Metsoalle ea Lesotho

Summer 2005

President

Secretary

Friends of Lesotho Newsletter

Friends Of Lesotho

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President's Message

Every day on the way home from work I pass several intersections where people hold cardboard signs saying "Will Work for Food", "Disabled Vet -Need Work", "Homeless, Please Help", etc. You see the same people day after day often working in groups of four to cover each corner. The local newspaper has carried articles about the situation, often finding deceit - begging more for sport than need. Last week a new sign appeared with a more positive outlook. It said "Why Lie - Want Beer".

Which brings me to our Board of Directors. Why lie - we want people to work. Election to the Board may be considered by some to be an honorary position for those who climb one sort of ladder or another. It's not. We don't talk about making policy very much, but we do work to make contacts with PCVs, publicize Lesotho here in the US, gather information to write newsletter articles, and figure out how to get donations to where they are most needed in Lesotho. It's work, and it takes time - but as compensation, the networking between Board members has developed nicely over the past year. The support Directors provide for each other is good and we would like to add to that with a few more members. Please read further and consider



FOL Board Elections are coming

participating. All it takes is a few phone calls and regular email contact to get in the loop.

I've mentioned the FOL Committees in past newsletters, and I will continue to promote them in future newsletters. The Committees are the working units of the Board. All Committees are one year appointments and report to the President. More information on the work of these Committees can be found in the "Committee Updates" section of this newsletter.

The Committees are

Donations and Distributions, Fund Raising, Membership, Annual Meeting, Nominations and Board Development.

Additionally there are other tasks not tied to any particular committee. These include assistance with the newsletter, web site development, and assistance in treasury duties.

For those of you who've been around a while, I'm sure the change in the newsletter lately is obvious. This is a reflection of what's going on with the Board as a whole. As always though, we're not stuck on a particular way of doing things. If you're interested and have some new ideas, we'd like to have you join us. The Board teleconferences are open to all, and we've changed the time in an attempt to make it easier to call in. The

(Continued on page 2)

Boom-par-stee-car



The Friends of Lesotho Membership Committee has produced a bumper sticker to be sent out to new members. A limited quantity is available to members on request. Please contact John Hollister (zapdoodat@erols.com) if you would like to receive one.

LESOTHO on the Web

Sotho Blog?

Those two words are a challenge to my spellchecker. Rethabile Masilo has established a Google discussion group for anything and everything about Lesotho and Basotho culture. It's mostly in English, but if you want to refresh your SeSotho, the opportunity is there for it. It's a new site, open to anyone to read, but you must register to leave messages. This website contains many links to new articles about Lesotho from around the world. Enjoy! *Bill Dunn (RPVC 79-82)*

http://groups-beta.google.com/group/sotho?hl=en

News Service

If you are like me, you belong to multiple listserves

for work and pleasure. I have subscribed to a weekly African news service listserve for about two years now and save for major holidays, they have sent pertinent and up to date news stories from around the globe to my desktop computer in plain text regularly.

The updates cover all of Africa and Lesotho ends up in about two thirds of the reports. The service is offered out of the Norwegian Council for Africa. I highly recommend this service, it is free, easy to join, and does not spam your account or sell your information.

http://www.afrika.no/newsupdate/index.html

Faye Farmer (RPCV 97-99)



Pres Message (cont)

(Continued from page 1)

teleconferences are held the third Sunday of odd numbered months at 8 PM Eastern. Please contact John Hollister or myself for access codes. I'll look

forward to hearing from you!

Bill Dunn (RPCV 79-82). He may be reached at wdunn@friendsoflesotho.org

Looking for a few good people (again)

The members of the Board of Directors of FOL are elected based on their ability and willingness to contribute to the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives. You do not have to be a board member to serve on a committee or task force. The Board meets every other month, via conference call and completes committee assignments between meetings.

