

FRIENDS OF FIJI

2017 WINTER NEWSLETTER



INVITATION FROM THE PEACE CORPS COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Bula Vinaka and Namaste to all Friends of Fiji,

As many of you are aware, 2018 will mark the 50th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Peace Corps Volunteers in Fiji. It is a great privilege for me to be serving as the current country director in Fiji for this significant milestone event, and I would like to extend the invitation to all of you whose hearts have been touched by Fiji to return and join us in what I trust will be a great celebration. In truth, you will not so much be “joining” a great celebration. Rather, it is your presence that will make the celebration great.

In my travels throughout the country, I routinely encounter school officials, government representatives, and leaders in many fields who remark with great tenderness about a Peace Corps volunteer that influenced them positively in their youth, and who in some way contributed to their success in life. For all of you who have served over the past 5 decades, you may have no idea about how the seeds you planted have germinated and grown over the years. But when I hear the stories, and the fondness with which so many older Fijians recall a former Volunteer who took an interest in their life and development, I become encouraged and energized about our ongoing work here and trusting of the enduring meaning and purpose of the Volunteer experience.

So, I want to thank all of you RPCVs for the legacy that you have left, and the tremendous good will that accompanies it. It is the reason that communities, schools and organizations around the country still actively and eagerly seek to have the support of Volunteers. And it is the reason why I trust that our 50th anniversary is deserving of celebration.

We are still in the formative stages of our planning for the activities for the anniversary. However, after consulting with the government of Fiji, we have set the dates for the official observance during the week of June 23 - July 1, 2018. The basic plan thus far is to kick off the celebrations in Nadi with a no-host cocktail reception on June 23 followed by a welcoming lovo on Sunday, June 24th, and leave the early part of the week for people to do village visits and possibly some service projects with current Volunteers. Toward the end of that week (June 28-30) we will have some more formal events in Suva, which will likely involve photo exhibit and banquet. Stay tuned for the particulars as the plans take form.

But for now, I would like to extend a warm invitation to all of you to find your way back to your “other home” here in Fiji for this celebration. I look forward to welcoming many of you back here at that time.

Vinaka Vaka Levu,
Dennis McMahon
Country Director
Peace Corps Fiji

50th ANNIVERSARY UPDATES

As Dennis said in his invitation, the dates for celebrations in Fiji will be from June 23 through July 1, 2018. The venue for the opening weekend will be [Aquarius On The Beach](#) in Nadi. The hotel's director, Dale Hermanson, is a Fiji LVII RPCV, minus the R. The Aquarius is offering us 15% off their rates. They are unable to set up a discount option on their website, so please reserve directly by emailing reservations@aquariusfiji.com and mention the Peace Corps 50th Anniversary discount, or call +679-672-6000. June / July is a busy season, so be sure to make reservations early. If rooms are sold out before you book yours, there are many options in the area.

The plan is to have an informal, no-host cocktail reception at the Aquarius on Saturday June 23 and to formally kick off the celebrations with an opening party the following day, Sunday June 24, at the same location. As neither Peace Corps nor Friends of Fiji have a budget for entertainment, there will be a ticket price, yet to be negotiated with the hotel but as reasonable as we can make it. RSVP for the opening weekend activities here - [RSVP for Reception](#)

In order to get a head count, we have set up event announcements on our webpage for the following activities. Please RSVP for each activity you're interested in, so we'll have an idea how many will be attending. We will post other events as plans develop.

For Monday, we have arranged for a tour of Koroipita, a housing development in Lautoka for displaced and disadvantaged families. There will be an opportunity to help out with minor projects around the community for those interested in staying in the area for a couple of days. [RSVP for Koroipita tour](#).

On Wednesday, there will be a half day tour of the Sustainable Environmental Livelihoods for the Future ([SELF](#)) farm, about a 30 minute drive up the valley from Sigatoka. SELF is the home of the "Happy Chicken" training program that several PCVs have introduced into their villages, thanks in part to funding from FoF. [RSVP for SELF tour](#).

The tour will include lunch. A 30 FJD donation per person to SELF is suggested in appreciation of the tour & meal. For those interested in staying on for a day or two, SELF offers the [Teitei Homestay](#).

