Wilcox, Ed PCV in Sehlabathebe



Michelle Wilcox.
Photo Credit: Michelle's Host Sister, Ausi Alice

Growing up in the Green Mountain State of Vermont, I thought I knew what mountains were and the agriculture life. When I stepped onto the soils of Lesotho for the first time, I knew I was wrong.

My name is Michelle Wilcox and I am a Peace Corps Volunteer serving in Lesotho as a Primary English teacher in the remote regions of Sehlabathebe, Qacha's Nek.

After completing the mainstream route of education, I wanted to educate myself on an international platform, to see the world from another view point, and to explore the field of international relations. The Peace Corps was that ticket to do so – literally.

A first glimpse of Lesotho from a distance and you see these vast mountains full of depth and wonder. As you approach closer, you start to see the finer details; the animals grazing in the fields under the watchful eyes of the herd boys, a cluster of *rondavels* that make up small villages scattered throughout the mountains, the Basotho wrapped in their colorful blankets which symbolize the essence of who these people are, and the real focus of my service, the children who are running down the mountains playing with their self-made footballs.

My primary role as an Education Volunteer includes HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention through programs like Grassroots Soccer and Life Skills education. Other service projects include World Wise Schools and one in its very beginning stages that promotes tourism and skill-building for youth through handicrafts.

One word that could describe Lesotho is 'potential'. And potential is something you can work with. Lesotho's natural resources of water, sun, and wind have energy just waiting to be tapped. Lesotho also has scenes that don't make sense to modern eyes. Such as herd boys texting on their cell-phones while riding donkeys, or areas that have paved roads with vehicles, but no electricity or running water. Nevertheless, the Basotho are welcoming and for the most part quite at peace with the world. Lesotho is also a country where a lens eye cannot do justice to the imagery captured by the naked eye.



Michelle with Standard 2 pupils, singing in English about days of the week.
Photo Credit: Peace Corps Lesotho



Michelle with 'M'e 'Makhotso at 2013 Pre-Service Training.
Photo Credit: Matthew Merritt, PCV

In terms of international development, I am inexperienced. But I am glad to learn about it on a hands-on level and can see how international development truly works on front lines. A challenge and a success is that Peace Corps works at the grassroots, community level. With Africa being a focus for projects supported by many non-profit organizations and corporate entities, sustainability and self-sufficiency can be difficult to implement or to demonstrate to those who expect results. However, in the end it is worth the efforts and I accept the possibility that the successes during my service may be immeasurable and invisible.

Already a year into my service, my reasons for why I joined the Peace Corps are changing. At the end of my service or maybe even in following years, I'll know the concrete answer of why I am here in this present moment. For now, I just know I want to be here.

One of my fellow Volunteers recently said, "Lesotho is the greatest country you have never heard of." I believe tourism is the industry that can preserve a culture and its land while boosting Lesotho's economy on the world stage. So when someone says, "The Forgotten Kingdom" or "the tiny country completely surrounded by South Africa..." others will one day say, "You are talking about Lesotho, the beautiful Mountain Kingdom in the Sky."

Editor: Michelle arrived in Lesotho November 2013. You can write her at

mwilcox.lsc12@gmail.com or follow her on Twitter @pcvmwilcox_wws





Litaba tsa Lesotho (News from Lesotho)

By Ella Kwisnek, RPCV 92-94, Lesotho Agricultural College, kwisnek@duq.edu

198-Carat Diamond Found in Lesotho

Letšeng Diamonds recovered an exceptional white, high quality 198-carat diamond. The Chief Executive Officer of Gem Diamonds, Mr Clifford Elphick, said this latest recovery is indicative of the mine's growing reputation of producing high quality diamonds of large size. It is the highest dollar per carat kimberlite diamond mine ever recorded anywhere. Since Gem Diamonds' purchased Letšeng in 2006, the mine has produced four of the top 20 largest white gem quality diamonds recorded in the world. Gem Diamonds owns 70 percent of Letšeng mine in Lesotho while the government holds the other 30 percent. Thanks to Kevin Freer: <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6633>

Lesotho Team Qualifies for African Cup of Nations

For the first time ever, the Lesotho football team earned the right to join Africa's elite in the final group stage round of the African Cup of Nations 2015 qualifications.

