

# FRIENDS OF FIJI

2014 WINTER NEWSLETTER



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Dear Friends of Fiji,**

I hope you are all well as we enter the holiday season and make our preparations for the end of the year.

I am happy to share with you that Friends of Fiji (FoF), in alignment with its mission to assist in community development projects in Fiji, has funded four additional projects. The first project supports an annual scholarship at the Marist Champagnat Institute for a child care certification course in Suva, proposed by Ann Couzens and Brother Fergus. We supported an educational initiative for Panang Sangam High School in Raki Raki, introduced to us by Jeff Bronow, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) school instructor. We were also able to aid in extending the electricity grid, providing lights for the community in Vuya Village, which was brought to us by Brooke McDavid. Lastly, we had the opportunity to support a women's cooperative farming project in Vatawi Village, which was proposed by Janet Lotawa from Rise Beyond the Reef. Rise Beyond the Reef is also in the early stages of development of the Ridge and Reef Environmental Learning Center, which FoF looks forward to sponsoring.

I would like to thank all of you that were able to attend the 2014 FoF Fundraising Gala in partnership with Viti DC, making it another great success. It was a wonderful opportunity for RPCVs, Fiji expatriates, friends, and family

to meet and celebrate while benefitting causes close and dear to us all. There were plenty of compliments on the food from the lovo and there was dancing until the very end. Rob Bartel, the chair of the 2014 FoF Gala committee, co-chaired by Sala Sucu, did an outstanding job. Please visit our website for pictures and to see who the winner was for the raffle drawing for the round trip ticket with resort stay to Fiji.

FoF had another opportunity to partner with Viti DC for the Fiji National Day Ball, celebrating the 44<sup>th</sup> year of Fiji's independence. This was truly a time to celebrate with the first democratic elections in eight years in the Republic of the Fiji Islands, setting the stage for democracy.

We have also set the date for the next Annual General Meeting (AGM) for January 24, 2015 at the home of David & Willa Downes in Fairfax, VA. We hope that you will be able to attend and join in our discussions of past year accomplishments and contribute to the plans for the year ahead. Please email us at [info@fofiji.org](mailto:info@fofiji.org) if you are interested in serving on the board for FoF.

In closing, I welcome your contribution and comments. We value your membership and work to giving back to Fiji. Please check our website for updates or announcements of the dates mentioned. See you at the AGM in January 2015!

**Vinaka vakalevu, bahut daanyvaad,  
Lalesh**

# PROJECTS UPDATE

With the addition of the Gala proceeds of more than \$10,200, at midyear of 2014 the Projects Fund had a balance of \$27,325.74. Since then, Friends of Fiji has committed money to these projects:

## Education Initiative in Rakiraki

RPCV Jeff Bronow will be attending the 25-year high school reunion of the students he taught while serving in the Peace Corps in Fiji in 1989 and 1990. In celebration of this reunion, to be held in December of 2014, he decided to raise funds to provide 20 Kindle Paperwhite e-readers with cases to the Gary Mitchell Library at Penang Sangam High School in Rakiraki, Fiji. (Gary Mitchell, the library's namesake, was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Fiji for 3 years beginning in 1968, as part of Fiji 1. Gary taught English and drama while at Penang Sangam High School, and he established the library, soliciting book donations from the United States.) Friends of Fiji has donated \$500.00 to Jeff's Kindle project.



## Light Up Vuya!

Vuya Village, on Vanua Levu, has been working together as a community for the past three years toward several sustainable development goals. Electrification is a major project they are almost close to achieving. The Fijian government has asked that they contribute 5% of the total project cost, which amounts to \$34,000FJD (~\$18,500USD), before work can begin. The village has worked to raise over \$25,000FJD since January this year. It takes just \$270FJD (or \$150 USD) to bring electricity to one household. This is a major burden for many families who are struggling to meet basic needs. Electricity will bring many new opportunities to Vuya and increase the standard of living. Brooke McDavid, an RPCV from Vuya, has been working to raise a small fund on their behalf to help them meet their goal. Friends of Fiji has contributed \$1,000 towards this effort.

