

Nouakchott Notes

Rock The Vote!

Mauritanians flock to polls; volunteers flock to everywhere else

By Jess Palmer

It's election year, and political zeal has been sweeping the country, inducing a state of severe fatigue in the Mauritaniens left in its wake. Post offices, hospitals, boutiques, and schools have subsequently reduced their already slim operating hours into a borderline non-existence. In an exclusive interview with Nouakchott Notes staff, Kaédi postmistress Miriam Fatou N'Diaye said she was "just too tired" to open the post office during the month of November, a direct result of campaign speech absorption and numerous beignet overdoses.

Regional elections are tallied, the final ballots having been cast in mid-November. Host country nationals and Mauritanian PCVs alike can now look forward (with excitement and trepidation, respectively) to the upcoming congressional and presidential elections (January and March, respectively).



An exhausted voter heads home from the polls.

Inside this issue:

David Solomon yells at bench

Lack of tiny Mauritanian flags disappoints souvenir seekers during elections

Rob's new house rocks way harder than his old one

Atar, Nouhadibou GMCs institute Machiavellian policies with impressive results

Leah Dale finds her matela butt groove "comforting"

Maaouiya surprises all with presidential bid, "Please Love Me" platform

All of those present in Mauritania undoubtedly have felt and will continue to feel the repercussions of this year's special events. Perhaps the volunteers in the education sector of Peace Corps Mauritania are among those most affected, as school attendance by teachers and students has reached an all-time low. NN staff contacted such volunteers to ask them, precisely,

"What did you do with your November?"

"Two words," replied Trarza volunteer Stephanie Farrell, "Literary pornography."

Kaédi PCV Nick Vroblesky arises each day and optimistically foots the path to the office of the DREN, where he is affectated as a teacher trainer. "I arrive every morning at 9 o'clock, only to leave at 9:30 when it's apparent that my presence is yet to be desired." Before he could elaborate, Vroblesky abruptly fell asleep, right against the tree under which he was being interviewed.

Nouakchott PCV Derek Hansen was quoted saying that he spent most of November "...growing my beard, eating cheese, and judging dung beetle strong-man competitions." When it was brought to his attention that this question was directed to his education volunteer spouse,

(Continued on page 13)

Director's NOTES

Obie Shaw, Country Director

Hello All:

Well, once again the deadline for submissions to the esteemed *Nouakchott Notes* has come and passed and I find myself reliving my typical university term paper experience (nothing like sliding the paper under the professor's door before midnight of the due date ... ha).

Allow me to begin by wishing all of you a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Blessed Tabaski, and Happy New Year! I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our annual holiday party on December 24th and welcoming the First Year PCVs to their Early-Term Reconnect on January 3rd.

While those of you are in Nouakchott over the next two weeks, you might notice that the office is going through some extreme changes. We are in the process of making ready the old office for turning it back to the owner prior to our January 8th move into our new space. The staff and I sincerely appreciate your patience while you are here. Now for the updates:

New GEE APCD

I am very pleased to announce that as of December 26th, **Ms. Fatimetou mint Babana (a.k.a. "Siham")** will be joining Peace Corps Mauritania as our newest APCD for the Girls' Education and Empowerment (GEE) sector. Siham comes to us with a wealth of experience. For the past six years she has been working with the United Nations on a program specifically targeting girls' education in Mauritania. Many of you may have met Siham at the last Annual Girls' Education Conference. Since August of 2006, she has been serving as our part-time Staff GAD Coordinator working closely with Calin and Keith. Siham is a graduate of the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) de Nouakchott and she holds a Master of Arts degree in TESOL and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Linguistics and English Language Training from Moray House College of Education in Edinburgh, Scotland. In the coming months, Siham will be leading the team effort to develop the new GEE Sector in Mauritania. I know that you all join me welcoming Siham to her new position with Peace Corps Mauritania!

Keeping with new staff introductions, I am also happy to be welcoming **Mr. Khalidou Diagana** to Peace Corps Mauritania. Diagana has been serving with us in the capacity of Receptionist for approximately one month. Please and take a moment to introduce yourself to him when you are next in Nouakchott.