Lesotho caused an upset as they held Kenya to a 0-0 draw in Nairobi. That, combined with 1-0 victory in Maseru, led to the unprecedented spot in the group stages. Lesotho will now play in Group C of the qualifiers where they will face Angola, Burkina Faso and Gabon. Thanks to Kevin Freer: <http://www.bbc.com/sport/0/football/28630738> & <http://www.just-football.com/2014/08/afcon-2015-africa-cup-of-nations-minnows-lesotho-kenya/>

Thabane Defends Guptas' Diplomatic Status

Prime Minister Thomas Thabane defended his decision to issue diplomatic passports, usually reserved only for official representatives of nations, to members of the Gupta family, powerful India-connected South African millionaires, and he rejected opposition demands to withdraw this vital recognition. The Gupta family has a number of business interests in South Africa -- mining, aviation, technology, and media, including publishing The New Age newspaper and establishing ANN7, a digital TV news network. The Guptas indicated that they intended to invest in the mining sector in Lesotho, and Thabane stated that the passports were designed to facilitate their investments in the county. http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/lesotho-defends-guptas-diplomatic-status-1.1740240#.VAR_CivD_IU

Lerotholi Polytechnic Closed Following Deaths

Lerothodi Polytechnic closed after the bodies of two first-year students, Motlatsi Matete and Tokelo Masiu, were found along the Caledon River after they were allegedly killed by senior students during an initiation ceremony for newcomers. This follows the death of two students in 2012, which resulted in murder charges being filed against six other students. <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6838>

African Growth and Opportunity Act

The future of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which is legislation passed by the United States in 2000, was part of the discussion at the three-day United States – Africa Leaders' Summit in August 2014. AGOA gives trade preference to least developed Sub-Saharan African states to export certain goods duty-free into the United States market, and is now set to continue beyond its initial September 2015 expiration date.

Although Lesotho has benefited from the privilege by manufacturing and exporting textiles and apparel, it has to import fabric. Thus, the local textile and garment industry is dominated almost entirely by investors from Taiwan.

Minister of Trade and Industry S'khulumisoale said Lesotho hopes to empower the local private sector to have an increased role in the U.S. market by diversifying into areas such as agro-processing. He said processing products such as tomatoes, cheese, and fruits would create a value chain that would help to create employment for Basotho. <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6630>

Standard Lesotho Bank Designs Product for Children

Standard Lesotho Bank unveiled a new banking product targeting children called the Hippo Children's Account. The account is designed to enhance financial literacy by young people and encourage them to save money. <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6461>

Marketing Local Tourism

On the invitation of the Lesotho Tourist Development Corporation (LTDC), local Basotho were encouraged to enjoy Malealea Lodge, nestled in Mafeteng's Matelile Plateau. The visit was part of a new initiative to promote domestic tourism in a series of profile-raising trips aimed at encouraging Basotho to know and visit the various beauty spots and tourist attractions the country boasts. <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6824>

U.S. Awards Grants

The United States Embassy awarded grants totaling US\$35,000 (about M370, 000) to three local non-governmental organizations to promote democracy and fundamental human rights in Lesotho. The three organizations which were awarded the grants are: Federation of Women Lawyers – Lesotho (FIDA), Lesotho National Federation of Organization of the Disabled (LNFOD), and Women and Law in Southern Africa-Lesotho (WLSA). <http://publiceye.co.ls/?p=6843>





11,250 Mile RPCV Reunion Roadtrip

By **Dyan Van Dusen**, RPCV 2003-06, Moriija/Mazenod, dyanvandusen@gmail.com

I've driven cross-country several times over the past 38 years, but with the flexibility of the newly retired, I embarked on an 8-week, 11,250 mile USA mega-circuit to find all my old RPCV buddies from Lesotho. In all, I connected with 16 RPCVs from my years in Lesotho (2003-06) and six years on the Friends of Lesotho Board of Directors (2006-12), and added in a few family members to boot. On May 17, 2014, I started from my home in California, and drove counter-clockwise through Arizona, toward Florida, a bounteous home of Mountain Kingdom RPCVs. Thanks for great hospitality enroute:

Dotty Whiteside, Placentia, CA

Adam and Stephanie Springer and Neo, their beautiful baby boy, Tucson, AZ

After a very long stretch exploring the Gulf Coast areas of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and the Florida Panhandle, I headed to **Kevin Freer's** home in Altamonte Springs, Florida. Kevin distinguished himself serving on the Friends of Lesotho Board for 10 years, including serving as its President, and he's now one of their "elders" for advice and institutional history. In Florida, my best RPCV buddy **Rose Paradise** joined me for the rest of the adventure, so suddenly the navigation improved as did the stories of our great years in the Kingdom in the Sky.