## Marist Champagnat Institute Child Care Certificate III Scholarship

At the recommendation of RPCV Ann Couzens, Fiji 4, a scholarship for financially disadvantaged students wishing to follow the Certificate III in Child Care at the Marist Champagnat Institute in Suva has been established by Friends of Fiji. The annual scholarship of FD1200 is to cover the costs of tuition for completion of the program for the Certificate III in Child Care in one year, and will be available from the first trimester 2015. It will be provided for three consecutive years, subject to an evaluation of the program.



**RiseBeyond Reef (RBTR)** founder, Janet Lotawa, is expanding a women's cooperative farming in Vatawai, located 30 minutes from Ba town, inside Nukuloa Village. The women of Vatawai have self-organized to establish a cooperative farm (approximately 2.5 hectares) to increase their vegetable and cash crop productivity to help increase the income levels of their families. They are leading their community in a desire to move beyond subsistence farming to larger scale farming to generate additional income. FoF support of \$1,000 into this women-driven initiative has a sustaining impact driven by the community and is not only inclusive of women, but promoting their leadership capacity.

# PEACE CORPS & FRIENDS OF FIJI EVENTS

## Friends of Fiji Annual Pot Luck Dinner & General Meeting – Saturday, January 24, 2015

You are invited to the Annual General Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner of the Friends of Fiji on Saturday, January 24, 2015, beginning at 5:00 p.m. at the home of David and Willa Downes, 3327 Mantua Drive, Fairfax, VA 22031 (703-641-0517). All are welcome to attend. The usually very brief business meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. and will include the election of the Board of Directors for the upcoming year and any other appropriate business.

If you are interested in serving on the Friends of Fiji Board, please email a brief biography (including details of your connection to Fiji) and what skills and interests you would bring to the Board to FOF President Lalesh Nagy at [lalesh@verizon.net](mailto:lalesh@verizon.net) (The Board generally meets about once a month in Arlington.)

Weather-related changes in the Annual General Meeting will be announced on the Friends of Fiji website ( [www.fofiji.org](http://www.fofiji.org) ) or by calling Lalesh Nagy @ 703-909-6553. The “snow date,” if needed, will be at the same time, one week later, Saturday, January 31.

### need to update your info? renew your membership?

<http://fofiji.org>  
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/13309240876/>  
<http://community.peacecorpsconnect.org/group/friendsoffiji>  
on twitter? follow us @friendsoffiji

### The National Peace Corps

**Association** hosted the first member groups networking event held in Washington, D.C. on October 1st. This was an opportunity for FOF to connect and exchange ideas with other country and regional RPCV groups on how to continue our 3rd goal. We were also able to meet our regional representatives on the NPCA board.

We've already used this connection to assist us with the website & we are looking forward to working with other groups in the future.

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

**Current membership count is 169 active, dues paying members.**

We have been working over the past several months to improve our website and enable on-line membership management. The web host we have been using did not give us adequate capacity for all member & non-member contacts so we are moving to a new service. Members will receive emails approximately 2 weeks before their renewal date with a link to on-line renewal. Those who prefer to send a check will still have the option to do so. The implementation of a new system will undoubtedly have some bugs. Please bear with us as we work them out. If you find any mistakes in your profile or believe your renewal date is wrong please let us know by emailing [info@fofiji.org](mailto:info@fofiji.org).

### Friends of Fiji welcomes the following new members:

Steve Asker & Samida Sargeant	Irma Miller
Jone & Lily Buadromo	Rishi Mishra
Martin Burrows	Diamere Murrille
Laura Dromerick	Luke Navatoga
Thomas Henry	Epeli Rokotuiveikao
Franklin Innes	Ciara Winslow

**We would also like to thank the following for making donations to Friends of Fiji.** Donations are received for three funds: Friends of Fiji general funds (pays for newsletters, fundraiser invitations, and minor administrative costs), Projects Fund (supports projects in Fiji), Dan Cantor Memorial Fund (supports social events for staff and volunteers in Fiji). **Thank You to:**

Terri Daigle	Dave & Sally McClure	Selai Nacagilevu
William Collier	Donald & Sara Miller	John Pirnat
Mary Eliot	Ron Moore	Norman Schoenthal
Tom Jamrogowicz	Suliana Moore	Robin Weaver
Don Lair	Barbara Mutz	Wetzel Investment

# GALA UPDATE

## 2014 Gala Raises more than \$10,000 for Development Projects in Fiji

In the early morning hours of May 17 Fijians and friends from distant parts of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York rubbed the sleep from their eyes and began their journeys to Potomac Overlook Park in Arlington VA to build a fire, peel dalo, and bundle palusami for the lovo that would feed approximately 120 guests at the 2014 Friends of Fiji Gala Fundraiser that evening.



