

F.O.M. NEWSLETTER

Volume 17, No. 1

Winter 2005

LETTER FROM F.O.M. PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

First off, I'm going to try to keep this short! We have a lot to share with you in this newsletter, and I want to save room for the good stuff. But there are two things that I particularly want to draw your attention to: the launch of the new webpage and the success of our membership drive.

If you haven't yet checked out the webpage, be sure to visit it at www.friendsofmalawi.org. Once you've checked it out, drop us an e-mail and let us know what you think. We hope the webpage will facilitate conversations between the FOM Board and our members--bookmark it and check it often!

In other news, I'd like to thank you for your generous support during our membership drive last October. At one point Lance was collecting several checks a week, many of them far over the suggested amount. That brings the total unrestricted donations for 2004 from \$470 to \$5,990 – congratulations! We'll be talking about new FOM projects at our next Board meeting to ensure that donated money is used effectively and efficiently. If you have ideas that you would like to see happen, let us know.

Tsalani Bwino,
Dawn

REPORT OF THE GRANTS COMMITTEE

Mone Nonse - donors and grant recipients alike! An influx of grant proposals has been received from local groups and PCVs. The grants team is accountable to donors who have generously supported the grants program. To make the awarding process more efficient and to speed up the process, the grants team considers the following as a guide.

1. **Sustainability** – to the grants team this means a long term goal, a plan for business (i.e., record keeping, locks for doors, plans for bank accounts, clear leadership, etc.), and a project that can run if the PCV or leader is unable to fulfill responsibilities.
2. **Community Involvement** – Community input is essential for sustainability. Projects should have broad participation and an impact on more than the immediate group. Self-help is an important element.
3. **A Well Thought Out Plan** – Specific information is needed: dates, detailed budgets, and detailed plans for *exactly* where the money will be spent. For example if building a chicken coop for a local group, include a plan for locks for doors, who will be in charge of the keys, who will get the chickens, who will sell the eggs, is there a market for the eggs, has a local veterinarian been contacted for future inoculations, etc.?

We hope that this information will assist in speeding up the communication between applicants and the grants team so that money will get to the field quickly. Thanks to Lou Kalolokesya and other PC staff for keeping us abreast of what comes in and for tracking all of the grants in Lilongwe.

Guidelines and grant application forms are available upon request at FOMgrants@yahoo.com. PCVs please continue to submit applications for money to help communities in need.

F.O.M. BOARD MEMBERS

President: Dawn Citrin, 98-00: Washington DC
Vice President: Mike Waldmiller, 97-01: Atlanta GA
Treasurer: Lance Cole, 93-94: Portland OR
Membership: John Staub, 98-99: Washington DC
Grants: Katie Reidy, 99-01: Washington DC
 Katrina (Young) Grantz, 97-00: Boulder CO
 Matt Grantz, 98-00: Boulder CO
Newsletter: Beth Evans, 62-64: Longmeadow MA
 Shannon Brown, 93-94: Portland OR
 Sandra Lauffer, 65-67: Washington DC
Sandra Lauffer also serves as a delegate to the NPCA
and was elected as the Central and Southern Africa
representative.

HOW TO CONTACT F.O.M.

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Beth Evans
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GRANT APPLICATIONS:

Katie Reidy
FOMgrants@yahoo.com (Grant application forms
available on request from this address)

REPORT OF F.O.M. TREASURER

(Edited from a more extensive report)

As of December 31, 2004, the Friends of Malawi has cash assets of \$30,693.66. Within that, the following amounts are restricted for special projects: \$7,000 toward AIDS projects, \$2,500 as a restricted donation to a school in Dowa, \$3,500 restricted toward the FOM Book Project.

A more detailed report showing a Comparative Balance Sheet for the past five years and a 2005 Budget may be seen on the Friends Of Malawi web-site. The biggest expenses budgeted for 2005 include \$1,500 for grants and \$1,300 for the F.O.M. Newsletter.
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PERSPECTIVES ON MALAWI

This column will try to provide a variety of perspectives on Malawi from past and current PCVs, Malawians, and NGO studies. Our goal is to provide a balanced mix of reflections, facts and figures, experiences, etc., to enhance our understanding of what is and is not working to improve the lives of all Malawians. Ideas for issues you would like to read about, as well as article submissions are encouraged. Views do not necessarily represent the board of FOM. We hope you enjoy this column.

TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS

(Adapted from Nyasanet)

An ancient tradition practiced by Sena and Mang'anja people of Chikwawa and Nsanje is called "kufafaniza imfa". Its translation means "erasing death". It takes place only after the death of a husband and it causes severe hardship on the widow and children. After death, a man's relatives come and invade his home and share all of the property that he had accumulated during his lifetime. Shortly after that, they return to carry out the tradition of demolishing the house. This causes the widows bitterness and a feeling of helplessness because, as a part of their culture, they feel there is nothing they can do. Widowhood becomes the worst marital status that a woman can endure. Many feel that women who die before their husbands are blessed.

A village headman who is one of the adherents of the tradition in Nsanje says that there are two reasons why the houses are demolished. It is believed that when a man dies, his spirits go back into the house where he lived. Demolition of the house will exorcise the spirits of the deceased person so that they will not have the power to send wild animals to attack people at night or to haunt others to spend sleepless nights and have horrible dreams.

The custom of kufafaniza imfa also prevents the wife from living in the house of her deceased husband if she remarries. This action prevents the new husband from inheriting a house and wealth that he never worked for. It is thought that the new husband should build his own house.

Women believe that this custom is discriminatory because it is practiced only when the man dies and it reduces women to second-class citizens. Men are allowed to continue living in their houses when their wives die. The women wonder if this implies that women have no spirits. They wonder why is it that men don't fear being haunted by the spirits of their dead wives.

Several individuals are urging Human Rights Organizations to go to Chikwawa and Nsanje to help eliminate this age-old custom that is so detrimental to women and children in these more modern times. 2

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Under the newly elected government, the Ministry of Education has been allocated the largest amount (or 12.8 per cent) of the K11 billion budget. The two universities will get an additional 2.2 billion. If a World Bank loan is secured, another US\$296,296 will be applied toward the improvement of the quality of education, including an increase in the number of teacher training institutions and the rehabilitation of old boarding schools around the country.

The second largest allocation is to the Ministry of Health. While recurrent programs were funded again, it is expected that a significant amount of new funding will be spent on HIV/AIDS.

The Ministry of Agriculture is reinstating the fertilizer and maize subsidies. In addition, the government will intensify its investment in irrigation facilities around the country.

The Ministry of Information and Tourism has been allocated eight times the previous amount to devote to development-related expenditures.

A total of K852 million has been devoted to the Ministry of Mines and Environmental Affairs for its development program and the Ministry of Trade and Private Sector has seen an increase from the previous budget.

The government has also earmarked resources toward the construction of the Kamuzu Mausoleum, and rehabilitation of government buildings at Capital Hill.

(Information from Nation Publications Limited)

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WEB SITE OF INTEREST

The web site for the *Malawi Project* has been redesigned and updated. To learn about Malawi, the lake, the National Parks, languages, the geography, the current state of medicine and health care in the nation, orphan care, food aid, and other programs designed to aid the people of Malawi, take time to explore www.malawiproject.org. The site will keep readers updated on the unique aspects of the project's outreach that reflects an equal partnership with Malawi organizations and hospitals.

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FALLEN PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER

MEMORIAL

Chelsea and Donna Mack have created the Fallen Peace Corps Memorial. They are the sister and mother of Jeremiah Mack who died in a car accident in Niger while serving as a volunteer. They created the memorial website www.fpcv.org for all the volunteers who have died while serving in the Peace Corps. They are asking readers to leave messages, sign the guestbook, and let others know about it. They also would like to create a physical memorial to fallen volunteers, perhaps at the Kennedy Library.

IN MEMORIAM

(Adapted from his obituary-Monterey, CA)

At the age of 81, **Edward B. Larsh**, former Peace Corps Director in Malawi (June 1969 - January 1979), passed away October 1, 2004, after suffering from advanced Alzheimer's disease.