Rose and I linked up at the home of **Nicole Potsane** in North Miami Beach, Florida, where Nicole is an art teacher by day and does the graphics for the Friends of Lesotho newsletters late into some nights. Hospitality there was extended by her husband Moseli, who she met in Lesotho, and their very cute baby. Father and son had recently returned from a family visit to Lesotho. Special thanks to:

Amy Sindler, College Park, FL, next door to Kevin Freer

Amy Hewett who recently moved to Coconut Grove, FL from NC

Texys Morris and her brother Bradford, Birmingham, AL

Hazel Domingue, who took us to watch soccer at Soldier's Field, Chicago, IL


A four-hour car ferry across Lake Michigan landed us in dairyland, Wisconsin, where we met for the first time **Maddy Uraneck**, current *Metsoalle ea Lesotho* editor, and visited with **Mary Ann Feutz**, who has done noble duty as RPCVs of Wisconsin Madison's Past President. More good friends:

Richard and Tlotlisang Rowan, another "PC couple" and Board member," St. Paul, Minnesota

Chuck Kuehn, Seattle, WA

Dick and Pam Nystrom, Portland, OR- also past Friends of Lesotho Board member

The last leg of our trip was a ride along the beautiful Oregon and California coasts to my home in Oakland.

Little Angels needs support. Throughout the trip, I heard many stories about Rose's on-going Little Angels Day Care/Pre-School project in in Thaba Bosiu, Lesotho. Rose founded and has shepherded it for the past seven years. Coming directly from Lesotho, Rose is in the states to set up a non-profit 501(c)3 for Little Angels, and hopes to return to Lesotho in October 2014. It would be wonderful if she could return with some extra funds from some of you RPCV Big Angels! One hundred such "Big Angels" willing to provide \$100 each would just about cover what it takes to feed and educate the 45 orphans for a year. If you're inclined, please contact Rose directly: Rose Paradise <montica05@yahoo.com>. Thank everyone for your past contributions to Little Angels, through Friends of Lesotho, outlined in the Annual Report: <http://www.friendsoflesotho.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Friends-of-Lesotho-2013-Annual-Report-FINAL.pdf> 



Photos: (clockwise from top left): Dyan & Rose with Richard & Tlotlisang Rowan; Stephanie, Neo, & Adam Springer; Nicole Potsane & Amy Hewett; Dotty Whiteside; Kevin Freer & Amy Sindler; Dick & Pam Nystrom; Hazel Domingue.



Wittenberg Service Learning Summer in Lesotho

Contributed by **Scott Rosenberg**, RPCV 1989-91 and Fulbright 95-96, srosenberg@wittenberg.edu

During June and July 2014, as part of a service learning program, 26 students from Ohio's Wittenberg University traveled to Lesotho with Dr. Scott Rosenberg. During their month in Lesotho, the students worked on building two houses for orphan-headed households in the Nazareth / St. Michaels area. They planted 150 trees at a school in Ha Abia, and helped develop a sports and vocational center in Thaba Bosiu by setting up an office, starting a library, and building a greenhouse. With then PCV (now RPCV) Beth Pagan, they worked at St. Gerard's Primary School in Berea, building a playground and painting all the classrooms, complete with wall-sized world maps. The students hiked in Thaba Bosiu and Morija and attended a dozen lectures by local NGO staff and professors at the National University of Lesotho. All wish to thank Friends of Lesotho for its generous support of project work.








Photos (L to R): Helping to expand Thaba Basiu Vocational Center; Planting fruit trees at Ha Abia school; Building a house for OVC children starts with carrying water to make cement, Nazareth, Maseru District.



