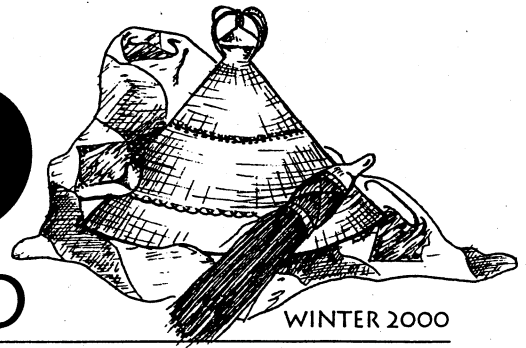


FRIENDS OF LESOTHO

METSOALLE EA LESOTHO



2801 Spencer Road, Chevy Chase, MD 20815 ■ 301/589-4236 ■ George Fanelli, *Editor*

THE GOOD NEWS IS...IT REALLY CANNOT GET ANY WORSE

The last issue of FOL alluded to the dissatisfaction the opposition parties felt about the 23 May 1998 election results.

It may be time for a look at the score board here—The Basotho Congress Party (BCP), headed by former Prime Minister Mokhehle, had been unable to hold its mandated party convention. Prime Minister Mokhehle, rather than risk losing control of the party in a convention, bolted from the BCP and formed a new political party called the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). Mr. Mokhehle took 40 of the 63 BCP Members of Parliament with him to the LCD and, in effect, formed a new majority government. The BCP, along with what had formerly been the opposition party in Parliament, the Basotho National Party (BNP), instantly both became minute opposition parties. The elections were then held and the LCD swept 78 out of 80 constituencies. The leader of the BCP, Molapo Qhobela (you may remember he had been deputy to Mr. Mokhehle prior to the creation of the LCD) and the leader of the BNP, Retselisitoe Sekhonyana, both bitterly contested the election results. The story now continues.

Shortly after the May elections, Pakalitha Mosisili, leader of the LCD (Mr. Mokhehle had relinquished this post to his new deputy

shortly before the elections) became the new Prime Minister. (Very dedicated readers of FOL will refer back to their Fall 1995 issue of FOL and recall how Molapo Qhobela, the current leader of the BCP, but at that time deputy to Ntsu Mokhehle, had tried to convince Mr. Mokhehle to retire as he was 75 at the time.)

Possibly, Mr. Qhobela had been right. Mr. Mokhehle died on Wednesday, 6 January 1999. He had become sick on 26 December and had been transferred to a hospital in Bloemfontein. He was 80 years old at the time of his death.

Events in Lesotho were boiling after the elections. The BCP and the BNP called the results a sham and were calling for an investigation. The South African government agreed to chair a committee (Botswana and Zimbabwe also agreed to be part of the committee) to look into the election results and issue a formal report to the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Prime Minister Mosisili claimed he would resign if the committee's investigation revealed the election results had been rigged.

Now is the time to credit the sources which were used for writing this article. The bulk of the information came from the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

NOTES FROM LESOTHO

EVERY DOLLAR HELPS

The Winter 1997 and August 1998 issues of FOL each had a article on two (2) projects in Lesotho which had been listed in the Peace Corps Partnership Program's November 1996 issue. The first article outlined the projects and the funds needed to see the projects through and the second article reported on the successful completion of both.

Well, there is now another project listed in the Peace Corps Partnership Program in need of funds.

The project, submitted by PCV Mary Plassmeyer, is for the classroom renovation of Safako High School. The roofs are leaking, the floors have been ruined and some classrooms do not even have a ceiling. Needless to say the classroom doors and blackboards have also been ruined. The estimated total cost of the project is \$15,483 and that amount is still needed in order to complete the repairs. If interested, contact:

Peace Corps
Partnership Program
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526
800-424-8580 ext. 2170

The Winter 1997 issue of FOL had a brief item on former Peace Corps Director Donovan Russell's request for stories/recollections from Lesotho to be incorporated into a book he was writing. The book is now finished and is entitled *An Incredible Year in Africa*. A brief description of the book:

"This book is a true story that takes place in the African Kingdom of Lesotho and the South African giant, which surrounds it. The story takes place during the height of apartheid. It follows the lives of ordinary Africans and a handful of expatriates through mystifying, personal, social and political dilemmas in a setting of simmering warfare. To an extent, the regions social challenges and violent politics are based on a puzzling confrontation of cultures and on the conundrum that people of tradition face when impinged on by modernization. But they are also the result of attempts by power brokers to control through intimidation and force.

