



# FACES of Guéoul



A Newsletter from Friends of Guéoul, a non-profit organization

Spring, 2011

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## Letter from the President

### *Faces of Guéoul, Faces of Hope*

Hello, and welcome to the inaugural edition of Faces of Guéoul. If you know about the Friends of Guéoul and our work in Guéoul, Sénégal, then you've seen the happy, vibrant, mischievous faces of our young scholarship girls. If not, you'll be excited to discover the important work being done there: our scholarship program for Guéoul's poorest girls so they can attend and continue in school, the Noos Club art program, our extra-curricular tutoring program, and the internet café and computer classroom.

I recently returned from Guéoul, where I had a first-hand look at how things are progressing. I saw a lot of exciting things that I want to share with you. I attended the scholarship ceremony for our girls, such a prominent event now that it's attended by all the local dignitaries and religious leaders. It is broadcast in its entirety on national television. I visited with Baye Thierno Ndiaye, the teacher of Noos (the Wolof word for *fun*) Club, and also a teacher at the local school. I met Lyzz Ogunwo, our Peace Corps liaison for business development (who's just terrific, and will be a tremendous partner). I attended a dinner put on by our good friends from the Rotary Club of the city of Saint Louis. And of course, I had the chance to see once again our students and their teachers, and all of the good people of Guéoul.

Our Executive Director, Judy Beggs, stayed a few weeks longer in Guéoul, setting up new computer equipment, planning see *President, page 2*



*Niania Gaye, John Montaña, Judy Beggs, Fatou Diallo and Youssou Sow at the scholarship ceremony*

## The Scholarship Ceremony: The Heart and Soul of our Mission

The excitement mounts each winter. The date of the fete is coming. There will be dancing. Drumming. Speeches by important people. Everyone dressed in their very best.

Because our 75 boursières (girls receiving scholarships) will receive their annual \$100.

\$100. It is so much more than mere money. It is a life-changing gift to the girls and their families. It is also now part of the annual flow of events in this bustling, go-for-it village. This year is the 7th annual scholarship fete.

At first it was just Sarah's girls. An American family is supporting this class in honor of their deceased daughter. Several years ago, these girls came in special and rarely seen traditional clothing; clothes layered in an unusual way; sashes of beads criss-cross their chests and backs. Some girls have a soccu in their mouth (a stick of a certain soft wood, the end chewed to softness and used to clean teeth). Some have a traditional fan. All have some kind of braided hair treatment that shows around their face and under their head-wear. Faces are painted with elaborate designs in black. One girl has a blackened lower part of her face, from lower lip down her chin. This is traditional. Some women actually tattoo their face like this, and it is not uncommon. It is mostly the women in the Pulaar ethnic group that have face tattooing.

see *Scholarship, page 2*



*Youssou Sow, walking scholarship recipient to podium during ceremony.*

## President's Letter, Continued

new programs with Lyzz and the local advisory council and working on the distribution of a container of supplies that we just shipped over.

***All of that is going to mean a big upgrade for our computer classroom and internet café, a big leap forward for our programs, and pencils, pens and other school supplies for a lot of kids that might not otherwise have any.***

Judy will be telling you more about these projects in her own words in this newsletter.

If you think anyone takes any of this for granted, you don't know Guéoul and its people. From teachers to parents to students to community leaders, everyone is unstinting in their gratitude for the help we've been able to provide and the progress that has been made. If you had been there to hear the speeches at the scholarship ceremony, you'd have blushed to hear the eloquent praise heaped upon you, the friends of Guéoul. I say you, because Friends of Guéoul is people, and we've been able to accomplish what we have only because people like you made it possible. At the ceremony, I got up and took a bow, but it wasn't really for me. It was for all of you. You should be proud and pleased at what you've done, and the miracles your help has accomplished.

These people of Guéoul are our friends, and they're your friends too. It's high time you met them, and that's why we created Faces of Guéoul. When you look at these faces, you'll see into the heart, the courage, the determination of a people who will not be defeated by grueling poverty.

You'll learn a lot about your new friends: who they are, what they're up to, what they think and say. I think you'll like 'em. They're kind, open and generous, and there's a great sense of family. And, they're doing a lot of important work to build their community and help their children that you should hear about. So welcome aboard.

