

F.O.M. Newsletter

Number 9

GRANTS COMMITTEE REPORT

Certainly the most rewarding function of the Friends Of Malawi is our funding of projects that directly improve the lives of the people of Malawi. Requests for support are received from qualified Malawians and Peace Corps volunteers throughout the year for many projects that fit our goals. The grants review team has reorganized recently. As of January 2007, in addition to Katie Reidy, Angie Sanders and Ellen Collisson share responsibility for the selection of proposals that receive funds from FOM. In order to better manage the review process, it was decided that the reviewing and funding of submitted proposals would be limited to four times a year: March, June September and January.

Projects are approved based on lasting and sustainable contributions to improving the livelihood of communities in Malawi, integral involvement of Malawians and matching support of monetary funds, supplies or labor. Following the March review cycle, we are very pleased to have approved funding for six grants that represent diverse topics ranging from promoting reading skills and literacy, health education, goat dairy farming, nutritional food gardening and forestry restoration. Most directly impact HIV/AIDS care and community awareness. The directors/managers of funded projects are Malawi professionals and Peace Corps Volunteers assigned in Malawi. Below are brief summaries of the projects that were targeted for funding during March 2007:

1. The Community Youth Groups Network project "Helping Young Pupils from Primary Schools by Instilling a Culture of Reading to Reduce Illiteracy Levels" will be managed by Aurgins Phiri and Triza Rachel Kazembe. Funding will provide materials for the community of Chichiri to build a facility for their library and provide supplies to assist teachers in literacy training. The FOM support for creating a learning and reading environment is combined with substantial support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Actionaid Malawi Internation, and Gift of Givers Foundation.
2. Kenneth Harry Misiska and Miss Atusaye Gondwe with the Young Advocates for the Advancement of ICT Related Development received funding for "The Lubwe Community Adult Literacy Project." Partners in this project include Malawi Communications Regulatory

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Authority, Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, NICO Technologies, Youth Services America, and the U. S. Embassy.

3. "Santhe Healthy Living" was submitted by Megan Brady, a current Peace Corps Volunteer at the Santhe Health Center south of the Kasunga Boma. Her project is supported also by the Santhe Health Center's Nutrition Rehabilitation Unit and Voluntary Counseling and Testing. A fruit, vegetable and herb garden will serve to provide a source for nutrition education and herbal remedies. The participants and beneficiaries of the garden will be caregivers and people living with HIV/AIDS. However, the outreach of the Health Center will be extended to the community as a whole.

4. The Ukhondo Services Foundation with leadership of Edgar Phiri received support for their "Ndirande Market Hygiene and Sanitation Promotion." Ukhondo Services Foundation, devoted to improving hygiene and sanitation, and nutrition awareness, will train residents of the Ndirande Township in hygiene and sanitation practices. This project is intended to address overall awareness of the necessity for clean markets to reduce pollution and the transmission of disease.

5. "Mphizi Village Agro-Forestry" with leadership from technical expert, John Nyambi, will provide awareness and instruction for weeding, fire control, and forest regeneration. The project is a continuation of the work of the people of Mphizi to restore their forests with tropical indigenous acacia trees (Mthethe trees in Chichewa). The acacia trees, ideal for a critical source of charcoal, provide alternatives to deforestation of the adjacent Thuma forest reserve.

6. Youth Ambassadors Organization with Cassim Cryton Chilaya as the director will work with the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Ministry of Health, City AIDS Co-ordinator and the PLWHAs Support Groups to educate the Soche community in AIDS awareness. Youth to youth outreach programs educate the community in reproductive health including HIV/AIDS prevention. Therefore, a major goal is to create youth awareness of the many issues of AIDS infection that impact infected youth. Their learning issues are communicated through drama, videos, lectures and group discussions.

FOM feels honored to play a part in these partnerships and wishes greatest success in their worthwhile endeavors!



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SOAP & MUSHROOM PROJECT

A group of ten women on the outskirts of Mzuzu have started the Nkhorongo Mushroom Club as a means of earning survival income. The group exists primarily to produce mushrooms in response to a huge market production gap. Their major weekly customer is the Sunbird Mzuzu Hotel. However, the demand was greater than their supply and their capital to expand.

Last fall the group decided to go into the soap making business as a means of raising enough capital to expand the mushroom business so that other hotels in the region could be supplied. Made with their own hands, soap tablets are sold for K25. The response has been tremendous – enough so that a bank account was established and they were able to mold enough bricks to erect a building in which to grow the mushrooms.