The book is not entirely about the negative side of life in the area. It is also a story of people managing remarkably, of people from vastly different backgrounds working side by side admirably, of hope where there is no hope, of love where there should be antagonism, of patience where there is frustration and of trust in the face of pervasive suspicion and discontent.

Finally, the story is about the amusing and touching things of everyday life in a fascinating cultural milieu and overwhelmingly beautiful setting."

If you would like to be on a list to be notified when the book is published you can write to: Donovan Russell, 3627 Rockefeller Road, Moravia, NY 13118. Or you can e-mail your intent to "mamaste@dreamscape.com."

WE ACTUALLY DO NOT KNOW WHO OR WHERE YOU ARE

Bill Dunn, FOL's membership data base guru and **Web Meister** (selected unanimously and without any opposition in the previous issue of FOL for both positions) has a great suggestion for getting in touch/keeping in contact with non-members. FOL has received addresses for non-members from various sources. These addresses, as you might suspect, can be very out of date.

However, many people may have simply moved to another part of the village/town/city where they had been living. If you are interested in helping to pursue what has happened to some of these RPCV's, Bill would love your help. You can either get in touch with Bill at the FOL website (<http://www.alaska.net/~dunnx2>) or write to Don Spicer at the FOL address and a list of "lost" folks in your area can be generated. Hopefully, we will be able to reach a great many people and find out what has happened to them and possibly sign up a few additional members.

Bill also wanted everyone to know the FOL website now has password protection on the list of member e-mails. He noted that although most new members agreed to list their e-mail addresses, there had been concern that the list may be used for solicitation or other undesirable purposes. E-mail addresses will continue to be listed only with permission, but with the added security there can now be a greater comfort level to list additional information such as village or year of service—but again, by permission only.

There have not been any problems reported to date, so this is a preventative measure. In an effort to keep it simple, there presently is only one password for everyone, and the site contains a hint to a word we should all know.

The upgrade which allowed for password protection also provided more webspace, so if anyone has any old (or new) photos of Lesotho they would like to put on the site, please get in touch with Bill.

You can also indulge in a bit of nostalgia by looking at a letter on the website from PCV Eric Thompson. I will not detail the letter but it brought back a lot of memories.

IN MEMORIAM

John Hollister (Thaba Tseka/86-88) passed along very tragic news about Scott Jenson (88-90), his wife Barbara (88-90) (nee Kloeck) and their children, daughter, Zoe, and son, Noah. All four (4) family members died tragically in a car accident in South Africa on Wednesday, 23 June 1999.

Although the funeral was held in late June, a memorial fund was established by the families which you may wish to contact should you desire to send a contribution. The address is:

Kloeck-Jenson Memorial Fund
c/o US Bank Corporation
601 2nd Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55402

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HOW THE WEATHER WAS

Unfortunately, it has been way too long since I have had the opportunity to sit down at the keyboard and begin this edition of Friends of Lesotho. It has been a very busy year both at home and at work and I just have not been able to devote attention to the newsletter. I hope you all will forgive me and find this issue of FOL acceptable (it has been a struggle to sit down and get this issue together prior to the end of the year).

Nevertheless, since it is late in the year, this is the traditional time to wish everyone a very haunted Halloween, a Happy Thanksgiving, myself a happy (but unmentioned age) birthday, a Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. It has also become part of the tradition to celebrate yet another New York Yankee World Series victory.

Many of you are already aware of the tragic events in Lesotho over the past year. A recap is provided in this issue for anyone who did not hear of the unrest and subsequent violence.

There is an update on FOL's contributions to the Volunteer Liaison Committee (VLC) and Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), with letters from the respective chairpersons from the VLC and TAP. Also, there is a report on some private contributions to TAP from some completely unexpected sources and places.

Sadly, there is another notification of an RPCV's (tragically, the notification is of two RPCV's and their children) untimely death.