There are also committees and task forces that help carry out the Board work. Requirements for Board members include:

- 1. Be a FOL member in good standing
- 2. Understand the goals, policies, and programs of FOL
- Attend Board meetings and participate in the policy-making decisions of the Board
- Participate actively on one or more of the Board's committees and/or task forces suited to a member's interests and skills
- 5. Foster the organization's purpose in other spheres of influence.

We're looking for people with a few hours a month to dedicate to a specific position. In addition we are looking for people with specific skill sets to complete task force and committee objectives.

We are soliciting nominations for the Board during the month of July. Nominees will be contacted in August for follow up and our committee will have a slate of candidates by the beginning of September. Voting on these candidates will occur 21 days prior to the October Board Meeting. Successful candidates will be contacted by a current Board member by the end of the year.

If you are interested in nominating yourself or someone you know for a board position, please fill out the following information. You can send the completed information to Kevin Freer as an attachment, in the body of your email, or you can print it out and mail it, or fax it by July 31, 2005.

If nothing else, I would like to encourage you to keep your contact information and membership dues current. If you have a recent address or email change, please send corrected information to Bill Dunn, President (dunnx2@alaska.net).

Candidate's Name:		
Address:	City, State, Zip:	
Country:	Email:	
Home Phone:	Work Phone:	
If RPCV, please list PC job/location/dates of service.		
Please describe helpful or appropriate skills Please provide a brief (less than 200 words) biography		
Please describe the nominee's interest and involvement with Lesotho		



Lesotho Friendship Reunion Event

The Lesotho Friendship Reunion will be held in Washington D.C. on July 2^{nd} at the Holiday Inn at the National Airport. The deadline for attending the dinner at this event has passed, but if you are interested in attending this event, contact Marcia Pierce directly at (202)468-9878 to work out the details. Friends of Lesotho will be represented with a booth. If you plan on attending this event and would like to participate in the Friends of Lesotho booth, please contact Faye Farmer (f_e_@hotmail.com).

Renew Your FOL Membership Before Dues Increase!

Effective October 1st, 2005, FOL dues will be increasing from \$10.00 to \$15.00 per year. Renew today and pay just \$10 for one full year of membership. This \$10 is your way of helping us make a difference in the everyday lives of Basotho, and it entitles you to a quarterly newsletter that keeps you up date on what is happening in Lesotho. Please renew today, see www.friendsoflesotho. org for the updated membership form.



Donations and Distributions Committee Update

In July \$500 dollars for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) will be sent to Peace Corps Lesotho along with an additional \$1500 for the Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) of PC-Lesotho.

The VAC handles funding requests from volunteers for special projects and considers other requests from people in Lesotho. FOL made a small donation to a group going to Lesotho to spend time working at an orphanage and working on a Habitat for Humanity project. We also worked with a member whose employer made it possible for employees to make self-directed charitable contributions through paycheck withholding. She chose to make a contribution to an orphanage in Lesotho. Friends of Lesotho helped facilitate the transfer of funds. If your employer offers a similar program, FOL can help you direct donations to Lesotho.

Most of the money received by FOL goes to TAP and VAC, but we also consider other requests. If you or someone you know is working on a project that helps the people of Lesotho, you may want to consider applying for a grant. The Donations Application Request for Funding form can be found on the FOL website. Contact a member of the Donations and Distributions Committee for more information on guidelines. Their information can be found at: www.friendsoflesotho.org



Photos in this issue are courtesy of Martha Munson and Bill Dunn. If you have photos you'd like to share, email them to Faye Farmer, $f_e@hotmail.com$.

LESOTHO Holds 1st Nationwide Local Elections

Background

Local elections have been a goal in Lesotho since 1993. This goal was finally realized on April 30, 2005, when Lesotho held the first local government elections since gaining independence from Britain in 1966. (Some urban areas have held council elections in the past, but these were the first nationwide local government elections. Also, prior to independence, local democracy was in place in the form of district councils.)

After the aim of transferring power from traditional leaders to democratically elected councils was initially proposed, the Ministry of Local Government was formed in 1994 and released a White Paper on Local Government. The Local Government Act was passed by parliament in 1997. The Local Government Elections Act in 1998 gave the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) power to run the local government elections.