***Come on in, meet and be part of the family. You'll be glad you did.***

*John Montaña, President  
Friends of Guéoul*

## Scholarship Ceremony, Continued

The annual fete has grown to be a showcase for many of the students to dress like this. It is enchanting to see these shy, young and very beautiful children dressed so elaborately.

The ceremony is scheduled for 4 p.m. During the day, I walk by the town meeting place. Big awnings are being put in place. Huge men with huge muscles man-handle the metal supports. 300 chairs await in orderly rows around a large open square of sand which is the stage for upcoming events. Bustling purposefulness. A huge towering amp. Large much-battered speakers. Microphones. A row of 8 chairs awaits behind the table where the most important people will sit. It's on the shady side of the square, I note with relief, since the tubaab (white person) will sit there, too. The usual gaggle of young boys skitter about, taking it all in, looking for mischief.

Now a cameraman from national television with a rickety light attached to his camera takes his place in the center of the square. The national radio station sets up their equipment. All of Sénégal will see or hear all of today's events. Four drummers begin that vibrant and familiar rhythm. Their drumming announces to the village that the meeting is imminent. A town crier had been sent throughout the village earlier in the day. Almost a thousand people gather.

Now it was time for an hour of speeches. A woman who is the director of FAWE (Forum for the Advancement of Women's Education) gave a perfect speech. She talked about the importance of educating girls: "If you educate a boy, you (merely) educate the man. If you educate a girl, you educate all her family when she becomes a mother." That's the mantra of the girls' education movement. Furthermore, she talked about how the parent should provide time and a quiet place for the girls to study, and how they should not hit or be angry with them.

There was a large group from SCOFI: Comité National des Enseignantes pour la Promotion de la Scolarisation des Filles, an association of women teachers in Sénégal, with a representative in every Region and every Department (county). Their objectives: to improve access to education, to monitor girls

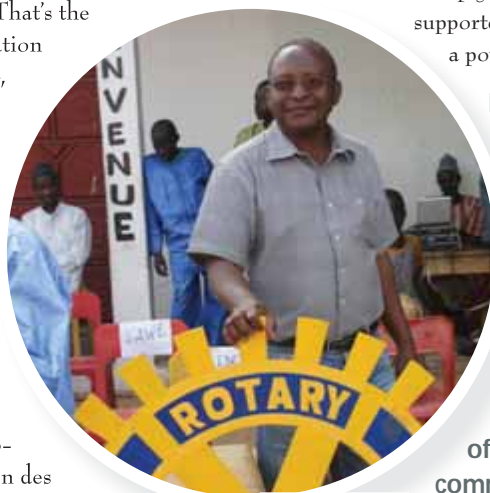
throughout their schooling to support their success and keep them in school, to mobilize resources, to encourage and promote female teachers. They are logical allies.

They are spread thin, Friends of Guéoul is spread thick. Everything I see shows that our concentrated focus will create the deepest and longest-lasting results. We are not alone in our goal. We have the advantage of riding the crest of a respected movement that is being supported at every level.

The best speaker was our own Board President, John Montaña. John was wearing the most elaborate clothing, worn by the men in Sénégal for the most important occasions. He talked about being the liaison between waa (people of) Guéoul and waa Colorado, about our deep respect for the leaders, the teachers and all the people of Guéoul. He emphasized that we started this program in a small way, and that it was only because of Mbaye Samb that we have been able to grow our program. He told them: People in the States have seen the faces of these girls and know their names and their grades. These people have given money for these scholarships – they are friends of Guéoul. His speech, his delivery of it, his enormously respectful clothing – all made an enormously important impact on the elders and dignitaries.

It was an impressive ceremony, and a proud success. The village leaders, the community, other organizations, the parents and the peers of our scholarship girls have again publicly supported education for girls in a powerful way.