Fondly known as "Eddie-Boy" and "coach", Ed graduated from Leadville High School in Colorado and went on to further his education at Western State College, Stanford University, and the University of Northern Colorado where he earned a Ph.D. in the field of education. From 1942-1946, he served as an aerial engineer in World War II.

Ed was a devoted, passionate and active fan of life. He sought opportunities, took chances, and embraced challenges that aimed to make the world a better place. He had a significant influence on the many basketball players he coached, and on the high school students in his social studies classes as well as on the Peace Corps Volunteers who served under his direction. Ed's wife Jane, who served with him in Malawi, passed away in 1992.

He published *Take the Aspen Train: A History of Changing Values* and *Railroads in Colorado*. He also produced *Leadville U.S.A.*, an oral history of his hometown, 1880-1994. Most recently, he published *Doc's Lab, Myth & Legends of Cannery Row*.

After his Peace Corps days, Ed divided his time between living and writing in Monterey, California and at his home in Carbondale, Colorado. Many will miss his enthusiasm, creativity and guidance.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Association or a charity of the donor's choice.

This column will present views from either a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Malawi or a Peace Corps Volunteer currently serving in Malawi. The intent is for RPCVs to reflect on the influence their PC experiences have had on their lives, and to keep Newsletter readers up-to-date on Peace Corps involvement in Malawi.

Fortieth Anniversary Notes – Nyasaland/Malawi I

By Jim Heaton

This experience wasn't Kansas anymore and perhaps not even the planet Earth. It was somewhere between Earth and Heaven – you choose the direction. First there were all my friends in the project who awed me, and who still inhabit my dreams. Then there were the others who really made a difference, such as Richard Msiska; Mtali and his twins; Msiska II our gardener and hunter; nyaHarawa: Good Chirwa, the Livingstonia principal and his kind wife; all of the students, kids caught in the turmoil of Livingstonia's forced closing and made to run a gauntlet of retribution from Banda's hired goon squads; Peter Chimwano, the traveling minstrel of Likuni; and the mysterious and ephemeral Nyau society defying the mission by racing through the outskirts with straw camels and strange masks.

It gave one a good kind of post-traumatic stress, forcing one to think twice about the rest of this life. Malawi wasn't the kind of life-threatening stress that soldiers face, but no one would deny it wasn't extremely stressful, from the mental and physical training, the pain of leaving relatives and friends for two years, the pain of the vaccinations for diseases we'd never heard of, and finally the Pan Am flight on a snowy night with our overweight baggage still in dispute. We thought about how we'd survive the naputsi flies, malaria, dangerous water, bilharzia and giant anthills.

What we found was a damp, cool little land with a lake so clear you could see the cichlid fish glittering in its depths, and rocky pinnacles as in a Chinese painting. Along the road from the airport people were dressed in rags and carried bundles of sticks. Some had bicycles. There were many cows. Roads were well kept and school grounds were spacious, immaculate and bordered with bougainvillea and hibiscus. Lilongwe was nice: a big cinema, big hotel, the biggest market in the country, a supermarket, and fine schools. We all had different assignments and different versions of the story, but in the end it came to the same thing: life was never going to be the same.

But there's another chapter, one of many. In 2000, a group of ex-Malawi RPCVs visited the country as a kind of sentimental journey, combined with some planned projects. Remembering the chiChewa syllables of four decades ago, we found that they worked and got replies and smiles in kind. (Cont. on page7)

F.O.M. GRANT AWARDED

Peace Corps Volunteer Hollee Pattison was awarded \$400 for a soap-making workshop. Several other PCVs were involved so that this grant reached Ntchisi, Mchingi, Salima, Mzimba and Lilongwe with various women's groups taking home a valuable skill for income generation. Megan Burnett in Salima helped raise capital for her group to begin soap making. Ruth Magtanog in Mchingi is working with her counterpart for maintaining the connection with the group for future projects. Adrienne Rather in Lilongwe is creating new scents with her group. Soap making has been a big hit in Chinguluwe and the group has had no difficulty selling its product.