Global Charities Supporting Lesotho

Compiled by **Kevin Freer**, RPCV 1976-78, Thaba Tseka, Mashai/Ha Theko, NTTC
Past President, Friends of Lesotho, kfreer@cfl.rr.com

The international NGOs listed below have development projects funded by charities with missions similar to Peace Corps Lesotho's. Their news releases, photos, newsletters, funding appeals and other resources can expand our understanding of how to continue to meet the needs of the people of Lesotho. Approaches taken by such organizations may provide promotion and programming ideas for Friends of Lesotho. Know about other groups? Send us information we can share in future newsletters.

 http://www.actionlesotho.ie/index.htm	<p style="text-align: center;">IRELAND</p> <p>Action Lesotho works to support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Lesotho. The Action Lesotho team also works with community groups to identify and prioritize the needs in the local area. These include the development of small business initiatives, training/education and care-in-the-community projects. We believe that the way out of poverty is through access to information, education and trade.</p>
 http://helplesotho.org/	<p style="text-align: center;">CANADA</p> <p>Help Lesotho is an international development organization working in the AIDS-ravaged country of Lesotho. Help Lesotho delivers education, leadership development and psychosocial support programs for 10,000 rural children, youth and grandmothers annually. HIV/AIDS and gender equity are embedded in all our programs with a special focus on girls and women. Help Lesotho is an effective, sustainable organization working at the grass-roots level to support the next generation of leaders for an AIDS-free Lesotho.</p>
 http://www.lesothofriends.net/	<p style="text-align: center;">NORWAY</p> <p>Friends of Lesotho Association in Norway is an association of Norwegians and other residents in Norway who for one reason or another are interested in Lesotho and wish to promote the country's interests and spread information about Lesotho in Norway. The Association has been established in consultation with the Embassy of the Kingdom of Lesotho accredited to Norway.</p>
 http://www.princehenryofwales.org/prince-harry/charities	<p style="text-align: center;">UNITED KINGDOM</p> <p>In 2006, Prince Harry co-founded Sentebale, a charity to help orphans in Lesotho, South Africa. Prince Harry was moved by the plight of children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic which has devastated the country. Together with his great friend Prince Seeiso of Lesotho, the younger brother of King Letsie III, Prince Harry set up Sentebale to offer long-term support to community organizations working with children and young people, and in particular to those working with orphans.</p>
 http://lumela.dk/	<p style="text-align: center;">DENMARK</p> <p>The NGO Denmark Lesotho Network (DLN) was founded in 2002 by former Danish development workers in Lesotho. DLN aims at supporting Lesotho NGO's in their work to develop civil society. DLN uses its network of people and organisations in Lesotho to pinpoint beneficiaries and to monitor funding. DLN enhances knowledge of the living conditions in Lesotho and seeks funding from foundations, business enterprises and organisations for projects in Lesotho.</p>



Is Lesotho in the Goldilocks Zone?

By **Shawn Joshi**, current Peace Corps Volunteer, joshisvcu90@gmail.com

We all know how important water is. Hama, the original blood bender from the Southern Water Tribe in the Avatar Universe, once said, "Where there is life, there is water."

Physicists understand the importance of water when looking for hospitable planets in what is known as the Goldilocks Zone. If the Exoplanet is too far from or too close to the parent star, liquid water won't exist. At the moment, liquid water is something that does not exist in my village, nor many other places in Lesotho. In this post, I will compare how we use water in Lesotho and the US. There are 4 categories that will be discussed: Showers, Dishes, Clothes, and Toilets.

Showers: How long is your average shower? I know mine was about 40 minutes. I wouldn't even use soap. I would just stand there, thinking about how I would get to space, why I don't have super powers, or even where I should eat. That was about 88 gallons per shower. I know...I was wasteful, and not even that clean.

In the United States, showerheads are limited to 2.2 Gallons per minute. The average shower time in the states is 10 minutes for a male, and 18 minutes for a female. Therefore the average person uses 31 Gallons of water per shower.

To get ready in Lesotho, we bucket bathe. I heat up 1 scoop of water and mix it with 2 scoops of cold water to get that perfect temperature. The scoop that most Basotho and I use is 1.5L. Therefore my bucket baths amount to 4.5L or 1.2 Gallons. To summarize, a typical American will get ready with 31 Gallons of water, and a typical Mosotho will get ready with 1.2 gallons, a 96.1% difference.