The elections were initially intended to be held in conjunction with the 1998 general elections. However, the logistics proved difficult for the IEC and the violence occurring after the 1998 elections further delayed the process. Finally, the goal began to be realized last year with a constitutional amendment providing for local elections. This decentralization of government is intended to curtail the power of the central government, to improve delivery of services, and to limit corruption.

The Elections

Representatives were elected to 129 new councils which will replace the present Village Development Councils, comprised of local chiefs and officials appointed by the government. Although declared a success by the government, only around 30% of the 830,000 registered voters participated. The government asserts that the elections went well, considering that they are the first of their kind to be held. However, lack of familiarity with local government elections is just one of the reasons for the low voter turnout. A threatened boycott by the opposition parties and a controversial requirement that one third of the councils be comprised of women are also likely factors contributing to the low number of voters at the polls.

The ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) won the elections by a large margin, followed by independent candidates, the Basotho National Party, the Lesotho People's Congress and smaller parties. Although the IEC Chair stated that the independent candidates' performance indicated that democracy is becoming more deeply entrenched in Lesotho, it is more likely attributable

> to the fact that the opposition parties pulled out of the elections, but permitted candidates to participate as independents.

Voter Confusion

One of the factors contributing to the low turnout at the polls was lack of information. The IEC worked to educate people through radio; however, the citizenry was reportedly confused about the roles and powers of the new office bearers. The local councils will be responsible for education, water and sanitation, land distribution, health, taxes, farming, culture, crime prevention, and trade. However,

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Lesotho Elections (cont)

(Continued from page 5)

no regulations govern the implementation of the local government councils, no office spaces have been set aside, and no provision for basic equipment, such as telephones, have been made. Accordingly, there is no clarity on when the new councils will become operational. Principal Secretary of the Local Government Department, Moliehe Matabana, has indicated that the more than 1,000 newly elected council members will first have to undergo one month of training.

Currently, Basotho are not sure who to go to with new issues, or where the councils will be.

After the election, an IEC spokesperson conceded that the poor voter turnout indicated that more needed to be done to educate voters. Also, the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LECONGO) plans to hold a conference on the local government elections in mid-June, in which they hope to address some of the concerns about implementation of the election results.

Why all of this confusion about implementation of the councils has arisen is not clear, because in September 2004 Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili introduced a local government training manual which was designed to assist in the orderly devolution to local government councils of services and power to allow them to control the administration of affairs they should be running

Threatened Boycott

Another factor leading to low voter turnout was confusion caused by opposition parties' calls for the elections to be delayed. The opposition parties, led by the group referred to as the "Six Pack," sought to have the elections postponed on the grounds that there were irregularities and discrepancies in the preparations for the elections. The Six Pack is made up of the Basotho National Party, Basutholand African Congress, the Lesotho Peoples' Congress, the National Progressive Party and the Marematlou Freedom Party.

Specific allegations included: failing to update the Voters' Roll, polling stations not being publicized, councils unable to fulfill their mandates due to lack of regulations implementing them, and gerrymandering by the ruling LCD.



all out boycott of the elections. They pulled out of the elections, but permitted candidates to participate as independents. Many Basotho seemed confused about the actual election date.

Quota of Women Councils

What some have designated the greatest issue in the poll was the earmarking of one third of the councils for women. This decision was done to comply with a South African Development Community (SADC) declaration that women make up one third of all government institutions in the region by the end of the year. Lesotho chose the women-only councils as a sure way to comply. If it had just required one third of the candidates to be women, that would not ensure their election.