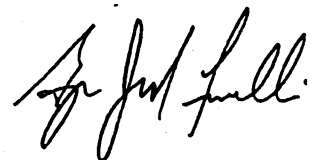
There are books being published, a Peace Corps Partnership project in need of funding and a host of other items in this issue.

It is also that special time of the year when FOL memberships are due for renewal. Please send in your dues and any other amounts you wish to contribute. I think you will see from information elsewhere in this newsletter that it is money well spent. Remember, your FOL dues and any additional contributions you make are fully tax deductible, and why not get that deduction this tax year.

I was going to write quite a bit on how it appears now is the time to pass on the (micky) mantle of FOL newsletter editor. However, FOL president pro-tem Don Spicer wrote much more eloquently about this topic, the need for a changing of the (point and shooting) guards here at FOL in his column.

So I will not echo what Don has written but let you know I do feel badly about the gap between the last issue of FOL and this one. I love doing the newsletter and I certainly am able to keep much more up to date on events in Lesotho but I am not able to devote as much time as is needed now to keep the newsletter up to date and frequently issued.

So now is the time for someone to step forward and let either Don or me know you would like to become the FOL editor. I would appreciate the offer and would offer whatever help and or assistance possible to make it easier for the new editor. Let us know!!! Thanks.



George Fanelli

THE GOOD NEWS...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Electronic Mail & Guardian. However, stories from the BBC On Line Network were used as well as items from MS-NBC, AficaNews On Line and a story from the Associated Press.

The Prime Minister's offer of resignation did not sit well with the opposition party leaders, especially Mr. Qhobela, who was insistent an interim government be set up until new elections could be held. Mr. Qhobela warned that the unrest experienced in Lesotho would continue until new elections, regardless of what the South African Committee reported.

The size of the protest continued to grow daily. Opposition protesters met outside of the royal palace of King Letsie (yes, he is still King) to implore him to intervene in the crisis. The King, however, is constitutionally prevented from any intervention. Soldiers guarding the palace used water cannons to disperse the crowds on some days. However, tensions rose exponentially the day when soldiers trying to disperse the crowd were met by other soldiers (presumably BCP or BNP members) with rifles loaded and aimed. The King had his brother, Prince Seeiso, visit the army barracks after this event to appeal to all members to act with professional detachment to the civilian protests. There was fear of an imminent coup.

Soon thereafter, civilian and administrative order in Lesotho collapsed. Young militant brigadiers in the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) assumed control of the country, after first sacking 28 senior officers and forcing the resignation of the head of the army Lieutenant General Makhula Mosakeng at gun point, when allegations arose that the senior officers had conspired with the LCD to fix the May elections.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

UPDATES: TAP AND VLC

FOL successfully completed its first ever fund drive (see August 1998 issue), raising over \$5,000 from your generous contributions. The success of the drive allowed FOL to send two (2) separate contributions each to the VLC (\$1,000 twice) and TAP (\$1,250 twice) in 1999 to help with projects and students in Lesotho.

FOL received four (4) letters, two (2) each from representatives of TAP and the VLC, in response to these donations.

Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

PCV Faye Farmer, former chairperson of TAP, wrote to FOL to indicate that with the receipt of the first FOL contribution of \$1,250, TAP would most likely be able to fund all 250 scholarship applications which had been submitted.

PCV Rebecca Chaplin, current TAP chairperson, subsequently reported that TAP was able to fund an additional 123 scholarship applications (total of 135 applications received) with the second distribution from FOL.

The last items to be reported are absolutely phenomenal events: El presidente Spicer received two (2) letters from the Far East (beyond Long Island) recently, one (1) from an eighth grade student at the Singapore American School, Elise Castillo, and the other from a teacher at the Taipei American School, Sandy Pucket (RPCV '72-'74). As an aside, Elise had been in the Taipei American School and Sandy had been her math teacher. (The letters are reprinted in full elsewhere in the newsletter.)

Elise had won \$100 in an art calendar contest and donated the full award to TAP. Sandy had his students run various fund raisers and they managed to accumulate \$2,500, which was also fully donated to TAP. Absolutely amazing!!!!

FOL subsequently sent two (2) checks to TAP for the donated amounts in October 1999.