Dishes: The average dishwasher in The States uses 45 gallons per load. To wash the same amount of dishes, I use 4 scoops of water, which is 6L or 1.55 gallons. Basotho use 96.6% less water to wash the same amount of dishes as Americans.

Clothes: A typical top-loading washing machine uses about 40 gallons per load. For the same amount of laundry, My 'M'eighbor (She is my 'M'e and my neighbor) uses about 40L or 10.3 gallons. Basotho use 74.3% less water to wash the same amount of clothes as Americans.

Toilets: The average American flush of the glorious porcelain throne is about 1.6 Gallons per flush. The average person visits the toilet about 7 times a day for his or her diverse excretory needs. That's a total of 11.2 gallons in a day.

In the remote villages of Lesotho, we do not use water for our business. Instead we have outdoor pit latrines. For those 7 times the average Basotho and I use the latrine, we use zero water. We also have convenient indoor "pee" buckets designed for that nighttime urgent awakening.

Basotho use 100% less water than Americans to relieve themselves.

A Math Problem: Here is a math problem. If Joe Americano and Abuti Tebatso (my Sesotho name) have a typical day -- they use the bathroom 7 times, wash one load of laundry, wash the same amount of dishes, and get ready in the morning by either showering or bucket bathing -- how much less water does Abuti Tebatso use?

Joe Americano will use 127.2 Gallons. (Average American)

Abuti Tebatso will use 13.1 Gallons. (Average Mosotho)

Basotho use 89.7% less water than Americans.

Take Away: Right now in Lesotho there is a water shortage. The country has been rampaged by a drought for many years. Crops are not as bountiful, rivers are drying out, and dust storms are becoming the norm. I use less than one bucket a week, which is 20L, and that is without trying to conserve. I feel like a water bender in the middle of the desert. Without water, I am wary to bathe. I am wary of cooking pasta or accumulating dishes. I am wary to wear fresh clothes because that means I need to wash more. There is a lot more to worry about than whether the new *Hunger Games Movie* will be sold out.

I am very fortunate to be living in my village where my fellow neighbors, teachers, and principal ask me how I am, and if I have enough water. Even students offer to fetch water for me from far away sources. I urge you to try your best to be less wasteful with the most precious of resources in life.

Pula, Pula, seka tsamaea.

Rain, rain, **don't** go away.

Excerpted from Shawn Joshi's Tuesday, October 1, 2013 entry, "Water" in his blog, African Shawnanigans. Check it out: <http://plannedspont.blogspot.com/> Shawn's blog was honored as one of 20 finalists in Peace Corps' 2014 Blog It Home contest, where Facebook readers voted on their favorite blogs with over 11,000 "likes." Congrats, Shawn!





RPCV-Created Laptops to Lesotho Enters 5th Year

By **Janissa Balcomb**, RPCV 1977-80, Leribe - Maputsoe, Sethlabathebe, St. Boniface

Laptops to Lesotho (L2L), celebrating its fifth anniversary this fall, is a small nonprofit founded in 2009 by Lesotho RPCV Janissa Balcomb and then shouldered by PCV Andrew Dernovsek (2008-09). L2L's mission is to improve educational opportunities for primary school-age children, especially in more remote locations, using laptops as a tool.

2014 Training Earlier this year, L2L conducted its 6th training workshop in Lesotho, this time at Kokobe Primary School, our second project in the Ketane region of the Mofale's Hoek District. The training focused primarily on math. Using customized computer-based math lessons developed by L2L volunteers, we saw very marked progress in students' skills after just a few days.

The customized lessons we created were designed to instantly monitor individual students' progress, so that teachers could immediately see who needed more help and then focus attention on those students. It also allowed teachers to pair students who quickly mastered a particular lesson with students who were struggling. This is especially helpful in overcrowded classrooms. Volunteers observed the classrooms during the day to evaluate students' skill levels. They spent evenings programming the next lesson as well as revising lessons tailored specifically to skills students had difficulty with that day.

Competency & Rewards Students had to achieve a minimum level of competency, usually 80% accuracy, before moving to the next lesson. Students who completed all the day's lessons before the end of class were rewarded with time to play computer games. We designed the computer games specifically to help students develop mouse skills, and customized them with Basotho characters using Sesotho. They loved the games, so this gave them lots of incentive to work hard on their math lessons.