Opposition parties took the matter to court alleging that the requirement discriminates against men. Some Basotho men, reportedly upset by the requirement, quipped that they thought the elections were only for women. In addition a portion of voters allegedly believed that the councils that would be only women were uncontested, i.e. that the women would just be nominated or volunteer. Purportedly some Basotho were also said to have believed that only women were permitted to vote for the all-women councils. As with other areas of the elections, arguments have been made that not enough groundwork was laid to educate the public about women's

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In the end, the opposition parties did not call for an

Lesotho Elections (cont)

(Continued from page 6)

participation, and hence, the quota was met with resistance and likely influenced voter turnout.

Conclusion

Certainly more could have been done to improve voter turnout and to ease the transition to the local government councils. However, it is impressive that the government stuck to its plan and moved forward with the elections. Overall, the elections were a success. The IEC invited a Commonwealth Expert Team to Lesotho to observe the local elections and they declared the elections free and fair. There were a few situations where people's names did not appear on the Voters' Roll or where voters did not have identification cards but their name appeared on the Roll. These voters were permitted to cast a "tendered" ballot. There were also some "failed" elections where a candidate passed away before election day. In these areas, a new date will be set for voting. Assuming the councils are in place before the next elections slated for 2007, at least some of the controversy surrounding this election, such as voter confusion about the role of the councils and regulations on their implementation, should be resolved. Prime Minister Mosisili noted that, "In many instances, local government has been found to be the answer to a lax, inefficient public service, fraud, unemployment and a host of other ill."

Lesotho appears to be moving in the right direction by empowering Basotho to have a say in matters affecting their quality of life.

Ella Kwisnek (RPCV 92-94)

Book Review

I have a knee jerk reaction to Peace Corps literature, which seems to be overly negative, simply saying more often than not, "been there, done that". My mother, who taught me how to read and has never visited Africa, usually passes along the African centric literature to me. One day in 2002, she "borrowed me" a book about a Tswana woman written by a white English man.

Incredulous, I dove in ready for a fight. How dare he presume to know! Instead, I found myself relaxing in the lilting language that was reminiscent of Sesotho and enjoying a cup of Bush tea on the high Veld, with characters who are multidimensional and so honestly representative of southern Africa that it breaks your heart. I find that I cannot wait to get my hands on each new installment of Mma Ramotswe's life. Once I have the book, I savor it, easily taking three times as long as it should take to read.

Alexander McCall Smith's small, quaint series (The No.1 Ladies Detective Agency) takes place in Botswana and stars an older woman of "traditional" build, who owns the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency in Gabarone. Each book covers one or two mysteries she is confronted with, but the main point of the series concerns Mma Ramotswe's progression through and perception of life. For people who have spent time in Southern Africa, the humor is profound, with the result being laughter and a fulfilling experience as you slowly make your way through the book.

For those, like my mother, who have not been to Southern Africa, the simple, elegant and loving way McCall Smith depicts and develops his characters is more than satisfying and dare I say, educational. This is not a hard hitting series, but it does manage to cover contemporary issues in Africa such as unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and stable government operations.

This series takes the best memories I have of living in Lesotho and draws them out for everyone, including my mother, to enjoy.

Faye Farmer (RPCV 97-99)

Books by Alexander McCall Smith:

The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency (2002)

Morality for Beautiful Girls (2002)

Tears of the Giraffe (2002)

The Kalahari Typing School for Men (2004)

The Full Cupboard of Life: More from the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency (2004)

In the Company of Cheerful Ladies (2005)

Bono Wants You to Buy African: An Update to Last Issue's Textile Article

Lesotho has not gotten back the 7,000 jobs it lost at the end of the New Year due to the end of WTO quota limits on China, but there is some positive news for the textile industry there. U2's Bono has launched a socially responsible clothing line called "Edun" that is committed to manufacturing clothes in Lesotho and other textile dependent countries at wages that "respect the worker." In Lesotho Edun pays its 300 Basotho workers about M600 per month at its Clothing Zone factory in Butha Buthe in addition to donating to local schools. The Gap has also committed to maintaing operations in Lesotho. Edun clothes are available at Saks, Barney's and other pricey boutiques (in case you're looking for an \$80 hemp tank top – hmm... is M600 per month socially responsible – what do you think?). Gap products are available at Banana Republic, Old Navy and the Gap.