**Friends of Guéoul, Inc. is now an integral part of this village society. You may not have been there; you may not ever see their faces in person, but your impact on the lives of these girls—this community—is immeasurable.**



*Marcel Savé (le Tové, Saint Louis (Sénégal) Rotary Member*







# *The Legend of* **Gwee the Tree**

by Sara Gillis

**The Route Nationale is the only highway going north from Dakar. It winds its way northeasterly, going through sub-Saharan country, getting into ever more arid country.**

When the Route comes to Guéoul, a wide spot appears in the road. Here, tourist buses, filled with intimidated faces looking out the window at the jumbled frenzy that is Sénégal, stop for a while so they can admire Gwee the Tree. Gwee is the Wolof word for baobab tree.

A baobab tree has an unusual structure. It can reach about 100 feet in height, and up to 36 feet in trunk diameter at the base. Under the right meteorological circumstances, the trunk of the tree will explode, leaving a living tree with a huge hole in the middle. Gwee's trunk has a hollow that would hold 10 people standing up. The hole extends through most of the trunk and there is a small hole at the base, allowing easy entry into the center.

Gwee sits in lonely splendor outside of town. Gwee likes more moisture than is found here and when she first put her roots down into this soil, it seemed a hospitable place to live forever. Gwee's first growth happened in ages long past. The Wolof people of Guéoul have a long tradition of stories going back generations. The Wolof custom is to name trees and other things by the first person to be involved with the thing in question. Therefore, the tree is known all over the Louga region where Guéoul sits as Gwee Biremé Coumba.

Long, long ago, as the legend goes, a woman named Biremé Coumba went to live in Gwee. She was a woman in touch with the spirits. She lived alone, in touch with the untouchable world. A spirit already lived in that tree. Biremé Coumba lived in pleasant harmony with the spirits for many years. She made her simple living selling wonderful medicines which the spirits helped her fashion from the everyday plants of the region.

After a long and helpful life, all while living in the core of Gwee, Biremé Coumba died. The spirit remained and lives there yet, missing Biremé Coumba. All the people know it is there. The adults don't go to Gwee. No houses are built around Gwee. Everyone in Guéoul knows that seeing the spirit of Gwee will cause permanent insanity.

Abdou N'Dir, a member of our Board of Directors, tells stories about when he was a young boy. He and his most intrepid friends would play in Gwee in the daytime. One day, the kids lost track of the hour and discovered that the sun was setting. Dusk is when the spirit of Gwee can manifest itself. The boys ran home in terror, never stopping until they were safely there.

**Never again did the boys stay too late visiting Gwee.**

## Like to Meet Stars? Meet STARFEST!

by Clare Donnelly

One of the benefits of being involved in a non-profit is the people you meet along the way. Not just within the organization, but out in the field. Far and away the most interesting people, in my opinion, are to be found at STARFEST.

Getting to meet people is fun, but at STARFEST you meet Klingons, Jedi Knights, The Green Hornet, robot chickens, even the Mad Hatter and Dr. Who, not to mention folks like me and you!

STARFEST is a weekend celebration of media entertainment that started 34 years ago as a Science Fiction convention featuring Star Trek guests. The founder of STARFEST, KathE Walker, along with her husband, sons and extended family, all work very hard each year to bring the region a weekend of entertainment that covers a wide range of the media. There is something for everybody at this weekend family event.

Last year, KathE and STARFEST very kindly adopted Friends of Guéoul as their sponsored non-profit. That means we are given table space at the convention to promote our organization. Our volunteers get the opportunity to tell the story of Guéoul, and accept donations of money as well as school and art supplies. We can also sell art from Sénégal, tickets to our annual dinner and other items that we offer. Finally, Friends of Guéoul benefits from the proceeds of certain auction items donated by STARFEST.

STARFEST is an incredible place to see who's who and what's new in the entertainment industry, including actors, writers, producers and directors, too.

Interested in helping at the Friends of Guéoul table during the weekend? Our volunteers get a free pass for the days' activities. You can volunteer for a day or the whole weekend!

Contact Clare Donnelly to learn more about helping: 303-798-6304 or 303-898-8013 or [claredonnelly@msn.com](mailto:claredonnelly@msn.com).

The event takes place from Friday the 15th of April through Sunday at the Marriot at the Denver Tech Center.

To learn more about STARFEST, all you ever wanted to know can be found on their website at [www.starland.com](http://www.starland.com).