Hours later the lovo's bounty was unearthed, loaded into vans, and taken to the Gala ballroom where volunteers continued with preparations for the party. At 6:00 PM guests arrived to find a hall beautifully decorated in Fiji style, island music filling the air, and a buffet table overflowing with Fijian and Indian dishes.

The 2014 Gala was the 12th biennial event hosted by Friends of Fiji to raise money for projects benefitting communities in Fiji where Peace Corps Volunteers have served for nearly 50 years. This year's gala was co-sponsored by the **Embassy of the Republic of Fiji** and **Viti-DC**. As guests were seated, they found a card at each table featuring one of the many projects that Friends of Fiji has contributed to. Projects included village developments such as composting toilets, water supply improvements, and paved footpaths. Also featured were projects benefitting school children in rural communities, such as library upgrades, kitchen improvements, and Camp Glow (Girls Leading Our World) on Vanua Levu.

Guests of honor at the Gala included: Fiji Ambassador Winston Thompson; Mr. Glenn Blumhorst, President of the National Peace Corps Association; and Isoa Rabuli, President of Viti-DC. Master of Ceremonies for the evening was Beth Shearer, a founding member of FoF. She was assisted by FoF President Lalesh Nagy and Past President Rob Bartel. The Gala organizing committee was chaired by Rob Bartel and included FoF Vice President Greta Wetzel and board member Sala Sucu. Anne Baker, also a founding board member, organized the very successful silent auction. Cynthia Grant was honored for her many years of service to the organization serving as membership coordinator.

As the evening drew to a close it was time to draw the winner of the raffle for a free trip to Fiji. 827 out of 1,000 tickets had been sold and the crowd waited in anticipation, each hoping fate would guide Rob Bartel's hand to draw their ticket. "And the winner is .... Susan Nordstrom!!!". Susan Nordstrom was not present for the drawing but we're sure she will be present in Fiji as soon as she can put in a leave request and find a house-sitter. Round trip tickets from Los Angeles to Nadi were donated by Fiji Airways and 2 nights lodging were donated by the Tokatoka Resort Hotel in Nadi.



*Fiji RPCVs in attendance at the gala gathered for a photo at the end of the evening.*

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Josephine (Jody) Haag**, 73, died July 21 of pancreatic cancer at her home in the loving care of her family; surrounded by music, love and the close proximity of her beloved garden. A longtime resident of the county, Jody came to Loudoun with her family in 1976 after four years with Peace Corps in Fiji and Afghanistan. In 1979, after three years in Waterford, the Haags had settled in Hamilton VA.

**Chris Lincoln**, Returned Peace Corps volunteer, died at his home in San Francisco this past April, aged 66. Chris was in Fiji 18, serving as a secondary school teacher from 1973 through 1977. His wife Edith, a Fiji native from Ovalau, died 15 years ago. Chris is survived by his daughter Louisa, who resides in Greenwich, Connecticut.



With Prop.8 finally gone,  
**Henry Hopkins,**  
Fiji One, married his partner of 22 years,  
**Richard Palmer,** in Richmond, CA, on August 25, 2013.

**Gloria J. Jacobson**, 59, passed away at home on August 31, 2014, of cancer. Gloria was HR manager at NH Catholic Charities, Manchester but most importantly, she was a proud Peace Corps volunteer ('09-'10) in Lavena on Taveuni Island, Fiji. She made such an impact to those around her, hundreds came celebrate her life. Our time with her was so brief but we all saw her kind spirit and experienced her generous love.