The Nkhorongo group attributes their success in both the mushroom and soap making businesses to the week-long training they underwent, courtesy of the National Association for Small and Medium Enterprises (Nasme). With professional guidance from Nasme, the group avoided buying mushroom seeds from nonaccredited institutions. They purchase seeds only from Bunda College of Agriculture in Lilongwe.

In addition to training from Nasme, chairperson Rose Sakala went to Tanzania to learn from farmers in that country about how they grow their mushroom crops. Now, the club hopes to take the mushroom business to new heights.

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DONATIONS NEEDED

**Along with a container of books for Malawi, FOM is sending school supplies and hygiene articles such as soap, tooth brushes, etc. If you would like to contribute, please send your monetary donation to:
FOM Treasurer, Lance Cole
7940 SW 11th, Portland, Oregon 97219.
Be sure to specify “For Container Supplies”.**

FROM COKE CANS TO FRUIT TREES

Over 92,000 metric tons of coca-cola cans and other aluminum materials have been recycled in England through the Aluminum Packaging Recycling Organization Limited (Alupro), a not-for-profit organization funded by the leading aluminum packaging and processing companies in the United Kingdom. Together with RIPPLE Africa, an NGO working in Malawi, they have agreed on a two year project for community development in Malawi worth MK13 million.

In this program, RIPPLE Africa will set up fruit tree nurseries in 75 communities to produce guava, pawpaw, mulberry, granadilla, grape vines, and indigenous fruit trees in order to improve food security and nutrition while conserving the environment. Also, a high tech community based fruit tree propagation nursery will be established to propagate improved mango, citrus, avocado, Mexican apples, etc.

Based primarily in the Northern District, the program will start in the Nkhata Bay area. Geoff and Liz Furber, founders and directors of RIPPLE Africa, thanked Alupro for their support and noted that, as of mid April, RIPPLE Africa had managed to raise over 700,000 seedlings that will help to transform rural communities in northern Malawi. The project will be coordinated by David Mkwambisi a lecturer at Bunda College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi.

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F.O.M. Members: When moving, please send CHANGE OF ADDRESS information to Membership Chairperson

Kristen George: kristengeorge00@yahoo.com
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The Inspector General's office has rated the Peace Corps Malawi program as being one of the three best in Africa!

JOY AND SADNESS AT MCV

On Friday the 13th of July, the nursery at Malawi Children's Village burned down. The electricity had been turned off earlier in the evening and it came back on around 9:30 pm when all were asleep. Noticing that the lights had come back on, one of the night security staff went into the building to turn off the lights. He found smoke and saw that the back of the building was on fire.

With the help of the secondary school students, the nannies and all 21 babies in their beds were saved. Someone had the presence of mind to pull the solar panels off the roof in order to preserve them. However, all of the records were lost along with the phone land-line, the washing machine, the new refrigerator-freezer, food, diapers, clothing, baby bottles, blankets, etc.

Hearing of the fire, several volunteers and local people shopped at local stores and brought diapers, baby bottles, blankets and food. Needless to say, there was a lot of scrambling to get things in order to be able to continue to carry on.

Babies and cribs were moved into the former guest house/office. The office was moved to an empty classroom. The clinic staff and volunteers moved outside under the trees and, almost immediately, work began on remodeling the building that housed the clinic and storage space.

Not everything at MCV caused sadness. On July 28th, over 300 people came to celebrate the joyous 10th Anniversary of Malawi Children's Village. Mr. Sabale and government representatives gave speeches, students sang, special dances were performed and much food was consumed. A special blue and white chitenje (wrap) was made to commemorate the occasion. It was used to decorate the platform seating area and many of the women wore it throughout the day. Singing and dancing went on until long after the formal program was finished.

In the week following the celebrations, there was another happy day...six of the children were well enough to be released back to their villages.

**FROM LUNZU SECONDARY TO INDIANA
UNIVERSITY: THE STORY OF
SHADRECK KAMWENDO**

By Jade Wu, Esq.

I remember when I first met Shadreck Kamwendo, known to me fondly as “Wazzey.” It was a hot summer afternoon in late 1995. I was just assigned to teach at Lunzu Secondary, a rural government school outside of Blantyre. A fellow teacher said to me, “There is someone I want you to meet. I think you will find him to be a leader among our students.”