The Volunteer Liaison Committee (VLC)

PCV Karen Seybold, VLC Treasurer, reported on several projects funded with the aid of FOL.

PCV Bob Richardson, working on environmental education in Bela-Bela, received 280 Maloti to begin a park. PCV Mary Ann Camp of Ha Rantaba received 300 Maloti for her bo-me sewing group activities. She also received 300 Maloti to carpet a health clinic.

Finally, PCV Jeanmarie Mitchell (I believe she is the current chairperson of the VLC) reported late this year the VLC had used 2856 Maloti for 11 projects throughout Lesotho. These projects included knitting and sewing workshops, art supplies for school are classes, oral hygiene clinics, workshops for teachers and aiding in the establishment of an Early Childhood Development Center. Each project was successfully completed with the help of the VLC donations from FOL.



SEARCHING FOR LISA LABELLA!

Hi Lisa! This is Candy Rogers writing. It has been all too long since I have seen you and the kids. Hope all is well. Please give me a call at 703/256-8424.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As you are aware, Friends of Lesotho conducted a fund raising campaign in 1998 with a goal of raising \$5,000 to help it fund specific projects in Lesotho. Due to your extreme generosity, we were able to reach our goal and for that we thank you. Your response was overwhelming.

We continue to support two main projects in Lesotho, both of which depend heavily on groups of Peace Corps volunteers in Lesotho. The first is the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) administered by volunteers in Lesotho, which accepts applications from students throughout Lesotho seeking financial assistance in paying their school fees. TAP itself solicits contributions from all sources to help fund these scholarships. Volunteers review the applications and under guidelines they have implemented, award scholarships to as many of the applicants as possible. Through 1997, FOL had sent \$6,300 for this type of scholarship assistance.

The second major project is the Volunteer Liaison Committee (VLC), a group of in-country volunteers who again solicit donations to be used to help individual volunteers with small scale projects in their villages. They also use established procedures to analyze the merits of individual requests and award funding to those determined to be most worthy. Through 1997, FOL had donated \$2,100 to this effort which helped with school construction projects, painting, a women in Lesotho calendar, the purchase of sports equipment, and other projects.

FOL's normal procedure is to send funds for these projects in the late summer to allow the groups involved time to make decisions before the new school year begins in January. Unfortunately, it had

been a pretty tumultuous time in Lesotho in late 1998 and the unrest did have an impact on FOL and its ability to send funds for these programs we continue to support. We were unable to send any funding in 1998, as there was no one to send it to. Volunteers were temporarily withdrawn from the country due to the unrest and we were unwilling to send funds until we knew there would be some mechanism in place to handle them. We kept in touch with both the Lesotho Desk Officer at Peace Corps in Washington and with Peace Corps/Lesotho during this time and they concurred with our decision to hold onto the money for the time being. I am happy to report, however, that once things settled down, volunteers did return to Lesotho and we did send two checks off in January 1999, one for \$1,250 to TAP and the other for \$1,000 to the VLC. We duplicated those donations later in 1999. Again, only your generosity allowed us to do this.* Please keep it up!

On a less optimistic note and as an additional non-monetary appeal to our membership—we need some “new blood” and enthusiasm on our Board. As many of you know, FOL has been in existence since 1986. We are now 12 years old and in many respects one of the stronger country-of-service groups. However, a few of us have been on the Board since the groups inception and quite frankly, need some relief. The needs of family, children, and work have a huge impact on how much time one is able to devote to FOL and, unfortunately, FOL suffers because of that. Scott Brumburgh (the groups original President and an active current member of the Board) and I have talked about this a number of times and fear that unless some folks step forward, the group might someday

“die on the vine”. One of our major concerns is that we have no recent knowledge of Lesotho—Scott was there in the late 1960's and I was there in the mid-1970's. Most of the other members of our Board were there during those times or the 1980's at the latest. We really need an infusion of new, young energy for the group. Rest assured that we would stay involved. We have invested far too much of our time to let the group die. However, what we need is someone willing to be President (editor's note—and some one to be editor of the newsletter) and to help guide the group.