Hollee and her group of women have contacted the district hospital and jails about the possibility of providing soap to these institutions. Congratulations to each of the PCVs and women's groups!

(Photos from the workshop on opposite page)

SECRETARY NEEDED

Wanted: New F.O.M. Board Member! Are you organized, energetic, and looking for a fun and meaningful way to be involved in the organization?

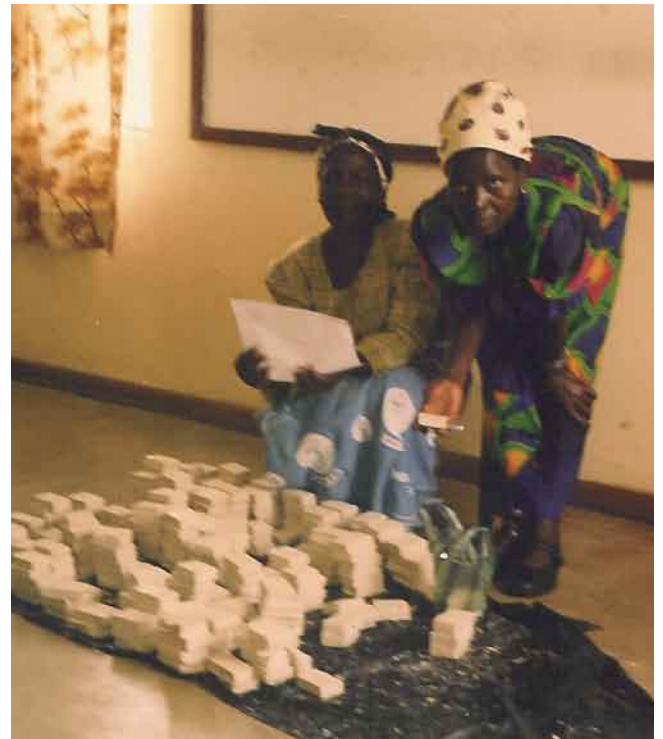
We are looking for someone who can:

- *Participate in quarterly conference calls,
- *Contribute to periodic e-mail discussions regarding FOM policy,
- *Receive hard-copy mailings on behalf of FOM, convert those into electronic format (either a Fax machine or Kinko cost reimbursements will be provided),
- *On a weekly basis, answer the "Questions" part of the webpage e-mail address,
- *Be a liaison with our web service provider to ensure updates to the FOM website,
- *Facilitate the two-step electronic decision process of the Board by (a) announcing electronic discussions to the Board members, (b) summarizing the discussions and phrasing them into a question for voting, and (c) tallying and announcing the results of the electronic votes and,
- *Take and distribute minutes of conference call discussions, and summarize board discussions conducted electronically, including options considered and the reason(s) for final decisions.

If interested, please e-mail Dawn at:
d_citrin@hotmail.com.



Soap Making Project



HELP WANTED!!

1. FOM needs a *secretary*. See article on page 4.
2. FOM still needs someone to coordinate the **history project**. Please contact Dawn Citrin *if you even think that you might be interested*.
2. FOM Newsletter editors encourage **current PC Malawi Volunteers** to submit articles about the projects they are working on. Photos are an extra benefit. Email or fax or mail to Beth Evans. Grant reports go to Katie Reidy.
3. FOM Newsletter editors encourage **RPCVs who served in Malawi** to submit articles about how their service has influenced them. Thanks to Jim Heaton (Malawi I) for volunteering to be first! Email or Fax or mail to Beth Evans.

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NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Wangari Maathai won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. She is the first black African woman and first environmental activist to win a Nobel Prize in any category since the awards were first given out in 1901. The 64 year-old Kenyan gained acclaim for a campaign planting 30 million trees to stave off deforestation.

When she got word of her award, she was distributing food to villagers who are suffering from drought, and campaigning to protect Kenya's forests. She believes that protecting the world's resources is linked to halting violence. This is the same work she has been doing for decades because she says, "Many wars in Africa are fought over natural resources. Ensuring they are not destroyed is a way of ensuring there is no conflict."