Wazzey was most definitely a leader. He was a prefect in Form 3 and also the student representative for the school’s entertainment committee. I remember my first impression of him: a handsome teenager who demonstrated maturity, intelligence, foresight, and compassion. I also was struck by how good his English was. Every time he and I worked together on the school’s entertainment schedule, we had absolutely no trouble communicating. Furthermore, the other students looked up to Wazzey and followed his direction.

Eventually, the years passed and I returned to the United States. I was happily surprised to hear from Wazzey in the late 90’s. He informed me that he had immigrated to Indiana, was working part time, and pursuing a B. A. degree. It wasn’t an easy time for him. He had to balance the university with work. However difficult, he became the President of the International Student Organization at Indiana University, South Bend, and was elected Senator-At-Large to the student government.

Furthermore, Wazzey devoted countless hours to several non profit organizations and programs while an undergraduate. Through it all, he demonstrated an undying fervor in helping people and helping them look beyond borders.

Just last summer, Wazzey graduated from Indiana University with a B. A. Now, he is pursuing a Master of Arts in Philanthropic Studies. He plans to return to Africa and share the knowledge and expertise he has gained here in the U. S.

I have never met anyone like Wazzey, even after my many years of living abroad (after PC Malawi, I worked in Kosovo, the Philippines, and Germany). He has demonstrated that it is possible that even a secondary student in Malawi can pursue his dreams. I am confident that Wazzey will continue to be a leader, this time in world affairs. Congratulations, Wazzey!

NEW PCVS SWORN IN

On July 24th, a swearing in ceremony was held in Lilongwe at the residence of American ambassador Allan Eastham for 21 new PCVs who are assigned to work in rural health sectors. Having completed eight weeks of in-country training and intensive language instruction, five will be working in the Karonga, Rumpi, Mzimba and Mzuzu districts. Eight Volunteers will be stationed in the central regions of Ntchisi, Mchinji, Dowa, Lilongwe, Kasungu and Nkhotakota. In the southern region, eight are assigned to sites in the districts of Chiradzulu, Zomba, Mulanje, Nsanje, and Phalombe.

Malawi government representative from the Ministry of Health, Louis Njaya, said that his ministry has worked with Peace Corps Volunteers for many years and that the close cooperation between Malawi and the U. S. government is appreciated. The qualified and highly skilled health volunteers come at a time when there is an acute shortage of qualified human resources in Malawi’s institutions.

Ambassador Eastham urged the PCVs to put more effort into helping communities **prevent HIV**. Peace Corps Malawi country director Dale Mosier asked the new volunteers to work with passion, responsibility, and humility.

Representatives of the volunteers who spoke in Chichewa, Tumbuka, and English reported that their training focused on many aspects of lifestyles in Malawi including language, culture, and food.



Ambassador Eastham swearing in Volunteers

VOLUNTEER AND SERVICE ENQUIRY SOUTHERN AFRICA

(Adapted from the Executive Summary in VOSESA Focus)

In a March 2007 meeting in Johannesburg, a report was made on the nature and form of civic services in five countries in southern Africa. One of the countries was Malawi. The main finding for Malawi was that there is limited recognition and understanding of the term civic service and that it consists primarily of unstructured volunteering with no expectation of financial gain. All service in Malawi is non-compulsory and the only national civic service program is the newly established Community Service Programme that deals with a small number of minor offenders.

While volunteering activities are prevalent in both rural and urban areas, it often is related to need, population density, and the presence of donors. A number of programs have been active for at least 10 years and they reflect the increase in NGOs and CBOs that followed the beginning of the multi-party system of government in 1994. There is increased involvement in response to HIV/AIDS, providing care for People Living With AIDS (PLWAs), orphan care, and increasing awareness and education of youths.

Turnover of local volunteers is high and long-term commitment rarely enforced. Time allocated for volunteering usually is flexible and fit around daily lives of the volunteers. "Service often reflects traditional gender norms: women are more likely to be carers. Whilst men are generally involved in skilled or manual labour and in leadership positions." Reasons for volunteering include humanitarian concern or a perceived or actual impact of an issue on their lives. Poverty also drives servers to offer their services in exchange for monetary benefits that accrue to the program. Positive aspects of volunteering include and acceptance of volunteers by communities, increased status, and access to training resources. Negative aspects include delays in receiving incentives, insufficient training and poverty.

In addition to local volunteering, there are approximately 400 international volunteers in Malawi who provide technical support, predominantly in health and education sectors. Amongst international volunteers, negative aspects relate to cultural and language differences and poor communication between the host organization and the service organization.