Bill Dunn, our long-standing membership database manager and current webmaster, suggested to me that I write up a job description for the position and put it in the newsletter. Unfortunately, I am not sure how to do that as the job can be as little or as much as one wants to make it. It all depends on the enthusiasm one has and the level of commitment one is willing to make. Please respond to this appeal. If there is a group of you that want to get involved, that is all the better. The Board doesn't have to run out of Washington, DC. I would hate to lose all of what we have established, particularly our ability to keep you informed and to send funds back to Lesotho, but unless some members volunteer to participate on the Board, I am not sure where the group will end up. Feel free to write, e-mail, or call me anytime if you would like to talk about this. George Fanelli, our long-standing newsletter editor, often refers to me as “President for Life”. I certainly would like to change that! Thanks.

*With the contributions we made in 1999, we have sent \$8,800 to TAP and \$4,100 to VLC over the life of this organization. (As you will see later in this newsletter, an additional \$2,600 was sent to TAP in late 1999.)

THE GOOD NEWS...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

The SADC went on alert as these events transpired and began preparations to send in troops in order to restore calm and end what was viewed as a mutiny. BCP Leader Qhobela was outraged and claimed any South African intervention would be viewed as an invasion and "aggression against King Letsie and his people".

It appears the senior army officers were members of the LCD while the junior officers appeared to be members of one of the three (3) opposition parties (BCP, BNP and the Maremathlou Freedom Party {MFP}). Officially, the junior officers explained they took action in order to protect the country's Constitution and King (Letsie) and to try to prevent an armed battle between the Lesotho security forces and growing opposition to Prime Minister Mosisili's government.

The army officers were subsequently released, and after South African President (at that time) Mandela, in an opening address to the SADC leaders' summit, expressed optimism a political solution for the crisis would be found, it appeared the situation was under control. Then the bottom fell out.

Intelligence reports to the BCP and BNP alleged the ruling LCD had solicited the services of Zimbabwean mercenaries "to phase out protesting opposition supporters from the King's palace" (AfricaNews). The BCP and BNP claimed the LCD hired the mercenaries after both the police and army were unable to identify the opposition supporters in the crowds in front of the palace.

The crisis grew worse when protestors then blockaded government buildings. The prime Minister and other government officials were barred from their offices which caused Foreign Minister Tom Thabane to predict a coup was "in

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the offing". Mr. Thabane was also prevented from entering his office. The protestors then locked the gates to the Parliament, went door to door in government offices and ordered civil servants to leave and forced the Lesotho Bank to close.

Adding fuel to the fire, the South African report on the May elections, the Langa report, was allegedly completed, but had not been released.

The army then confronted opposition supporters with gunfire and drove them off the streets.

The SADC, unable to decide if there had been a coup in Lesotho or not, tried to hold negotiations with all concerned parties. The SADC's proposal to hold the negotiations "on neutral ground" in South Africa was rejected by the Lesotho opposition parties due to safety concerns. However, with no other alternative site to hold negotiations, the prospect for a peaceful solution dimmed. And then the stuff really hit the fan.

South Africa then invaded Lesotho. 600 members of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) entered Lesotho, some troops crossed over the Caledon Bridge and other airborne troops landed at the airport. There were conflicting reports on the number of SANDF and Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) casualties. The reports ranged from three (3) to ten (10) SANDF soldiers killed, and from six

(6) to 17 LDF soldiers killed. All of the reports, however, indicated there was heavy resistance to the SANDF.

The heavy resistance, much greater than anticipated, caused the SANDF to completely ignore the civilian rioting and looting which then occurred. Maseru was torched. Reports indicated South African businesses were originally targeted but that soon all foreign businesses, homes and cars became targets.

Two hundred soldiers from Botswana joined the invasion two (2) days after the SANDF originally crossed the border, indicating a lack of coordination between the two nations about the operation.

South Africa later stated the SANDF entered Lesotho at the request of the (Lesotho) government "to assist the lawful government to restore stability". And, in fact, the Mail and Guardian printed a copy of Prime Minister Mosisili's letter to the presidents of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique requesting their military intervention.

My understanding of events is that although the Prime Minister requested and was granted this military intervention, the information was not passed on to any members of the Lesotho Defense Forces, including those loyal to the government. Therefore, when the invasion occurred, which was not pre-announced to the Lesotho government, all members of the defense forces engaged the SANDF. The South African soldiers had no idea who were the mutinous troops since all of the troops were resisting.