Maathai is Kenya's deputy environment minister and a former presidential candidate. She has worked nearly half of her life for human rights and to protect the environment by founding the Green Belt Movement. She has campaigned against government oppression and was repeatedly arrested and beaten for protesting against the environmental policies and human rights record of former President Daniel arap Moi.

In Oslo, Norway, she said, "Today, we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds, and in the process heal our own, indeed to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process." Committee chairman Danbolt Mhoes said, "This is the first time that environment sets the agenda for the Nobel Peace Prize, and we have added a new dimension to peace."

Maathai has warned that the world remains under attack from disease, deforestation and war. At the Nairobi Summit for A Mine Free World, (11/29-12/3,'04) Maathai was one of the opening speakers.

THE MALAWI HANDCART PROJECT'S

"AfriCart"

(By Arnold Wendroff)

There is a dearth of wheeled transport in Malawi. My dozen post-PCV ('67-'68) visits there gave ample opportunity to note this fact. In 1989, while helping a friend collect firewood in upstate NY, it dawned on me that the two-wheeled 'Garden-Cart' we were using would be ideal transport in Malawi. I made up fliers with photos of handcarts and showed them to Malawian farmers. Many were eager to buy them, but they were not available. In 1992, I brought over a set of wheels and axle, built a cart at Livingstonia, and demonstrated it from Karonga to Lilongwe. There was lots of interest, but no uptake because the components were not available. In 1998, the Ministry of Agriculture invited me to demonstrate the handcart concept at Chitedze Agricultural Research Station. We built and tested two, and a favorable report was submitted. However, the commercial sector was not convinced enough to import the components. In the spring of 2000, I stumbled upon a handcart design using bicycle wheels held together in a wooden frame. That summer I built a prototype AfriCart at Livingstonia, and had 11 more built for testing under local conditions. Suggestions of a variety of uses for programs run by government ministries resulted in testing 16 carts by the Malawi Rural Travel and Transport Programme. A favorable report was submitted, but no money was allocated.

After discovering stronger 12 gauge spokes in Tanzania, getting them imported, and training some carpenters to build the AfriCarts, we demonstrated them in 2003 at the 1st national agricultural fair in Lilongwe. We won 3rd prize. In 2004, we won 1st prize at the fair held in Blantyre. The Ministry of Agriculture is officially certifying the AfriCart for use in its programs and is assessing their utility to assist farm families impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Three Malawian colleagues are working with me in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu. They are building carts, training local carpenters to build them, and advocating for the dissemination of handcart technology by government, NGO and commercial agencies.

The AfriCart design is unique to Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) because it is made of readily available and relatively affordable bicycle wheels, bicycle bolts, and wood frame and body. Carpenters can make them with common hand tools. Virtually all other cycle-wheeled handcart designs in SSA use welded steel frames that are expensive, and both steel and welding apparatus are not available in rural areas.

The AfriCart enables women and children to move loads up to 300 pounds with no lifting and at a speed of over two miles per hour. PCVs could work to disseminate this technology in Malawi. For further details visit www.malawihandcartproject.org.

Fortieth Anniversary Notes (cont. from page 4)

We saw colorful clothes, Nike backpacks, big striped umbrellas for the afternoon rains, brick houses. We visited Mvuu National Park and saw animals cavorting in the Shire river that I'd never dreamed existed in Malawi – scores of hippos, crocodiles, cormorants, elephants. But driving around the country, I saw many fewer people, no cows, few trees, few bikes, and the big green and yellow busses had disappeared to be replaced by ubiquitous white minivans, all packed to the gills. The roads were no wider than in the '60s and were missing much of their pavement, the mnemonic road signs were gone, as were the city streetlights and sidewalks, and yet crowds of people were almost everywhere. Where did all the people come from? But the crowds consisted mainly of women and the very old and very young. There were a few young men – in some villages you'd see none of the ages 15-25 years. What happened? You ask a hotel guy about conditions back in the villages. Any AIDS problem? Oh, no, no, none of that sort of thing. *So did people just not have babies 15 years ago?*

But wait a minute. The fact was, I now could talk to the hotel guy, or to any number of people. Real talk (in English, or chiChewa or chi Tumbuka – it didn't really matter) as equal citizens of the world seeking to figure it out. It all came to me while singing the Malawi national anthem with the owner of the bookstore in Mlanje, that *this was what it was all about*. We could look each other in the eyes and, by God, talk to one another. We both knew there was a way to go.