In the next month, we will be recruiting for a new Programming and Training Assistant position for the GEE sector. We hope to have the new staff person onboard by mid-February.

Office Move Update

The office move is still set for January 8th. We are in the final stages of putting all of the new furniture together and waiting on some additional equipment from the States. If any of you enjoy putting together furniture and would like to volunteer your time, please let me know. Any and all help would be appreciated.



Visiting PC Staff

We are looking forward to the visit to Nouakchott of **Ms. Winsome Wells**, Chief Accounting Officer for Africa, in mid-January.

In mid-February, we will be hosting Dakar-based **Ms. Andrea Wojnar-Diagne**, Sahel Sub-Regional Programming & Training Coordinator, and Washington, DC-based **Ms. Linda Gonzales**, Programming and Training Specialist for Education at the Africa Regional Assistance Unit. They will be working with the APCDs, PCVs, and our government partners in putting the final touches on our new GEE Project Plan document.

To date, we have four invitees listed for our June 2007 training class. The incoming class will number approximately 77 and are scheduled to arrive the last week in June. PST will be held in Kaédi again this year.

Must-see PC (events)

For those of you wishing to attend WAIST in Dakar this year, please mark your calendars for the following date. There will be

(Continued on page 9)

Health NOTES

Daouda Diallo, APCD/Health

As we're moving closer to the end of 2006 and the celebration of the Id, I would like to say **HAPPY NEW YEAR** to all of you and wish you all a great Tabaski. I was very happy to spend some time (though short) with all of you and have the opportunity to reconnect around very interesting topics and creative project ideas. Thanks to all of you first year volunteers and congratulations for the wonderful efforts you are making through your process of integration. I have heard from all the regions and read the CHACAs. They are well done and very informative, and I hope that the sharing will be even more productive during the technical IST. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Assaba PCVs for the Indian food: Ritesh, you are a great cook!!!... And some day, you will have to teach me....



UNICEF and Nutrition

At the regional level, UNICEF and the Ministry of health are working on different Nutritional activities (Kids malnutrition detection, Monitoring and supervision of Nutrition centers). The activities are spread out between now and the month of June 2007 and schedules are based on region-specific programs. Please contact your DRPSS for detailed plans and participation.

The first round has already started, and I would like to thank April and Helena for their participation, despite the short notice.

New SENLS plan

On the field of HIV-AIDS, The SENLS (Read Secretariat Executif national de lutte contre le SIDA) has initiated a new plan for the fight against HIV-AIDS. The plan (which is still a draft) has clear objectives and very promising practices and offers various opportunities for collaboration at the regional level. There will be new Regional representatives posted to each region. Stay tuned. The new plan and the future collaborators will be communicated to you at the right time.

Program updates

In south Brakna region, PCV April Wilhelm and her World Vision partners are in the midst of phase II of her Malaria campaign. We congratulate her for her effort and commend her perseverance for making this project happen in the Brakna.

The next few months will see the launching of another HIV-AIDS sensibilisation project in the Ajar Soninke area by PCV Ariana. This project will be implemented with the collaboration of SOS Paires Educateurs and will train about 20 youth of Ajar how to successfully educate other community members about the dangers of STD's/AIDS.

On the Gorgol side, PCV Rachel Zuback has already identified her next target: Infant nutrition, demonstration for cooking nutritious baby food, training on a healthy weaning schedule for babies, training on importance of breast-feeding for infants. For these activities, she will be working with her AMPF partners. On the health Education aspect, we are still keeping the focus on family integration, verbalizing important themes about hygiene, nutrition, etc. There is also very meaningful and productive technical exchange going on among the PCVs.

Moringa in Kobenni

On the Kobenni side, PCV Mira and four super ladies have put together a very creative project called the Ma'ta Moulana Co-operative. In the next ten months, they will be working on gardening income generating activities, and Health Education, nutrition (Moringa origins and nutritional value, moringa powder preparation, moringa as part of a healthy diet, production realities and long term tree commitment).