Eventually, the SANDF gained military control of Maseru and other strategic areas and forced the opposition into the highlands where the promise of a long guerrilla war waited.

The intent now is to hold new elections (the Langa report, which was finally issued, did find the May 1998 elections irregular) within the next 15 to 18 months. ■

IN THE MAIL

Singapore 285343

October 1, 1999

Dear Mr. Spicer,

My name is Elise Castillo, and I am an eighth grade student at the Singapore American School. This is my first year here in Singapore. My family and I previously lived in Taipei, Taiwan, where I attended the Taipei American School. At T. A. S., my math teacher was Mr. Sandy Puckett. With his encouragement, my seventh grade class raised money to help send several children in Lesotho, Africa, to school.

In May, while I was still enrolled at T. A. S., I entered an art calendar contest for junior high school children from American schools worldwide. In August, I found out that my picture had won, and was published in the calendar. I was awarded with a certificate and a check for U. S. \$100. I remembered Mr. Puckett telling us that only U. S. \$100 can pay for a year's education for one child in Lesotho. Even though that is not a large amount, many children still cannot afford it.

The theme of the calendar contest was "the role you play in the world." Because I am better off financially than a lot of other people in the world, I feel that it would be only fair to help out those who have less, rather than spend my money on something I do not really need. I would have liked to buy a new pair of rollerblades with my prize money, but the children in Lesotho obviously need an education much more than I need rollerblades. I e-mailed Mr. Puckett and told him this. He gave me your name and address. He said to mail my check to you, and you will make sure that my money supports the education of a child in Lesotho.

I would appreciate it if you could let me know when you get this letter and the check.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Elise Castillo

IN THE MAIL

29 September 1999

Don Spicer
13527 Cedar Creek Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20904
United States

Dear Don Spicer,

Sorry that I have been so long writing to you, but we have had some troubles here. The earthquake was really bad mid island. We are all fine here in Taipei--just power interruptions and one or two downed buildings. My heart really goes out to all the people of central Taiwan. They are still having aftershocks that are also creating havoc. We are surviving because everyone is pulling together. Humanity is a wonderful thing.

I promised that I would send you a short paragraph explaining our project and the results.

Taipei American School is a private school located in Taipei, Taiwan. It has approximately 2000 students. Although most students are American passport holders, they are ethnically Chinese. The Middle School has about 570 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The Middle School operates using a house system with flexible block scheduling for the core subjects.

As a teacher in the 7th grade Gold House and as a former volunteer in Lesotho, Africa (1972-1974), I approached the core team and we decided to include a service component in the 7th grade curriculum. The students were presented with different and varied ideas for projects, but they decided to support students in Lesotho.

I showed the students slides of the country and the people. Part of the lesson included language instruction in Sesotho and the music of Lesotho. Different artifacts from the country were shown. All this gave the students a common background from which to discuss and work.

The students then brain stormed ways to raise money. The two ideas that created the most interest were a fudge sale and manning a student booth at the spring school fair. Students responded and both ideas were a great success. Despite the success, it was decided that only certain students were helping with the fund raising projects. The 7th grade Gold House wanted every student to contribute, not money but time. Thus, the House decided to hold a Lesotho Walk-a-thon. Every student received a pledge sheet, and they canvassed the community signing up others who pledged to give a specific amount of money for every lap around the track that the student walked. The Walk-a-thon was an even better success. All the students felt that they were personally involved as well as advertising the project to the community at large. Taipei American School's Middle School Gold House hope that their efforts can help students in Lesotho, and want to thank you for providing the vehicle through which their efforts can be administered.

Again thank you for your support, and I hope that this money will supply needy students with the means to study and achieve without worries of fees and other costs.

If you need any questions answered, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sala ka khotso



Sandy R. Puckett

Taipei American School
800 Chung Shan N. Rd., Sec. 6
Taipei, Taiwan

PS: If you could send the students any articles from past newsletters about scholarship and projects support from which I could make a bulletin board, it would be much appreciated.

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CHEVY CHASE, MD 20815