**GoodSearch**  
YOU SEARCH WE GIVE

## A Good Way to Support Friends of Guéoul

Did you know that when you use GoodSearch for searching and shopping on line, you automatically contribute to Friends of Guéoul – without even opening your wallet or purse?

GoodSearch.com is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. You use it as you would any search engine, and it is powered by Yahoo, so you get great results!

In addition, GoodShop.com is an online shopping mall that donates up to 37 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause! Hundreds of great stores have teamed up with GoodShop and every time you place an order, you'll be supporting us.

So far, we've earned over \$100 from GoodSearch. By comparison, the national SPCA has received about \$30,000! Obviously, we could be doing a lot better. And you can help.

Just go to [www.GoodSearch.com](http://www.GoodSearch.com), make it your internet homepage, and enter Friends of Guéoul, Inc. as the charity you want to support. Let's add at least another zero to our total this year!

## Volunteers Needed! And oh, the fun we have!

Come "play" with us! Check out this list of fundraising events and projects for which we could use your help.

- **Starfest:** April 15 - 17. (see above)
- **Annual Dinner.** May 14th. (see right)

### • Salon Zoe Event.

September 19th.  
(see right)

### • Mailing Parties.

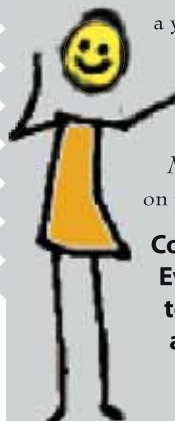
Sit down to address and stamp mailings to our friends and supporters while swapping stories and eating pizza. Three times a year.

### • Two Weeks in Senegal.

January 26 - February 12, 2012. (see *My African Adventure* on page 7.)

Contact Susan Everett, volunteer coordinator at [Susan2co@yahoo.com](mailto:Susan2co@yahoo.com) or 720-238-3538.

Your face could be here!



# EVENTS...

## Annual Dinner, Saturday, May 14th

The Highlands Masonic Temple  
3550 North Federal Blvd, Denver

In Guéoul, our most important event is the scholarship awards ceremony. It's our key reason for being – making it financially possible every year for the poorest girls in Guéoul to go to school. **And stay in school.**

We have said from our inception: "When you educate a girl, you educate a family, a community, a nation." This year, it is truer than ever! Because of the wonderful generosity of our friends, we have gone even further in our effort to increase educational opportunities in Guéoul. We've been able to create and develop a computer lab and internet café.

Friends donated precious laptops, and as a result of a grant from Rotary International, we provided reconditioned PCs and peripherals and some of the set-up expenses.





## A Mother's Day Gift

In Sénégal, a girl can be a mother at age 12 or in her early teens. With our scholarships, Friends of Guéoul inspires a family to keep their girl in school. One terrific consequence is that she is not married off at an early age.

This Mother's Day, May 8th, give a gift to help keep a girl in school – in honor of your mother. Or your father. Or your friend. Or just because you feel like it.

**We'll send them a letter, telling them you made a donation in their honor. We'll even include a picture or two of some of our girls. Visit [www.gueoul.org](http://www.gueoul.org) for details.**



# DONATE

**Your contributions help our girls and the whole Guéoul community!**

Here are some gift levels, but ANY donation is most welcome:

**\$100** keeps one girl in school for a full year; **\$1,500** keeps a whole class in school; just **\$10** buys more than a year's school supplies; **\$2,000** helps develop our computer lab.

**Additional contribution levels are listed on our website.**

We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, and your donation is tax-deductible under federal tax law. Check with your tax professional for details.

You can send a check to Friends of Guéoul, or donate via credit card on our website: [www.gueoul.org](http://www.gueoul.org). THANK YOU!

In Denver, our most important event is our Annual Dinner. It is our key fundraiser which makes our scholarship and education programs possible. It will be expanded this year. The dinner will be held on May 14 at the Highlands Masonic Temple. Doors open 6:00 p.m. The delicious and authentic Sénégalaise dinner will be served at 7. We will be offering a cash bar as well as our silent auction. Ceremonies will include honoring the five local Rotary chapters most influential in providing the computer equipment.