Site Assessments

Next time you see me at site will be for Site Assessments, incha-Allah. The trips will start soon and your input will be highly appreciated. If you have any recommendations, please pick up an electronic copy of a volunteer request form that you can hand over to community representatives requesting for a volunteer.

Talk to you again in the next issue. Till then, Have fun in Saint Louis and stay away from trouble...

Daouda

Ed NOTES

M. Abderrahmane O. Bagga, APCD/ED

Hello and welcome to this new issue of the NKC NOTES!

Let me first wish every single one of you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! And since this is Holiday season, here are the dates for school breaks and exams dates for the school year 2006-2007. The (long awaited) decree states the following:

School Vacation Dates

For the First Quarter: Schools will be out on Thursday, December 28, 2006 at the end of classes to Monday, January 8th, 2007 at 08:00.

For the Second Quarter: Schools will be out on Wednesday, March 28 through Monday, April 9th, 2007 at 08:00.

For the Third Quarter/Grandes Vacances: Friday, June 15th at 12:00 to Monday, September 24th, at 08:00.

Exams Dates:

1st Q Exams: December 25th to December 28th, 2006.

2nd Q Exams:

For non-terminales: March 22nd - 28th, 2007;

For Terminales (First mock Bac): Thursday, March 22nd, Then on Monday 26th, Tuesday 27, and Wednesday, 28th.

For Terminales (Second mock Bac): May 14-17, 2007.

End of year Exams: Monday, May 28th to Friday, June 8th, 2007.

Bac (First round): June 11-14, 2007

Bac (Second round): July 17th & 18th, 2007.

GEE has an APCD

Yes, please join me in congratulating our new colleague, Siham Mint Babana, who has just been hired as the APCD for the new GEE Sector. Some of you may already have met Siham as she has been working w/ GAD on a part time basis for the past 4 months. For those who haven't, you will get to see her during the ETR/IST (January 3rd-5th). This is great news for our newly born sector and our dear colleague Siham. We wish her the best of luck with her new job!

ETR and Technical ISTs

As you may know by now the ETR and Technical ISTs will be taking place in Nouakchott at the Peace Corps old office (by now) for the period January 3rd thru the 5th.



ED/GEE IST Schedule	
Day One: January 4th, 07	
Time	Session title
07:30-08:00	Breakfast
08:00-08:10	Welcome and objectives overview
08:10-09:10	Open discussion: hot issues "shooting"
09:10-10:30	Classroom Management Guidelines and practical tips
10:30-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-11:50	Teaching Large Multi-Level classes and motivating your students
11:50-12:20	Peer coaching issues
12:20-12:50	Classroom Management and discipline - Panel
12:50-14:30	Lunch break
14:30-15:15	A typology of animation activities (w/ a GMC focus)
15:15-16:15	Secondary projects idea sharing - Panel
16:15-16:30	Day One evaluation
Day Two: January 5th, 07	
07:30-08:00	Breakfast
08:00-08:15	Day One evaluation debriefing
08:15-09:00	Competency-based Approach (illustrated)
09:00-10:00	Grammar & Vocabulary teaching techniques (illustrated)
10:00-10:30	Question and Answer - Panel
10:30-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-12:00	Test writing and Grading
12:00-12:45	Open space - Discussion points (Groups run concurrently): - A reflective teachers' approach, - GMC Mentoring & Organizing Community Projects, - Setting up English Clubs & Pen Pal Correspondence
12:45-13:00	Action Plans
13:00-13:15	Evaluation and Wrap-up
13:15	Lunch and End

AgFo NOTES

Mohamedou Aw, APCD/AgFo

Hello Again From the Agfo/EE Evergreen Corner

I hope every one is doing well. Kane and I have concluded our posting follow up and site visits. We have visited all of you. We are very impressed with your efforts to integrate into your communities and the work you all do or are planning to do. Keep up the good work.

I think the biggest news is that I am on vacation since yesterday. I will be out until Jan 01. As mentioned in the e-mail I sent you yesterday, Kane is in charge. Direct all your questions, comments, requests, issues, concerns etc. to him. He will handle them professionally and in a timely manner.