Volunteers Two returning L2L volunteers, Janissa Balcomb and Kathy Plath, had the pleasure of introducing two volunteers visiting Lesotho for the first time ever, Phyl and Sarah Gardner, to the people of Kokobe. All four volunteers enjoyed working with the new Mosotho L2L Project Coordinator, 'M'e Florence Monoto. Florence has become an invaluable asset to our project.

Hardware We now have 45 laptops and a school server for the approximately 200 students attending Kokobe. This year, we added computer mice and headphones, donated by the Unadilla (NY) Rotary Club and Rotary International. The headphones helped alleviate noise problems in the classroom when all the laptops were making sounds at the same time. We also beefed up the solar power system with a new solar panel and deep-cycle battery to power the server.

Challenges As with any grassroots project in a developing nation, our progress often takes the form of "two steps forward, one step back." We believe that to truly ensure success, local participants must control and run this project on their own, we allow staff to make mistakes, even risk failure. One major "step back" involves a lack of mastery of the computer technology by participating teachers. They are not using the laptops as much as we recommend. Part of this problem revolves around the software on the OLPC XO-1 laptops. The free XO software requires far too much time for the teachers to develop classroom lessons, and it offers too few self-taught learning opportunities for students. That is why we are now putting much energy into developing customized lessons.

Future Our first project, at Nohana Primary School, is now independently run by the Basotho teachers there. Thanks to previous grant writing training, the staff at the school will write a grant proposal this year to acquire their own funding to replace worn-out batteries used for the solar electrical system. L2L still provides training and technical support when requested.

We are laying ground work for a third project at Pela Tsoeu, in the Leribe District. We expect to visit the site in early 2015 to begin developing the local human resources there before deploying hardware, probably in 2016. We are committed to staying involved with these schools for the long haul. It takes continued support, mentoring, and encouragement to make meaningful change. Here's hoping we'll still be going strong in another five years!

Learn more about our work at www.laptopstolesotho.org and on our blog at <http://olpc2010-lesotho.blogspot.com/>. You can see lots of pictures of our work on Facebook. Just search for "Laptops to Lesotho photos." To donate, go to <http://www.justgive.org/nonprofits/donate.jsp?ein=27-1239343>. You can contact us at info@laptopstolesotho.org.





Laptops to Lesotho—Volunteer Openings

Laptops to Lesotho (L2L) is expanding, and we need volunteers, preferably with experience in Lesotho. All work is unpaid, but L2L will cover expenses. Except for positions that require travel to Lesotho, all work can be done via email and phone.

Communications & Human Resources Liaison between our U.S.-based organization and Basotho counterparts, to mentor and motivate them, monitor progress, and encourage compliance. Must be able to communicate well with Basotho via phone, text message, and email.

Fundraising 1) Grant Researcher to locate potential new grant sources, primarily for project evaluation and travel expenses. (10-40 hours per year). **2) Fundraising Volunteers.** May range from putting out boxes to collect small electronics and ink cartridges for recycling to hosting a community event. (1 hour per month or 5-40 hours per event)

Lesson Development 1) Educators to create customized computer-based lessons for primary school-age children to use in the classroom and at home. (Flexible, 1-2 hours a week) and **2) Computer-savvy Education Volunteers** to work with Educators to create lessons. Video training available. (Flexible, 1-2 hours a week) and **3) Graphic Designers** to create illustrations and animations for lessons. (Flexible, 3-4 hours per month)

Electrician to design a Lesotho school-based solar-powered electrical system and to remotely train others how to set up, operate, and maintain the system. (10-20 hours per year)

Experienced Teachers to train Basotho instructors how to use laptops as teaching tools. Prior Lesotho experience desirable. Must be able to spend at least 3 weeks in Lesotho between January and April. L2L helps with expenses. (5-20 hours prior to travel, 3+ weeks in Lesotho)

Contact: If interested, please contact Janissa Balcomb, jbalmc@laptopstolesotho.org, +1 208-574-2990 (US Mountain Time). L2L Website: www.laptopstolesotho.org Our blog: <http://olpc2010-lesotho.blogspot.com/>



Dear Electricity

Dear Electricity,

I need to confess: I've cheated on you. Feel bad for it but I have needs, baby.