## Friends of Fiji in the NEWS

Vair receives Northeastern's Faculty of the Year Award – Journal-Advocate – Sterling, Colorado  
[http://www.journal-advocate.com/sterling-local\\_news/ci\\_25479164/vair-receives-northeasterns-faculty-year-award](http://www.journal-advocate.com/sterling-local_news/ci_25479164/vair-receives-northeasterns-faculty-year-award)

Gudmunsson wins triathlon individual Olympic event - The Fiji Times, Suva, Fiji  
<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=264980>

Students honor retiring principal with parade – The St. Augustine Record – St. Augustine, Florida  
<http://staugustine.com/news/local-news/2014-04-29/students-honor-retiring-principal-parade#.VEm0ROcxb9i>

New Book "Fatherhood: In Pieces" Offers Advice and Wisdom For Fathers from Fathers – PRWeb – Herndon, Virginia  
<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/06/prweb11912720.htm>

Verbatim: Mary Griffith – Sequim Gazette – Sequim, Washington  
<http://www.sequimgazette.com/opinion/263666451.html>

US help needed - Fiji Times, Suva, Fiji  
<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=273761>

P.E.O. Chapter XH honors scholarship recipient, McKensy Richmond – Santa Ynez Valley News  
[http://syvnews.com/lifestyles/p-e-o-chapter-xh-honors-scholarship-recipient-mckensy-richmond/article\\_3390cbdc-995c-5541-be07-4dcb897f854b.html](http://syvnews.com/lifestyles/p-e-o-chapter-xh-honors-scholarship-recipient-mckensy-richmond/article_3390cbdc-995c-5541-be07-4dcb897f854b.html)

Adapting to the faith - The Fiji Times, Suva, Fiji  
<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=279375>

UC Cooperative Extension Central Sierra and FoodCorps Members working together - Jackson, CA  
<http://www.tspntv.com/component/k2/item/22711-uc-cooperative-extension-central-sierra-foodcorps-members-and-ucce-working-together>

## THEN & NOW - ANNE BAKER

**Then:** Inspired by my grandparents, who travelled the world in retirement, I was intrigued with the idea of Peace Corps starting in college, but didn't feel ready until two years of work at General Electric convinced me that the corporate life wasn't for me. I am grateful that my degree in physics led me, exactly 30 years ago, to Fiji and to Lomaivuna.

Coincident with my arrival, Lomaivuna High School transitioned from a Junior Secondary School with the addition of Form Six. I taught two of the five Form Six courses (physics and mathematics), along with Form Five physical science. Learning to teach was a challenge, especially without textbooks (did anyone else have to teach just from the "Notes & Examples" books?) and without lab equipment. Until the new lab was built and opened, the school compound was the lab, e.g., a small stream for wave mechanics. I strived to prepare my students to pass their exams (still written and graded in New Zealand at that point) while also coaching them with practical skills they could apply in future work. As a secondary project, I worked with the Public Works Department to complete a water tank project started by an earlier volunteer. At mid-service, I assisted with the training of group 59, taking over to train group 62 after I completed service in December 1986.

**Now:** I was one of those volunteers for whom Peace Corps service completely changed their career direction. I returned home wanting to continue in education, landed a job teaching and coaching in Rhode Island and stayed for nine years. After getting my master's degree in International Education, I found myself wanting to do more – wanting more Americans to better understand the cultures and peoples of the world beyond our borders. (Wait – isn't that Peace Corps' Third Goal?) The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) hired me to manage their brand new global educators network. I've been at NPCA ever since, but with an ever-expanding range of responsibilities and new programs and challenges each year. The best part of my job? I get to work with the Peace Corps community: returned, current and future volunteers; their families; and the countless individuals and communities around the globe impacted by Peace Corps. What are some of my current responsibilities? Connecting and facilitating the work of our 143 member

groups (including Friends of Fiji!); managing the nomination and selection of NPCA awardees; supporting the Ebola Relief Fund; and, of course, promoting global education. (*Are you a member of NPCA? Learn more and join at [www.peacecorpsconnect.org](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org)*)