## Silent Auction

In addition to art and crafts from Sénégal, our silent auction features donations from you, our friends, and local businesses. So, if you have items to donate, we will be accepting them starting March 25. You can drop them off at Judy's or call us to arrange for pick-up if needed. Hard-to-find items such as sports memorabilia are very popular. Any donations of that kind will be especially appreciated. Also, gift cards from your favorite sports bar, fine dining restaurant, spa, health club, etc. would greatly enhance our offerings. They can be mailed to the Friends of Guéoul address.

**We look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones!**

Chas Richards



salon & spa

**Salon Zoe Event  
Monday, September 19**

Treat yourself to an extraordinary evening of pampering and fun! Men and women welcome! Salon Zoe is again donating an evening of Luxury Salon & Spa Services to benefit Friends of Guéoul!!!

You get the incredible value of two "mini services" for \$40, services that would cost a lot more if they weren't part of this event. PLUS, enjoy gourmet appetizers and a Sénégalaise drink or wine. Peruse the Sénégalaise arts and crafts for sale. Relax and delight in your mini massage, facial, manicure, pedicure, make-up lesson, hair cut, blow dry, hair color consultation or scalp treatment. Your entire \$40 goes to Friends of Guéoul to help educate young girls. All services are donated by the artisans at Zoe Salon & Spa.

Watch for more details in Faces of Guéoul, or visit [www.gueoul.org](http://www.gueoul.org).

## The New Boursières: Twelve Bright Faces with a Future.

Most have never seen a tubaab (white person). Most have never had a fuss made over them. I visit them with Baye Thierno, the kind man and talented teacher who works with the

Noos Club art and enrichment program. These new boursières will spend 2 days a week with him, 2 hours a day, while he does academic enhancement projects with them.

We now hire a horse-drawn surrey for these visits. The kids are spread out all over the place, and we have large sacks full of gifts that we were able to ship in the container sent from the U. S. The horse is named

Dareau, a sweet-tempered mare who pulls the wobbly surrey through the soft desert sand, without complaint.



When we arrive at the girls' compound, there is always a great flurry of excitement. Everyone knows we visit all the girls and bring cool gifts.

The girls are wide-eyed, sometimes a little alarmed, always charmingly pretty. Sometimes they live in millet stalk houses. Sometimes they live in a ramshackle cinder-block house. Sometimes they live with a grandmother, or an aunt, or an uncle. Occasionally they live with both parents. The fathers are usually gone—gone to larger towns or other countries to earn their livings, or maybe just off to live with other relatives. Sometimes they take another wife. Sometimes they divorce the mother of our boursières. Just like in any culture, their absence makes it harder on the mothers and children left behind.

We have now helped 86 girls. Some have already finished school, so our present student



count is 75 girls. We are keeping them in school. We lost only one to a marriage at age 12. It looks like Noos Club is bringing up their grades. We'll study the impact of the Noos Club more completely this summer, after this year's grades are in.

When you give money for these girls, you can be sure that it gets to these girls. We always give the scholarship money to the closest family member. We expect them to spend some of it on the girl, and some on rice, medicine, and other critical needs of the family. Remember, in Sénégal, the poverty is astounding. The average income is \$600 per year. But the poorest families? A fraction of that. This is why our \$100 scholarships are treasured windfalls, and motivate the families to keep their girls in school. Since we have no salaries or big car or office rental, most of your money goes from your heart to their hands. This is a hugely effective use of your donation, and a hugely powerful leverage in the lives of these marginalized girls.

## Meet a Volunteer Who's Not Worth a Nickel.

Have you ever asked for a nickel and someone hands you a hundred dollar bill?! Meet Lyzz Ogunwo, a hundred dollar bill. Maybe several of them.

Lyzz Ogunwo is the new Peace Corps Volunteer. Her primary project is to help create a financially self-sustaining computer classroom, called The Informatique, using the income from renting time on computers and from selling services and supplies to pay for the salaries, expenses, upkeep, and purchase of future equipment. It's a grand and glorious project. Rotary liked it so well that they sprang for nearly \$24,000 to help with certain parts of the set up.



As is usual, Lyzz has taken a local name: Mame Seye Cisse [MAAM say SEE say].

Her two diplomas are in International Affairs and in Media Arts and Design/Corporate Communications. Her father is Nigerian, and her mother is Black American. All of her life, she's known she wants to work in West Africa. Look at her resume!