A note on travel and accommodations - organizing group accommodations and travel is much too large a task for the FoF board to take on, and outside of Peace Corps Fiji's role. What we have done is arranged for a discount on air travel through Fiji Airways and discount on room rates at the Aquarius. We don't have the capability to assume the role of travel agents, so everyone will be responsible for their own reservations. The reality is that you can probably get better hotel rates through online booking systems than we can get with small discounts offered for group rates, so please do your research for flights and hotels to get the best deal.

The Fiji Airways promo code to use when booking flights through their on-line system is **USAFTY07**

Please help us make sure no one misses the opportunity to take part in the 50th celebrations. Our contacts list is far from complete, so forward this newsletter to any Fiji RPCVs you have addresses for.

Win Round Trip Air Fare to Fiji!!!

In honor of Peace Corps Fiji's upcoming 50th anniversary in 2018, Fiji Airways has donated a pair of round trip tickets from Los Angeles to Nadi as a fundraiser raffle prize. Drawing will be held at the Friends of Fiji Annual General Meeting on January 20, 2018. You don't need to be present to win, but you do need to buy a ticket. Click on this link for more info -

http://www.fofiji.org/round_trip_tickets_drawing

Please help Friends of Fiji raise funds to support development & education projects in Fiji by buying tickets and sharing the link with your friends and family.

Only 1,000 tickets will be sold, so get yours while they last.



Dan Cantor Fund – Group 93 MST Event – Thea Mink

Group 93 greatly enjoyed coming together and celebrating our mid-service mark this past week in Nadi. The Dan Cantor Fund allowed us to commemorate Dan's life and contribution to Peace Corps Fiji and to toast our year of growth in service. We enjoyed a couple rounds of poolside drinks and talanoa-ed about life at site and the year to come. Vinaka vakalevu to Friends of Fiji and the Dan Cantor Fund for our wonderful gathering!



FoF Bay Area Gathering in Palo Alto

Friends of Fiji events have typically been held in the VA / DC area, not by any mandate, but simply because that's where the organizers live. Recently, thanks to Paul Milo (Fiji XXII), we were able to break that pattern and have a gathering in beautiful Palo Alto, CA.

On September 23rd Paul hosted a BBQ that was attended by Bay Area RPCVs and local members of the Fijian community. They were joined by one RPCV who was visiting from Hong Kong. Meanwhile, FoF Board of Directors member David Downes traveled west to help organize and run the meeting. They shared lots of great 'pot luck' food while reminiscing with old friends and getting to know others for the first time. The Adi Cakobau School Old Girls association, which is quite active in the bay area, were also well represented at the Palo Alto event.

We're hoping that this is just the first of many events on the west coast and elsewhere. Bay area folks that missed this one will very likely get another chance in the spring of 2018. We'd like to encourage those in Southern California and other parts of the country to follow suit. If you are interested in taking part or helping to organize please contact us at info@fofiji.org. We can help spread the word to all contacts from your area in our database.



Send Us Your Mug Books!

Thanks to everyone who sent us a mug book in the past few months. Since we put out this request in our spring newsletter we picked up 8 more books! Help us find the rest of them.

So far we have groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 30, 51, 56, 59, 63, & 71. You can view them at http://www.fofiji.org/mug_books. If you have one that we're missing please scan it and email to info@fofiji.org or make a copy and mail it to Jay Sztuk, 528 Norton Ln, Arnold, MD 21012. Some folks have had good results and found it easier to take a digital photo of each page. Send us the pages and we'll compile them into a pdf file.

Friends of Fiji Annual Pot Luck Dinner & General Meeting

Saturday, January 20, 2018 5:00PM to 9:00PM

3311 N George Mason Dr, Arlington, VA 22207 (703) 534-7113

You are invited to the Friends of Fiji Annual General Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner. Jim & Polly Reiersen have graciously offered to host this event at their home in Arlington, VA.

All are welcome to attend. The pot luck dinner will be followed by a brief business meeting at 7:00 p.m. and will include the election of the Board of Directors for next year and any other appropriate business.

If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, please let us know in advance by emailing a brief biography (including details of your connection to Fiji) and what skills and interests you would bring to info@fofiji.org. The Board has a monthly *web* meeting, so you can participate from anywhere.

A drawing for two round trip tickets from L.A. to Nadi will cap the evening. Get your tickets at http://www.fofiji.org/round_trip_tickets_drawing

Weather-related changes will be announced on the Friends of Fiji website (www.fofiji.org) and by email. The "snow date," if needed, will be at the same time and place, two weeks later, Saturday, February 3.