Most volunteer programs do not have clearly defined criteria for servers. Other factors that hinder service and volunteering in Malawi include: illiteracy, low

standards of education, high burnout and turnover amongst volunteers, a lack of sustainability of programs, lack of capacity, corruption, and political interference, donor dependency, etc. (More details at www.sosesa.org.za or www.service-enquiry.org.za.)

RESTORE M-BAG EFFORT

By Shannon Brown

On May 14, 2007 the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) eliminated International Surface Mail (M-Bag). This is the method used extensively by many RPCVs, organizations (including Friends Of Malawi) and individuals to send books overseas and to support meaningful humanitarian projects and grassroots efforts in many rural schools and communities around the world. Many PCVs in Malawi have started Resource Center Libraries in their villages through books received by M-Bag.

USPS now offers only airmail service to Malawi which is \$3.95/lb. International Surface M-Bag cost \$1.05/lb prior to its elimination. This change has seriously reduced or shut down many humanitarian projects.

The Coalition to Restore M-Bag Service was formed to advocate this change and to educate the public and lawmakers about its impact.

Book and library projects have an important role in uplifting communities and supporting education and advancement of young people. At a time when we should be taking advantage of every opportunity to connect with other nations in friendship, goodwill and positive collaboration, these recent changes in overseas shipping rates could have a damaging-if not devastating- impact on many global service initiatives and be a missed opportunity to convey U.S. goodwill to millions of citizens in developing nations.

Our mission is to protest increased postal rates for humanitarian projects and to petition Congress and the U.S. Postal Service to reverse this decision. Please sign our petition at <http://petitiononline.com/zikomo/petition.html> and visit our website at <http://mbags.wikispaces.com/Background+and+Mission>.

CHONGONI ROCK ART AREA

On a high plateau in the Dedza District there is a cluster of forested granite hills with a dense concentration of rock paintings. First paintings were done by BaTwa hunter-gatherers who inhabited this area in the Late Stone Age. The Chewa farmers whose ancestors lived from the late Iron Age, continued to practice rock painting well into the 20th century. Strongly associated with women, the symbols still have cultural relevance amongst the Chewa and the sites are actively associated with ceremonies and rituals.

Rock art of hunter-gatherers falls into two distinct categories: the *naturalistic images* found mostly in the mountains of Southern Africa in Namibia and Zimbabwe with a few in Tanzania; and the *schematic images* thinly scattered across central Africa in Malawi, Central Africa Republic, Uganda, Zambia and Angola.

This latter category was not represented on the World Heritage List until the Chongoni site was nominated and put forward to be representative of schematic art on the World Heritage List. The paintings consist of images which can be related to two distinct types. One depicts static animals occasionally accompanied by humans depicted in outline and is found in two sites only. The second type of paintings is dominated by geometric motifs and includes designs of circles, ovals, parallel lines, wavy lines, etc. These may indicate atmospheric or climatic phenomena. Colors used for the paintings include red, pink, violet and white pigments.

In 1924, the Chongoni and surrounding hills were designated a Forest Reserve. The boundaries have been revised several times, but have remained unchanged since 1965. The rock art was first recorded in the 1930s and several sites were published in the 1950s. Of the 127 rockshelters, five were declared a protected national monument and opened to the public. The remaining shelters and isolated rock paintings scattered outside of shelters are not yet declared National Monuments.

All rock art sites are protected by the Monuments and Relics Act of 1990. Anyone found guilty of damaging paintings at Chongoni could be fined the equivalent of U. S. \$96 and subject to three years imprisonment. However, the act is not enforced to prevent graffiti. The Forest Reserve is protected by the Forestry Act of 1997. While these laws are more stringent, they rarely are enforced. While a Management Plan has been drawn up, it has not been supported by any funding and is more of a "wish list" than a reality and very little conservation work has taken place.

See next column for samples as depicted on stamps.



LETTERS OF THANKS

The previous issue of the FOM Newsletter had an article about CAMPSKY, the summer school enrichment program for girls that was run by Malawi PCVs.

Several FOM Board members have received personal letters from CAMPSKY participants. Letter writers thanked Friends Of Malawi for financial support of the program and stated how excited they were for the opportunity to be included. In addition, the girls usually wrote about their favorite part of the curriculum and the special activities that they liked along with some personal information.

FOM Newsletter

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FOM NEEDS HELP!

F.O.M. President, John Staub, is looking for RPCVs who are interested in becoming Friends of Malawi Board Members and/or who are willing to work on a Directory of Members. Please contact John at:

johnstaub@hotmail.com.