Even though by the time you read this, I will already be back (or almost) from vacation I would still like to touch base with you on certain items before I disappear for the next 3 weeks.

ETR and IST

Kane has sent a detailed memo about the two events by e-mail. He is sending hard copies with the different missions in your region. He has also started calling you about it. Please read the details in the memo and bring a counterpart to the IST (not to the ETR).

Seeds and Moringa Powder

Refer to Kane's section. We would like to empty out the stock of Moringa powder by ETR time. Continue collecting seeds. Thanks Ginger for the seeds.

Seeds! By Kane Oumar

I hope that everything is doing well. I would like to let you know that the followings are available:

Moringa seeds (6 kg) and powder (4 kg), Balanites seeds (3 kg), Neem seeds (1 kg), and some Parkinsonia seeds. Also, the tree sacks are available. If anybody needs them, please contact me.

I would also ask you to collect any tree seeds you have in your site (add date, name of the seeds, site name), then send them to me through the shuttle, or any other means.

The Agfo/EE IST 2007 dates are: January 4th to 7th. The Training Director will send you the Memo and the Agenda. The PCVs who have access to the Internet, please make copies and then send them to those in the rural sites.

Thanks a lot,

Kane



EE Update

Obie has written to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEFS) about the recommendations that were formulated during the review. We are still waiting for their response. I am in contact with the Director of Fundamental Schools and hopefully some things will come out in the next week or two. The director has sent out an official memo signed by the Secretary General of MEFS to all regional offices to revamp their office in charge of animations socio-educatives. In that memo they have asked that this service be re-enacted and have stressed out the place and the importance of EE within that service and in the schools. This is a good beginning.

If we get positive response from the MEFS regarding the recommendations we will organize a follow up EE workshop in February (right before the S&S refresher) to define Peace Corps' involvement and at what level and re-write the new project plan. We will send out detailed information once we know more.

School gardens: This year again, World Food Program in collaboration with Woodside has asked Peace Corps to help identify six sites to receive school gardens. The proposed sites are:

(Continued on page 13)

SED NOTES

Brian Zoeller, APCD/SED

Happy Holidays from the Techies and Bean Counters.

Did I say Beans? Is that a Pulaar joke?

Ok, on to less important things. It has been a slooowwww period in Mauritania. Between the elections of recent, the lead up to them, Ramadan, school being late, new volunteers getting acclimated in their sites, I'd say that this has been a great movement forward for the country but a bit slow for us on the project side. That's just fine. I think observing this part of history in Mauritania, conversing with people daily, getting to understand how events are changing perceptions and attitudes are every bit as important for your future story telling as the work you do.

In the news

Elections seemingly went quite well. Thanks for not participating.

Factoids: Mauritania's economy is driven by products such as fish, livestock and iron ore/metals and the elusive oil and gas reserves that purport to revolutionize this place. For instance, approximately 22% of this year's GDP should come from oil (estimates for next year's oil revenue are already about ½ of what they are for this year). Mineral resources produce about 13% of GDP. Fishing income from contracts with the EU alone will bring in 135 million a year until 2012.

All debt was forgiven by international lenders a few months ago. To put that into perspective, the debt facing Mauritania in 2005 was \$830 million USD. That is more than the annual GDP of this year alone! Another startling figure (and likely due to oil) is the GDP for 2006, a whopping 13.9% increase compared to 5.4% in 2005 – \$Cha-ching-guetti. The combination of new natural resources and debt relief are having positive effects on the economic standing of the country, not necessarily across the population. Average annual per capita income was \$430 in 2003 according to World Bank statistics, however one Ministry official says that more than half the country still lives on about a buck a day.

The current regime announced boosting of salaries of all government workers by 50%. This makes a 100% increase this year alone in government salaries. Not too shabby if you work for the government. NGW's (non-governmental workers) not so fortunate talk about the inflationary pressures they might feel as a result. RIM will also increase pensions for current and future retirees by 20%. The overall RIM budget

To catch Mauritania in the news:

Google > News > Mauritania

Economic news: http://www.businessin africa.net/news/west_africa/241874.htm

Agence Mauritanienne d'Info: <http://www.ami.mr/fr/defaultfr.htm>

Mauritania Internet/News Portal (French): http://www.e-mauritanie.net/index_fr.php



for '06 increased 7.5%, just shy of 200 billion UM or \$800 million US. They are also working to simplify the tax code, but, I'm not sure what that means.