**Then:** Anne with her Form Six students in the new science lab at Lomaivuna High School.



**Now** (actually in 2011): Anne is part of an extended and interconnected family of RPCVs, shown here celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peace Corps in September 2011 (L to R): Murty Polavarapu (Anne's partner and RPCV Fiji 1990-1992), Anne, John and Kathy Baker (Anne's Dad and step-mom, Romania 2001-2003), Becky Smith and Jeff Hopkins (Anne's step-sister and husband, Guatemala 1988-1990 and Guatemala 1987-1989, respectively), Will and Fran Irwin (Fran is Jeff's cousin; Afghanistan 1966-1967 and Afghanistan 1964-1967, respectively) and Jack and Angene Wilson (Angene is Jeff's cousin; both were in Liberia 1962-1964; Jack was also the Country Director in Fiji 1970-1972)

# EATING WITH YOUR HANDS BY SARA SZUNYOGH

As I sit in my tiny Harlem apartment & write this, I reminisce about my time as a volunteer during the holiday months. A large group of us gathered at a volunteer's house in Lautoka, doing our best to re-create the comfort foods of our familiar family traditions. Mashed potatoes were easy enough, but others were committed to the more labor intensive pumpkin pie and even stuffing from scratch. My contribution was a take on my grandmother's sweet potatoes and apples. A cleaned up version of the marshmallow crusted variety, this is simple, spiced and can be made for a Fijian sized crowd. Don't be shy with the butter or use some virgin coconut oil for a vegan option!

## Sweet Potatoes and Apples

Serves 4 as a side dish

### Ingredients

2 medium sweet potatoes (or kumala), skin on, cut into large chunks

2 medium apples, cored, skin on, cut into large chunks

2 tbsp Butter (or coconut oil)

1 tsp Cinnamon

Pinch nutmeg

Pinch sea salt

Juice of ½ an orange

Drizzle of Maple syrup (optional)

### Instructions

1. Fill a medium stock pot with water and bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Add sweet potato and boil covered for 5 minutes. The potatoes should be tender but not quite done.
3. Add apples to pot with sweet potatoes and boil for an additional 5 minutes.
4. Ensure sweet potatoes and apples are both fork-tender & drain in a colander.
5. Place in a large mixing bowl & add butter, cinnamon, nutmeg, sea salt and orange juice, toss to coat. Taste for seasoning.
6. Smash lightly with the back of a spoon
7. Drizzle with maple syrup just before serving if you desire added sweetness. Serve as a warm holiday side.



## DAN CANTOR FUND



The Dan Cantor Fund was a huge hit at the last COS conference! Everyone was highly appreciative. We were able to spread the budget out over 2 nights and everyone was able to have at least a couple nice drinks! Vinaka!



## NPCA ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Save the Date!** The National Peace Corps Association's annual Peace Corps Connect is coming next to **Berkeley, CA on June 5-6, 2015**. We plan to gather the Fiji community, then, too. Put it on your calendar! Are you willing to host an event or help us plan? Contact Ben Wasserman ([ben.a.wasserman@gmail.com](mailto:ben.a.wasserman@gmail.com)) or Anne Baker ([aebaker42@icloud.com](mailto:aebaker42@icloud.com)). See you there!!

### NPCA Ebola Relief Fund

In collaboration with Returned Peace Corps Volunteer member groups representing three of the main affected countries — Friends of Guinea, Friends of Liberia and Friends of Sierra Leone — and in response to community interest to assist in the region, the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) launched an Ebola Relief Fund. Contributions, which are tax deductible, are accepted and acknowledged via the NPCA website and designated 100% towards Ebola-related relief efforts. Learn more and make your contribution at [www.npcaebolarelief.org](http://www.npcaebolarelief.org).

# FRIENDS OF FIJI

4327 43rd St NW  
Washington, DC  
20016



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*Annual General Meeting - January 24, 2015 - See page 3 for details!*

## UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  Individual FoF only \$15.00  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  Couple FoF only \$22.50  
City/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  Individual NPCA & FoF \$50.00  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  Couple NPCA & FoF \$92.50  
Peace Corps Info \_\_\_\_\_ if couple, please name second person \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail to:**

*Friends of Fiji 7111 Woodley Lane, Falls Church, VA 22042-2539* Optional Donation \_\_\_\_\_

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