- Two years on Obama's presidential campaign
- Event organizing for the President, the Vice President and Ambassadors, working with 3,000 volunteers age 14 to 80
- One month at a non-profit school in Ghana.
- President of 2 different service organizations
- Worked in the White House
- A cross-cultural and diversity commission in Arlington, Virginia
- International Council on Women and Girls to increase women's presence in science and technology fields
- Developed a memorandum of understanding with the Nigerian Energy Ministry for the Under Secretary of Energy
- She is considering going to law school at the end of her stay in Guéoul. (John Montaña and I are campaigning for her to come to DU Law!)



We've been working together for two months in Guéoul. A delightful two months. She's in the first few months of her service, learning the language, getting oriented, making allies and friends. If you've never served as a PCV, you might not have ever experienced such an unsettling torrent. Imagine trying to learn a language that is totally unrelated to any language you've ever studied – there is no past or future tense – you have to memorize 40 pronoun forms to accomplish what we do with verbs. She's handled the typical initial craziness with grace, style and wisdom. She's earned the respect of everyone in Guéoul. She's already coming up with insightful ideas, and even a rather ambitious project to try to manage the ubiquitous trash.

**Her motto: "The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity."**

**- Leo Tolstoy**

**Faces of Guéoul Newsletter**





## My African Adventure: a volunteer's story

by Diane Wilson

**Traveling to a third-world country is an adventure! Guéoul, Sénégal—a world where transportation is by donkey or by foot. Where the day's meal is slow-cooked on an open fire. Where vivid people move slowly and savor time with their friends and relatives. Where there's sand, out at the edge of the Sahara. Where people live in thatch homes. Where life is harsh, hearts are kind and people live in peace.**

In January 2010, I traveled to the village of Guéoul to volunteer with Friends of Guéoul to help create a new arts program for our scholarship girls.

Since the government schools do not provide art or music, a volunteer program was born in 2009 to enrich the girls' education with art. I was one of five volunteers to continue the effort in 2010, both with our girls and with co-ed classes.

Judy Beggs, Executive Director, has led many visits to Guéoul. I found this trip well organized and the experience of a lifetime.

In the Sénégalaise capital Dakar, we experienced the bustling Sandiga street market. I was amazed at the variety of dress, from the men's flowing African robes to Western jeans or business suits and the African women's brightly patterned dresses with long skirts, short sleeves and a swath of cloth tied around their heads.

On the way from Dakar to Guéoul, we shared the road with horse and donkey carts, public buses with men hanging off the back and private cars (station wagons) for hire that carry seven passengers.

We arrived in Guéoul to much fanfare. The children were chanting "JoJo," Judy's name there. The people were wonderful, friendly and welcoming. We stayed in the upper story of Khadime N'Dir's house, which was built for the use of Friends of Guéoul. Khadime is the uncle of one of our Board members, Abdou N'Dir. He's also head of the household which includes three families plus the grandmother. Each family and the grandmother have their own rooms, and share a living room and a large foyer, which doubles as a TV room and the children's sleeping area.

The kitchen is a separate building in the cement courtyard. The food is cooked on a one-burner gas canister in the courtyard where the women sit to prepare the food. Attached to the kitchen is the wash room with a bucket for bathing, and attached to the wash room is the squat toilet.

Our bathroom included a cold-water shower and a real sit-down flush toilet. Our space included three bedrooms and a large open area—our living and dining room. All rooms are open to the outside, although the bedrooms have shutters. There are no windows, heat or air conditioning. We shared the second floor with some storerooms and 105 baby chickens. The latter is an entrepreneurial effort by Khadime to supplement his income.

We spent our days organizing the art projects; sorting gifts for the girls, teachers and host family and, of course, presenting the "beaux arts" to the coed classes and the scholarship girls. The coed classes, teachers and even the school directors (principals) got involved and enjoyed the painting, sponge painting, friendship bracelets and collages.