Project Status Report

The report points out quite a few things. Most glaringly, we need to refine our project plan. That is what I will be doing over the next month. Some of you will be tapped for your input and to participate in a workshop with some of our partners to redesign, focus and simplify the document and direction. The report will be provided digitally to SED and IT PCVs, or other PCVs who want to read worse writing than found in Newsweek.

From a programming perspective, the report shows a pattern found last year that PCVs really work well with women's cooperatives both in technical and business training. It also shows increased interest in working with youth on business education and skills training. This is good because learning a skill is one thing as is learning basic business concepts. However, learning to put the two together is what will increasingly help our "clients" to improve their well-being.

The report shows marginal to poor goal achievement with the CFPPs and with various aspects of Micro-Finance. With respect to IT, the report showed

(Continued on page 14)

Stay HEALTHY!

With Cynthia and Amel, PCMOs

Nouakchott Notes

Bird Flu: Like real flu, but with wings and a killer beak

It's that time of year again, flu season. Once again I am sure you are all wondering why you *have* to get a flu shot. I would like to say it's because I said so, but I won't. I will do my best again this year to explain why the Peace Corps requires every Volunteer worldwide to receive a flu vaccination.

Let's start with a little flu history. There have been 10 influenza pandemics in the past 300 years. The most recent outbreaks were in 1957-1958 and 1968-1969. In 1918-1919, a flu pandemic killed 100 million people worldwide. The current world population is about 6.5 billion, which is 3 times the population of 1918. A pandemic now, obviously, would be devastating. Giving the flu vaccine again this year is an attempt to prevent such a pandemic.

Currently the avian flu, caused by the H5N1 virus, is transmitted from wild birds to domestic birds such as chickens and undergoes changes that allow it to infect humans, pigs and possibly other animals. There have been cases of bird-to-human transmission in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia. Once in the lung cell of a mammalian host, the H5N1 virus can "mate" with the human influenza virus type A to create a new influenza strain that is capable of sustained human-to-human transmission. If such a virus has not circulated in humans before, the entire world population would be susceptible. Thus far this has not happened. The hope is that if we vaccinate everyone for the human influenza virus type A (the vaccine that you are all required to get) we will prevent mating of the viruses and therefore control the human-to-human transmission.

Symptoms of bird flu include fever, cough, aching joints and sore muscles, sore throat, and respiratory disease. You're right, that describes almost anything.

Again, prevention is the key. There are a few things you can do to help out as well. Wash your hands frequently, avoid close contact with those who are sick, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, drink plenty of fluids, and if you are sick stay home and get plenty of rest. Avoid contact with chickens, ducks and other poultry and their

waste. Wash hand with soap and water after any contact with birds. Do not eat poultry from affected areas.

Do not transport birds even if you think they are healthy, and don't keep them as pets.

The symptoms of the bird flu are similar to many other health problems here in Mauritania. They include fever, cough, aching joints and sore muscles, sore throat, eye infection and respiratory disease. Yes, you're right, that describes almost anything. But contrary to most illnesses, the bird flu would make you feel really sick.

The Peace Corps' plan is as follows: vaccinate all PCVs worldwide for human influenza type A, provide all posts with Tamaflu (an anti-viral medication that may be effective against the bird flu), close monitoring of bird flu developments and a plan of action in case of a pandemic.

Again, prevention is the key. You play the largest role. Use common sense and you will all continue to serve healthy and happily.

With only your best health in mind,
Cynthia

ATTENTION ALL FIRST-YEAR VOLUNTEERS!

ALL First Year PCVs need to stop by the Health Unit to have their final round of vaccinations. PLEASE come by before the last of December.