Claire Hilger (RPCV 98-00)

Fundraising Committee Seeks Member Support

Are you interested in working with a team of three or more FOL members on planning fundraising strategies for the coming year? The charge for this committee is to plan strategies to provide new opportunities for funds to ensure:

- the board's ability to continue its work
- increase our ability to fund needed projects in Lesotho

Committee members meet via conference calls and emails. Committee appointments are for one

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Thanks to Faye Farmer for pulling together all the articles and information for this newsletter. year. The committee has several exciting projects to work on in the coming year and is open to other suggestions. This is a great way to contribute to the organization without having to make a long term commitment to the board.

Contact Kevin Freer, (RPCV 76-78) Fundraising Committee Chair, at kfreer@lucent.com



Future articles

Do you know of a great website? Have you given a talk about Lesotho? Have you visited Lesotho recently? Do you know where to find the best Basotho music? Do you have a fabulous photo of your time in Lesotho?

If you have answers to these questions, or answers to questions people have not thought to ask, or just questions, send the Friends of Lesotho Newsletter a brief article about it! We reserve the right to edit submissions and publish them when appropriate, but are really interested in collecting information from our community FOR our community.

Submit your articles, photos, or blurbs to Faye Farmer, FOL Newsletter Coordinator at f_e_@hotmail.com, or send hard copies to 2612 E. Geneva Drive, Tempe, Arizona 85282.

2005 Annual Meeting Plans

Looking for the chance to re-connect with Lesotho RPCVs and Basotho? The Friends of Lesotho Annual Meeting is just the opportunity you've been waiting for. The Board of Directors is encouraging all FOL members to join us for the annual membership meeting this fall.

The 2005 Annual Membership Meeting will be held one weekend in October, the date is yet to be determined. The meeting will be held as a conference call and will include speakers familiar with Lesotho, election of Directors, and reports from the Board of Directors on FOL's goals and achievements.

One extraordinary way to participate is to host a regional meeting on the annual meeting date. We

would provide you with a list of FOL members, who live in your area of the country and their contact information. You would contact them and invite them to a site convenient for a group to gather for a conference call. It could be an opportunity to partake in a little joala, while reminiscing about your links to Lesotho. The Board wants your input and is planning to present an informative and participatory meeting.

Keep your eyes pealed for the next newsletter containing more details on the Annual Membership Meeting. If you are interested in hosting a regional meeting, please contact Martha Munson at khotsocv@hotmail.com now, so that we can begin to assist you in this undertaking.



Membership Subcommittee Update

The Membership Committee has completed revised the membership form and FOL brochure, both of which will be available on the website in July. Recognizing the importance of the newsletter as a means for communicating and connecting with our membership, committee member Faye Farmer has assumed the role of coordinating the newsletter to ensure that FOL produces consistently high quality, information packed newsletters for its membership. Dorothy Holland will continue to edit and format our increasingly professional newsletter. Representatives from the Membership Committee will also be attending the Lesotho Reunion event, scheduled for the July 4th weekend (*see Announcement in this newsletter*), and will be handing out brochures, bumper stickers, and membership forms.

If you know members from your Peace Corps group who are not members of FOL, please suggest that they visit the FOL website or pass along a copy of the newsletter and encourage them to consider joining FOL. It is a great way to continue to have a positive impact on Lesotho.

Networking and Updates

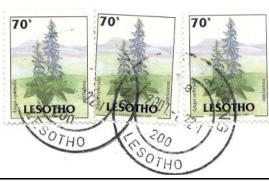
This section of the newsletter combines updates with networking opportunities. Networking because we are more likely to contact and utilize people we have a connection with and the updates because everyone does something fantastic. To that end, YOU are invited to send "updates" to Faye Farmer, FOL Newsletter Coordinator, via mail or email (f_e_@hotmail.com, 2612 E. Geneva Drive, Tempe, AZ 85282). Faye reserves the right to edit all submissions.