You're not here in my village so I had to see other light sources like Solar Charger, ParaffinLamp, Portable Bulb and Head Lamp. Feel like I've settled because they just don't measure up to you. Quite frankly, they're not as bright as you were. Bottom line is I miss you, boo. I miss the way you illuminated my living room with the flick of a switch. Miss the way you didn't need batteries to operate. The way you didn't need to be struck with a match to work.

Electricity dear, you were so effortless. I miss you just as much as I miss my family. Miss you more than the bean burrito at Chipotle's. More than the nail polish display at Sephora.

Electricity, I need you now more than you'll ever know.

Baby, come to me. You light up my life.

Forever your love,

Lerato

(AKA Jen Jiggetts)



Reprinted from June 2014 Khotso, Newsletter of Peace Corps Lesotho

Current Volunteer, Jen Jiggetts, ED 13, jenjiggetts@gmail.com



METSOALLE ea LESOTHO

Good Memories Aren't Enough—Put FOL In Your Will

Contributed by Pete Neumann, RPCV 2004-06, Mohales Hoek, St. Elizabeth pneumann1947@yahoo.com

Even young people, even people who aren't rich, should have a will. And certainly older people should have one. Make a difference in the lives of the people of Lesotho for future generations by contributing to FOL's endowment fund in your will.

While your gift will depend on your goals, assets, family considerations, and charitable interests, two common ways of giving, the specific dollar amount and remainder of estate, are summarized here. While we refer to our organization as "Friends of Lesotho" or "FOL," its legal name is "Friends of Lesotho, Inc." In a will or named as a beneficiary in an insurance policy or IRA, use the legal name.

Specific Dollar Amount Sample language for you or your attorney to include:

"I give the sum of \$_____ to Friends of Lesotho, Inc. TAX I.D. #52-1544063, to be used for the benefit of the organization in any manner its Board of Directors deems appropriate. A receipt issued by any officer of such organization shall be a complete release and discharge of my Executor for such payment and my Executor shall not be bound to see to the application thereof. Friends of Lesotho, Inc., may be contacted at 4110 Denfeld Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895."

THANKS!!

Thanks to contributors to this newsletter:

Christina Balch, Janissa Balcomb, Kevin Freer, Eric Goldman, John Hollister, Jen Jiggetts, Shawn Joshi, Sarah Jurewicz, Megan Kelly, Ella Kwisnek, Lynn Minderman, Pete Neumann, Rose Paradise, Zach Rosen, 'M'e Lebohag Ranooe, Scott Rosenberg, Richard Rowan, Deena Rose, Wendy Vandamme, Dyann Van Dusen, Michelle Wilcox

Remainder of Estate Many donors leave a portion of the remainder of their estate to Friends of Lesotho. After providing for relatives and friends, the estate specifies that all or a portion of the remainder be given to Friends of Lesotho. Here is sample language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to Friends of Lesotho, Inc. TAX I.D. #52-1544063, all [or state the fraction or percentage] of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate, both real and personal to be used for the benefit of the organization in any manner its Board of Directors deems appropriate. A receipt issued by any officer of such organization shall be a complete release and discharge of my Executor for such payment and my Executor shall not be bound to see to the application thereof. Friends of Lesotho, Inc., may be contacted at 4110 Denfeld Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895."

Treasurer's Report – Low overhead, generous donations

Current Balances:	5/17/2014	7/15/2014	Difference
Bank Balance (checking)	\$3,312.20	\$4,956.48	\$1,644.28
Bank Balance (savings)	\$48,292.07	\$48,324.30	\$32.23
Total:	\$51,604.27	\$53,280.78	\$1,676.51

Donations Total:	7/16/2014	Treasurer's Report:	
Rotary Club Maseru – Amy Friedheim Scholarships	1/22/2014		\$1,450.00
Little Angels Day Care/Pre-School, Thaba Bosiu	3/12/2014		\$4,785.50
Wittenberg University Projects via Scott Rosenberg	4/23/2014		\$6,769.18
TAP scholarships, Peace Corps Lesotho via PCPP	6/9/2014		\$10,600.00
			\$23,604.68

For detailed Treasurer's Report: FOL Board Treasurer John Hollister, johnh@zappedat.net
For Donations Committee guidelines: FOL Board member Lynn Minderman, lminderman@yahoo.com



Newsletters Past and Present—The FOL Newsletter, *Metsoalle ea Lesotho* is posted on our website homepage (<http://friendsoflesotho.org>) each quarter of the year. The complete set of newsletters is available on our website from Issue Number One, Summer, 1987 to the present. Go to Membership > Newsletters for the archives.