Thanks, The Health Unit

Health Tips

with Amel



"In order to test whether a person has diabetes you must test her urine. One way to test the urine is to taste it. If the urine tastes sweet, have two more people taste it. Also taste the urine of three other people. If everyone agrees that the same person's urine tastes sweeter, she is probably diabetic."

—From "Where There Is No Doctor"

Get TRAINED

Ahmed ould Sidna, Training Coordinator

Training Events

ETR & Tech ISTs

ETR will take place in about one week (January 3, 2007) in Nouakchott. We are looking forward to hearing all the stories and events that marked the first year PCVs' life at their sites.

Tech ISTs for ED, SED and HE sectors will be held in Nouakchott from January 4-5, while AGFO/EE will be having their IST in Dieuk (Trarza region) from January 5-7.

Safety & Security Refresher

S&S Refresher will be held on February 15 at the bureau. This is a mandatory event where all PCVs will have the opportunity to gather and share their best strategies in coping with safety and security issues.

COS Conference

COS Conference for PST 05 training class will be held in Keur Macene from April 1-5. PCVs are expected to be in Nouakchott on March 31 to leave the following day for Keur Macene. Trarza PCVs will be leaving straight from Rosso to Keur Macene on April 1.

PST tentative dates:

Trainees' arrival: June 28

Site visit: August 1-7

Swearing-in: September 6

Posting: September 8-14

PST

As everyone knows, this year we will be having a large group of trainees (75-80 Ts) because of the new sector (Girls Education and Empowerment).

We intend to keep the center in Kaédi with some improvements on the infrastructure. We will be using most of last year training sites with a possible extension to Boghé and Aleg.

MTR

All first year PCVs' Mid-Term Reconnect will be held in Nouakchott on August 22.

PST Preparation

P.DOT

The Peace Corps' Pre-Departure Online Training (P.DOT) initiative refers to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of online learning tools and activities in the areas of language, crossing cultures, and the role of the volunteer in development. P.DOT currently consists of six online learning activities that are housed on the Peace Corps internet website, www.peacecorps.gov, in the 'My Toolkit' framework section for password protected use by Peace Corps applicants, nominees and invitees.



Mauritania P.DOT materials were developed and sent to Washington. It will be launched on the Internet by the end of December 2006. [Editor's note: they are now online!]

It will be helpful for those who would like to learn more about greetings, vocabulary and useful expressions in the four local languages.

Site Visits

The Training Program scheduled PCV site visits in all regions from November 28, 2006 to March 23, 2007. The purpose of the visit is to assess how PST did impact the life of 1st year PCVs, provide training support needed and have PCVs' perspective and input for the upcoming PST.

Sidna and Oumar already visited the Gorgol and Brakna (South & North), Hodh, Assaba and Tagant.

These visits gave us a wealth of ideas and suggestions to improve all training events from ETR to PST. We are really proud of our PCVs for the work they are doing in the field. Again, we reiterate our invitation to all PCVs visited and others to share with us all their valuable recommendations for training events. They are more than welcome.

Announcements

As PST is approaching, we are planning to have announce-

(Continued on page 14)

Chalk Chat Corner

With Bahena

Hello again from me, Bahena, Your ED/GAD PTA, and welcome to the **Chalk Chat Corner**. Actually, before starting to share with you this contribution, I'd like to express to you how proud I am of you and the great job you're all doing at your sites, and would like to say, 'Keep up the good work!'

My contribution this time is something I thought would be of interest to any teacher. I hope you find it useful. Enjoy it!

Introducing yourself to classes by Clare Lavery

The first lesson and subsequent lessons will be crucial in establishing the atmosphere in your classes and your students' attitude towards you. Here are ten useful tips for helping you to get to know your students better and get off to a good start.