The AIDS epidemic that began in the '80s continues to this day and it's just beginning to turn around so that now "edzi" is a fact of life rather than an unnamed form of population shrinkage. And the current Peace Corps generation is in the middle of administering AIDS education programs in the villages. A few volunteers showed up at the Peace Corps reception for the Year 2000 returnees. They greeted us as venerable grandparents.

POSTSCRIPT: Of the Malawi I project, Bob Poole and Dan Bowen each died in car accidents. Jim Baine, Marie Sauer and Elda Ginevri died of other causes. These things and the ongoing poverty, the AIDS trauma that has undoubtedly affected many of our ex-students, and the seeming hopelessness of the Malawi infrastructure, all force us to tear up old journals and compose new ones. One can see a lot of the new approach in the locally administered Malawi

Children's Village and the amazing accomplishments there. I learned so much from Mr. Sibale and Faith and, of course, from Kevin Denny, the American partner at MCV – this represents an entirely different generation of volunteerism and it may prove to be more enduring than projects that are politically inspired. To be sure, the process is traumatic, and this aging former 24-year old mind is strained to accommodate the scope of this journey into the coming years. One way or another, we'll still be there for the fiftieth anniversary.

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EDUCATING MALAWI'S AT-RISK GIRLS

The Africa Education Initiative (AEI) Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program has awarded \$934,000 to Malawi to support a nationwide program to keep girls in school. In 1994, Malawi abolished primary school fees, but girls still are less likely to attend school and stay there. HIV/AIDS has had a huge impact on communities and schools. Girls are expected to leave school to care for sick family members. HIV/AIDS also is leaving many orphans who cannot attend school because they must struggle daily for food, shelter and clothing. The AEI program started in January 2005. It will assist Malawian girls in the highest risk groups – the poor, the handicapped, the orphaned and those adversely affected by HIV/AIDS. Books, clothes, food, school supplies, and other expenses essential to retaining girls in school will all be part of the assistance package to encourage and enable girls to stay in school. For more information go to http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/initiatives/aei.html.

NEW VOLUNTEERS SWORN IN

On December 16, 2004, eighteen new Peace Corps Volunteers were sworn in. This group will focus on education. The ceremony took place at the Ambassador's residence. Volunteers are assigned to eighteen different schools in 13 different districts. Currently there are 98 PCVs serving in Malawi along with two Crisis Corps Volunteers. Another group of PCV's is due to arrive in March.

F.O.M. Newsletter

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Return requested

EDITORS' NOTE

After a number of years when Friends Of Malawi was inactive, we have produced three newsletters and instituted another membership drive. It has been a great success. We hope that you will let us know if we have missed any of your friends or fellow Peace Corps Volunteers (nearly 75 newsletters were returned with a new forwarding address and 75 returned as "Not Deliverable"). Just email John Staub or contact one of the FOM Board members with names and addresses and they will be added to the mailing list.

We, the editors, are volunteers and we are trying to keep costs at a minimum in order to fund as many grants as possible. We collate, fold, tab and label each copy by hand so if your label is askew, please forgive us! Many thanks to Judy Trevena for proof-reading and volunteering to help us get each issue of the FOM Newsletter ready to mail.

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1. We encourage current PC Malawi Volunteers to share stories about their projects and experiences and to send us pictures.
2. We encourage RPCVs to write about how their experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Malawi has had an influence on what they are doing now.
3. RPCVs, please let us know how you are staying in touch with Malawi.

PLEASE SEND INFORMATION AND ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION IN FUTURE ISSUES TO:

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