Jim Mueller was a PCV in India in 1965, where he met his wife, another PCV, in 1966. They were both PCVs beginning in 1997 in the Solomon Islands. Their latest stint in Peace Corps was in Lesotho, where they stayed in Mohale's Hoek from 2002 – 2004. They live in Maryland currently. Jim is a member of the FOL Board).

Rebeca (Grinstead) Ernst left Lesotho in 1998, where she was a teacher of the deaf at the Kannenelo Centre of the Deaf outside Maseru, as well as a primary school supervisor in Ha Khyanetsi. Since returning from Lesotho, she has completed a master's degree in Psychology (Behavior Analysis) and married Rick Ernst, a fellow volunteer from Lesotho. She currently lives in Memphis, TN, where she works as a Behavior Analyst with adults diagnosed with mental retardation.

Martha Munson lives in Harrisonburg, VA. She served as a PCV at Thabana-li-mele Vocational School and HIV/AIDS Youth Club Organizer in Moitsupeli, Maseru, 2001–2003. Martha also served as Volunteer Liaison to HIV/AIDS Committee, was a participant in the Gender and Development Committee, volunteer trainer, and coordinator of the volunteer safety and security information system. Martha is currently on the Board of Directors for FOL. Martha has 17 years experience as a paralegal, focusing on the commercial practice area, including real estate, estate planning, finance, and corporate/business formation and has excellent organizational, written, and computer skills. She also serves as VP of the Virginia Alliance of Paralegal Associations.

Jeff Lee returned from Lesotho in 1999. Shortly after returning, he met his future wife, Trinity. After a brief courtship, they eloped to New York City and married in May of 2001. Shortly thereafter, Trinity left her work as a pharmaceutical rep and



together they formed a corporation named Archipelago, Inc. Archipelago, Inc. is the owner/ operator of 32 billboards in northern IN. In July of 2002, Jeff and Trinity gave birth to their first daughter, Emerson. In March of 2004 they relocated their business to Indianapolis, living downtown in a historically renovated loft. In May of 2004, Jeff and Trinity gave birth to their second daughter, Foster. In March of 2005, the Lee family purchased their first home. Currently, the family has thoughts of expanding; however, Jeff is greatly in fear of being completely outnumbered by the opposite sex in his own home. Nonetheless, Trinity, Emerson and Foster are his paramount pride and joy.

Todd Vetter served as a Secondary Education volunteer at Ribaneng High School on the border of Mohale's Hoek/Mafeteng from January 1996 to December 1998. On his return, Todd worked for the United Church of Christ's Office for Church in Society, in Washington, DC, before attending Yale Divinity School. He graduated May, 2003, with a Master's of Divinity. He now serves as the Associate Minister at the Orange Congregational Church, in Orange, CT. His responsibilities include developing adult education programs and mission and outreach projects for a 700 member congregation. In June, 2003, he married Sarah Hare, a Methodist minister. They currently live in Cos Cob, CT, with her cat and their dog. They are planning a three-week visit to Lesotho and South Africa this coming July. You can contact Todd at: Orange Congregational Church 205 Meetinghouse Lane, Orange, CT 06477

Becki Krieg left Lesotho in November 1999, where she worked as a Professional Studies lecturer and distance teaching instructor in special ed for the National Teachers Training College. She worked in Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek districts. She moved to New York City to join the Peace Corps Fellows program at Teachers College/Columbia University

> where she completed a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 2003. She currently combines her bachelor's degree in Deaf Education and her master's degree in TESOL to teach deaf immigrants at the Lexington School for the Deaf in Queens, NY.

Friends of Lesotho 4110 Denfeld Ave. Kensington, MD 20895 Tel (301) 942-2751



www.friendsoflesotho.org

MEMBERSHIP FORM

			Name:		
Annual memb	pership in Friends of I	Lesotho (\$10 per person)		\$	
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Friends of Lesotho

Friends Of Lesotho 4110 Denfeld Ave

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