The most exciting part was the gift of an unused room and desks at one of the schools for the use of Friends of Guéoul. There we formed the Noos Club (Fun Club) where the scholarship girls can work on their art projects. A local teacher, Baye Thierno Ndiaye, and his wife Diatou have been working with the girls all year both in art and in scholastic endeavors. Baye and Judy visited each of the girls in their homes. I accompanied them on two visits. One of our girls lives in a one-room thatched hut with her aunt and uncle and a younger child. How precious her education will be!

My two-week adventure in Guéoul concluded with an intriguing lesson of how to cook Mafe Gerte, a wonderful beef dish with vegetables and a fantastic peanut sauce, and an exciting drumming and dancing lesson.

**I arrived back home feeling happy, culturally educated, and fortunate to have helped create a much-needed arts and scholastic program for our girls. I have memories for a lifetime, which have changed me forever.**

Join us  
for two Weeks  
in Senegal! January  
26 - February 12, 2012.  
Contact Judy at [gueoul@mindspring.com](mailto:gueoul@mindspring.com)



# An Ordinary Miracle

## *An unimagined power comes*

Is it any less a miracle because it seems so ordinary? Does your breath catch in your throat with the bedazzlement of yet another high noon sun?



This ordinary miracle was borne from a hundred mere coincidences.

It was three years ago that Dave, my accountant of more than three decades, said casually "Hey our (really big) accounting firm releases 25 used laptops every year. You want 'em?" I said "sure," but thought, "what the heck can be done with 25 computers out at the edge of the Sahara, a bazillion miles from anything that relates to computers?"

### Over the next 15 months

A crescendo of coincidences: Turned out that Sénégal had a push to get internet out into the outlying parts of the country. Since Guéoul is on the only road north, it was within the target.

Turned out that Peace Corps Sénégal liked the idea. How about combine a computer classroom with an Informatique - a business that sells computer time and cool stuff, and then the profits go to pay the salaries and expenses of the classroom? They assigned a savvy experienced Peace Corps Volunteer to develop the project. (See Lyzz Ogunwo article.) They also helped get the first computers into the country. No small task.

May 6, 2009. Internet connectivity came to Guéoul, and the Informatique sat there, laptops all in a row, ready to connect. The switch was turned. Suddenly, our remote, dusty, bustling, feisty village was in touch with all the miraculous, boundless knowledge in our known universe.

### And then what didn't happen. And then did.

This bold grand idea sat there in an empty room, filled only with the two teachers we had hired in our unfettered enthusiasm. An entire village of some 2,500 students and maybe 9,000 adults didn't notice it. Why?

It didn't relate to their measured working world. Donkeys took the men to their fields, women took their baskets to the market, merchants sold bags of peanuts to passing rickety buses. What's a computer got to do with a world that, when all IS said and done, works remarkably well, even sweetly?

Ah! Another coincidence came barreling out of the universe. Rotary International got wind of this cool idea. If it works, it solves a key problem in international development - how to achieve sustainability when the donor and his wallet return home. Rotary reaches all over the globe, to any reachable crevice. If this idea works, they thought, Informatiques (computer classrooms) can be established all over the world. So they funded the project with an amazing grant: \$24,000.



### Thank You, Chip Donnelly.

March 15, 2011 - adults are clustered around the desktop computers brought in our container shipment from the U. S. It's the first-ever adult class at the Guéoul Informatique. This is the classroom established by Chip Donnelly, in memory of his parents Francis and Gladys Donnelly. A hand-painted plaque on the wall proudly proclaims this donation.

You've heard about the two-year miracle of getting the kids into the classes, and even of getting adults in to rent time at the first room, the Informatique. The first room will now be open as a Cyber Café, with additional services - photocopying, plastic lamination, the sale of certain office items. The goal is that the first room will pay for the operation of the Informatique.

This second room is used for all classes, both children and adults. The establishment of this second room frees up the first room to operate as a business. There are no classes in the first room now, just income producing activities.

This extraordinary gift from Chip Donnelly hugely increases our chances of making a long-term success of this project. Thank you, Chip!



# Le: to Guéoul

A Rotary grant is a challenge. You bring an American/developed-nation project into worlds where American thinking is pretty alien. Does a fish value the ideas of a bird? How about American accounting and accountability?! Try explaining the aerodynamics of THAT idea to a fish!