Peace Corps Lesotho in-country Khotso Newsletters are also available on our website. *Khotso* is the official monthly newsletter published by Peace Corps Lesotho and distributed to current Peace Corps Volunteers. Read it and be prepared for some nostalgic memories and a unique reconnection with your own experiences in Lesotho.

Submit Newsletter Articles—Pass on RPCV updates. Recommend a Mt. Kingdom movie, music, book or Website. Share new or old photos. Been to Lesotho lately? Share it!

Submit articles, photos, or information of interest to our members to:

Madeline Uraneck, FOL Newsletter Coordinator (globalmaddy@gmail.com) or send hard copies to her at 2995 Gannon Street, Madison WI 53711, USA



FRIENDS OF LESOTHO

Making a difference at the grassroots level

4110 Denfeld Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895
(301) 942-2751
www.friendsoflesotho.org

*Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone/Home _____ Cell _____

*Email: _____

*Yrs in Lesotho: ____ to ____: *District: _____

*Village: _____

CHED ED Project(s): _____

Occupation/Employer: _____

Newsletters will be sent by e-mail as part of FOL's "GO GREEN" effort. If you prefer postal service, check here .

FOL's Website Member Directory is accessible to members only by use of a secure ID and Password. The fields marked above with an * will be included in the directory. Check here if you do not want to be listed .

Privacy Policy: FOL will not release member information to any organization, except the National Peace Corps Association, upon implied consent when a member joins both FOL and NPCA. FOL will share membership information with other FOL members and prospective PCVs seeking information about Lesotho.

Friends of Lesotho (FOL) is a registered 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. A copy of the current financial statement of Friends of Lesotho is available by writing 4110 Denfeld Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895, or by emailing treas@friendsoflesotho.org. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis MD 21401, (410) 974-5534.

*FOL is affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA). * If you choose to send your FOL dues directly to NPCA in response to their membership solicitation, you must specify FOL as your choice of affiliated group to receive the credit for dues.*

Membership Form

Complimentary--PCVs during service up to 12 months after COS.

Dues Are Per Person

Annual Membership--\$15 \$ _____

Lifetime Membership Options

- Basic--\$250 \$ _____
- Bronze--\$500 \$ _____**
- Silver--\$750 \$ _____**
- Gold--\$1,000 \$ _____**

****Payable in annual installments of \$250**

Additional Donation to FOL \$ _____ for:

- Greatest Need (default option)
- Tuition Assistance Programs
- Memorial Scholarships Fund *In memory of:*

Name _____

Yrs _____ to _____ Dist/Village/Job _____

TOTAL to FOL \$ _____

NPCA Membership--\$35 \$ _____

**FOL will forward to NPCA for you.*

TOTAL CONTRIBUTION: \$ _____

Mail your check and completed form to Friends of Lesotho at the address above or pay by credit card by Clicking on Join/Renew from our website at www.friendsoflesotho.org and select JustGive or Razoo.

For FOL use only. Please do not complete the information below.

Check # _____ Amount \$ _____ Member Since _____ New _____ Source _____

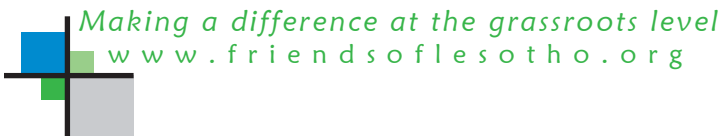
Renew Date _____ Expires _____ No. of Members _____ NPCA _____ 11/01/2010



FRIENDS OF LESOTHO

4110 Denfeld Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895

301.942.2751
board2@friendsoflesotho.org



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Third Quarter 2014
Newsletter



FRIENDS OF LESOTHO

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Additional assistance from the following members:

Website/Database/Social Media: Tammy Benabides, Kieran Conway, Martin Smith

Membership: Jan Kalnbach

Newsletter: Nicole Potsane, Layout Design
Mary Howard, Deena Rowe Krumdick, & Kevin Freer, Proofing
Marisa Ernst, Mailing