- Enlist the help of teachers: Will the teacher introduce you? Will you have your own slot of time to talk to the class? What would the teacher like you to do?
- Confirm guidelines with teachers: rules for rowdy behaviour, leaving the room to go to the bathroom, will the teacher deal with bad behaviour if you are both in the room together?
- Voice your worries, no matter how small.
- Keep in mind the old adage "first impressions count" and apply this to your first classes.
- Make your role clear you are a member of staff, not a member of the student body (no matter how close in age) so do not set out to be "mates" with them. Keep a friendly distance, keep personal details about boyfriends to yourself.
- Look professional: do not totally change your style but dress appropriately for the school culture, respect the staff dress code. Students need to perceive you as a teacher.
- Sound professional: be careful about your voice (clear and calm) and posture. Students need to feel you are in control or they will take control.
- Assert yourself: establish rules from the start and make them clear. No more than 5 will do. For example: do not start the lesson or explain activities if students are talking. Always expect silence before you speak. Have signals for getting atten-

(Continued on page 16)

(Obie, Continued from page 2)

a mandatory **Safety and Security Refresher Workshop** held in Nouakchott on Thursday, February 15th. Attendance is mandatory for any PCV expecting to travel to Dakar during the WAIST weekend. You will be expected to arrive in Nouakchott on Wednesday, February 14th. I will have letters out to all of you in the next few weeks that you may pass on to your local counterparts and supervisors explaining your absence from site. For those of you not traveling to Dakar for WAIST, the workshop is optional. However, you will receive a copy of all of the documents covered at the workshop and be responsible for "refreshing" yourselves.

The first **VAC Meeting** of the New Year is scheduled for January 2nd at 16h15 in the Large Conference Room of the New Office. The Regional Coordinators are all invited to attend; if the RC (or Alternate RC) cannot make the VAC meeting, I would ask that the RC appoint a delegate to sit in his or her place.

This may be a bit early, but for the soon to be COS'ers I would like to let you know that **Ms. Ellie Le-Baron** has graciously accepted to facilitate your COS conference this year. Ellie has facilitated our last three COS conferences and is a fantastic resource for soon to be RPCVs. Your conference dates are tentatively set for the first full week in April and will take place in Keur Macene. I would encourage you all to form a COS committee and begin working with Sidna and Oumar Ba in the next few months to tailor the COS conference to your group's specific interests and needs.

As the next *Nouakchott Notes* will not be going out until March, I would like to let you know that I will be taking home leave from February 24 until March 25, 2007. During my absence, AO David Solomon will be Acting CD.

As always, my door is open. Please do not hesitate to stop in and say hello when you are in Nouakchott or call me or drop me an email if I can be of any assistance.

Very Best,

bulx

Rumor Has It...

PCV Leah Dale's getting married!









PCV Leah Dale, 28, and Mowdou Checkna Sow, 26, are tying the knot. Obie has given his stamp of approval for the marriage; however, the couple awaits the OK from PC Washington. Fellow PCVs have declared "finally!" and "does he know what he's getting into?!"

The couple's future plans are to move to America for a few years. He wants to continue his education with his eyes on a PhD in Hydraulic Engineering. She loves to travel and is looking into different job options.

When the wedding is announced, they both hope the entire PC family will attend. They promise plenty of cousins for everyone.

World Wise Schools Update

We have just received our match status update from the WWS coordinator. New matches will receive match letters during ETR in January. To those still awaiting matches: best of luck!