Commemorative Quilt Project

Christine (Laws) Anderson, a Fiji XXI RPCV, has offered to coordinate a group effort to create a quilt that may be offered as a raffle prize or donated to the Peace Corps office in Fiji. Chris organized similar projects for PC Fiji reunions and special occasions in the past. See her proposal below.

From Christine Anderson - KANA VAKALEVU & OTHER GOODWILL OF FIJI

You can be part of the 2018 quilt project to celebrate 50 years of Peace Corps in Fiji. You would stitch a 9 inch design centered on brown cotton 14 inch fabric you have pre-washed as a background square. Any technique of embroidery, appliqué, stenciling using permanent waterproof ink or fabric pain is encouraged. Include your full name and years of service, along with Group #, positioned 3 inches from raw edges of that 14 inch fabric square. You might choose to honor your host family or local colleague of your volunteer assignment or feature a remembrance of a sulu ni kana or the Hindi names of speices used in your last tin fish curry with baigan or bhindi. I also think that an allamanda flower would be nice, so if your sulu has this pattern, let me know so we can trim and stitch it on.

Thank you to Fiji XXI Kathy Chergo for stitching a nostalgic Takia canoes scene from a souvenir scarf!

Technical Requirements:

1. Submit finished block by 2/28/18 to organizer Christine (Laws) Anderson, 3327 Scott Street, San Francisco, CA 94123-2013
2. 14 inch brown pre-washed cotton square decorated with 9 inch design centered as well as your full name & years of service (and your Fiji Group# if known). This can be written using Pigma® Micron® archival waterproof black ink pen manufactured by Sakura, or use black cotton embroidery floss which is colorfast.
3. Staple or pin paper with your contact info (name, home address with zip code, email) so we can send you a jpg. photo of the finished quilt.
4. Donation of \$10 or more, payable to Friends of Fiji.

Friends of Fiji – Moala Happy Chicken Report – Kevin Pelstring

Goal: To educate and empower the people of Moala to raise/breed chickens to lay eggs to improve nutrition and provide economic opportunity.

Narrative: With the funds provided by Friends of Fiji, we transported 9 Moala community members from Suva City to the Teitei Permaculture Training Center in the hills of Sigatoka. These members represented 6 of 8 villages on Moala, the Soqosoqo ni Marama (women's group), Yasayasa Moala College and a village youth group. Over a 4-day training in 7-11 August 2017, each community member learned successful techniques to breed, hatch and raise egg-laying hens with the resources found in their villages on Moala. Each attendee will bring roughly three dozen young chicks back to their villages to begin raising a flock of improved cross breed chickens – a mix of the best local “jungli” roosters, egg-laying hens from New Zealand, and Kabir meat chickens from Pakistan. In addition, the Training Centre has donated 2 rounds of 90 fertile eggs to be hatched on Moala Island (25/8/17 and 27/9/17).

At the training centre, each attendee assisted with the daily care of chickens and saw the progression of fertilized eggs as they hatched in small incubators, raised as small chicks and eventually trained to live in a chicken house with large area to roam and feed. They learned how to construct proper chicken houses and boxes to protect chicks. Because a large focus of the training is to raise chickens without needing to continuously buy commercial feed from Suva, attendees learned the number of plants available in the village that can create a nutritious diet, including edible trees, root crops, fruits and vegetables.

Thanks to the additional donation of a small incubator from the Kyeema Foundation in Australia, Yasayasa Moala College will be able to establish a small hatchery to breed more flocks of hens for each village on the island. All attendees – including the teacher from Yasayasa Moala College – have learned techniques from the workshop to breed and hatch fertilized eggs. This training will help resolve a huge barrier to members of the community raising chickens: the irregularity and length of travel to Moala from the main island resulting in high mortality of newly hatched chicks. After 4 – 6 months, we hope to have 14 dozen “super jungli” chicken hens laying eggs on Moala, improving nutrition and accessible protein, and reifying successful breeding techniques.

Vision: After ten years, we hope for each village on Moala to have flocks of large chickens to provide eggs as a staple food for all 2,000 people.

NOTICE: When you shop on Amazon, you can designate Friends of Fiji as your charity and Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase to us. Use this link the next time you shop. -

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1802073>

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