How many people helped us get to where we now are? Garth Godwin and his gang at Rotary renovated 50 computers. Several dozen people donated their individual computers, printers, scanners, cameras. Chip Donnelly donated additional money to finish out a second room and now a plaque is on that wall in memory of his parents. John Christian Montaña, our President, donated in honor of his law school mentors, Glenn Yarberry and Murray Blumenthal. You'll see that plaque outside one of the doors. Musicians donated proceeds from concerts. And you'll see the respected Rotary emblem in the first classroom, on the door, and proudly displayed at the annual gathering.

Hundreds donated household items, school supplies, arts and crafts, and many other articles to put in the container we shipped across the Atlantic - including a table and chair for our quaint "office" in the corner of my Guéoul bedroom, and even a few crutches and medical supplies.

## Shape arrived out of the chaos.

We had a key "aha!" These folks couldn't afford to pay for classes. Therefore, we would never have clients. Our solution? Free classes for everyone.

The local high school now sends students to the room regularly. Surprise - we've reached about 1,500 students with our beginning computer class!

Four free classes for adults started in March. Lyzz Ogunwo is co-teaching, using her media and computer background. She's also established a papeterie, so the Informatique can sell

paper and office supplies. We're even thinking of buying a tiny refrigerator and selling cold pop. We've just GOT to create a financially sustainable project!

I've been watching the news on Sénégal television (as I write this in March in Guéoul). What made the people's uprising in Egypt unprecedented, even unique, was that it was the first time a government overthrow was inspired and driven by online news and social media. The Tunisian success showed Egyptians a better life was possible, and they united to achieve it.

Sénégal is a successful Democracy, so I don't expect such a revolt to happen there. But think of the unbridled power the Internet has to reach and teach, enlighten and unite a people!

I am so thrilled by all of this. Today, you walk into the Informatique any time during 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and the computers are in use - sometimes with a class, usually with several people clustered around a computer. I tour the room. This cluster of kids is on Facebook, that one is researching something scientific, over there is a young woman face all aglow Skyping her husband in Spain not seen for two years.

**If you are reading this, you may be one of the "coincidences" that made this miracle happen. You gave your time, your money, your stuff, your energy. You are my "high noon" miracle. You've reached across 5,400 miles and lived every metaphor—you've opened windows, doors, eyes, and minds.**

**Thank You!**





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**Jumelage. A Sweet Idea!**

Elisabeth Denizot came up with the idea. "Hey," she said. "Let's have a jumelage."

"What's that?" I said, thinking hopefully it might be a French pastry.

She said, "You know, jumelage. That's French for a twinning."

Elisabeth is a native French woman. Our good luck is that she married an American, that she lives in Boulder, and that she teaches advanced French to high school students.

She explained her idea. She knew that we'd established a computer classroom in Guéoul the year before and that it had internet. The students could do a collaborative project. They could meet each other via Skype. Her students would each write a short essay in French on a relevant subject, maybe a history of the Eiffel Tower or a description of the current French President, write a short bio about themselves with a picture, and then a booklet would be created out of this essay and sent to Guéoul.

The advanced French students in Guéoul could do the same thing—but they could send their essays by email.

**It was accomplished!**

I went to Guéoul with a suitcase full of illustrated and nicely bound booklets. The fateful day came. The Guéoul students went to the Informatique/computer classroom. A Skype call was set up. I was there to see this miracle.

The Guéoul kids were blown away by it all. They could hardly believe that they were talking to students 5,400 miles away! They were barely familiar with computers, they had never heard of Skype, and now they couldn't get their minds around the amazing feat that was happening.

**Next Project? An essay entitled "A day in my life", written by a kid in Guéoul.**

Several people donated point-and-shoot cameras. We're thinking about having this essay written in the English Club, a group of high school students led by Lyzz Ogunwo, the new Peace Corps Volunteer assigned to Guéoul, and by Sidy Ndieye, the head of the language department.

So Elisabeth Denizot and her class are looking forward to a new jumelage, but now in English. We'll still call it a jumelage.

**It's not a sweet French pastry. But it is a sweet idea.**



*High school students in Boulder and in Guéoul proudly display their Jumelage essays.*



***When You Educate a Girl, You Educate a Family, a Community, a Nation.***