	Volunteer	Teacher	Address
	Kristi Elliott	Christopher Garland	Mater Dei School 9600 Seven Locks Road Bethesda, MD 20817
	Helena Joyce	Tamara Mann	Christ the King Catholic School 195 B Brandon Road Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
	John Langdon	Janet Doxey	World Schools 138 Spit Brook Road Nashua, NH 03062
	Donna Lenius	Nancy Love Lopez	Parkside Middle School 8602 Mathis Ave Manassas, VA 20110
	Amanda Owens	Erin Kenny	Drury University 900 N. Benton Avenue Springfield, MO 65802
	Ginger Tissier	Nancy Custeau Chidester	Moon Area School District 8353 University Boulevard Moon Township, PA 15108
	Thaddeus Wincek	Christopher Garland	Mater Dei School 9600 Seven Locks Road Bethesda, MD 20817
	Kathleen Wolfe	Wanda Alderman-Swain	Eleanor Roosevelt High School 7601 Hanover Parkway Greenbelt, MD 20770
	Eleanor Andrews	rebecca Bader	Madison Primary School Primary School Drive Madison, VA 22711
	Alison Blank	Catie Huguenard	Henderson Elementary 12301 E 124th St. Henderson, CO 80640
	Amy Conley	Holly Breanne Carter	Beechwood School 780 Beechwood Ave. Fullerton , CA 92831
	Gregory Coordes	Lisa Morrash	New Hope-Solebury Middle School 180 W. Bridge Street New Hope, PA 18938
	Daryn Crowell	Robbin Crowell	Cesar Chavez Primary School 3710 Deen Road Fort Worth, TX 76106
	Tyler Cummings-Bond	Julia Lakey	Gig Harbor High School 5101 Rosedale Ave. Gig Harbor, WA 98335
	Leah Dale	Kathleen Crosby	Clarksburg C-2 Elementary 401 S. Hwy H Clarksburg, MO 65025
	Andrew Deer	Melissa LaDuc	Troy Athens HS 4333 John R Troy, MI 48085
	Andrew Deer	Mary Jo Hagey	Alma Middle School 1500 N. Pine Ave. Alma, MI 48801
	Michael Donovan	Phillip Paeltz	Governor French Academy 219 W. Main Street Belleville, IL 62220
	Mary Fitzpatrick	Amy K. Lemme	Hill Murray School 2625 Larpenteur Avenue, E Maplewood, MN 55109
	Clarice Hammett	Esther Greenberg	Centennial High School 9601 Hageman Rd Bakersfield, CA 93312
	Nicole Horvath	Barbara Jakubowski	Strawbridge School 307 Strawbridge Avenue Westmont, NJ 08108
	Sharon Jones	Dan Fitzgerald	West Potomac High School 6500 Quander Rd Alexandria, VA 22307
	Bethany Larsen	Mary Larsen	Goshen School 34020 B Street Eugene, OR 97405
	Ariana Metchik	Robyn Metchik	Nipomo High School 525 N. Thompson Ave. Nipomo, CA 93444
	Jeremiah Miller	Mary Miller	Hill-Gustat Middle School 4700 Schumacher Rd. Sebring, FL 33875
	Jacob Newberry	Suzanne Croco	Kennedy Junior High School 2929 Green Trails Lisle, IL 60532
	Zachory Petersen	Kathy Winters	Harris Lake Park PO 8 Harris, IA 51345
	Erin Riesland	Megan Pann	Mount View Elementary 10811 12th Ave SW Seattle, WA 98146
	Chelsea Rosendale	April Rosendale	Hilltop Elementary 700 South St, PO Box 457 Henderson, MN 56044
	Michael Thoms	Thomas Cambisios	Maumae Valley Country Day School 1715 South Reynolds Road Toledo, OH 43614
	April Wilhelm	Kent Mick	Garner-Hayfield Community High School 605 West Lyon Garner, IA 50438
	Rachel Zuback	Suzanne Miedema	John A. Coleman Catholic High School 430 Hurley Ave. Hurley, NY 12443

One Man's Trash...

Volunteers, in a time of need, creatively supplement project budgets, incomes

By Aaron Dibner-Dunlap

The noonday sun broils the parched West African landscape today. But as most Mauritanian citizens are hurrying home to their meals in dark corners, Atar Health Volunteer Kristen Morella stops in the street. She braves the heat a few seconds longer to pick up a discarded jar.

"Yes! One more," she says excitedly.

Kristen is just one of tens of Mauritanian volunteers who have resorted to such budget-saving techniques to stretch their strained program budgets. Other items she has found today include tea leaves, a piece of wire, and a spork.

The trend reportedly began when Director Obie Shaw announced the unavailability of traditional project funding, alternately called SPA, ASPA, OSPA, or DAYSPA, for the current fiscal year. Rather than beg already-strapped parents and friends for money through the cleverly-named Peace Corps Partnership Program, volunteers have turned to locally available options.

"My parents are stretched as thin as they can be. They've got their Beamer payments, stock traders' fees, yacht repairs, and first-class airline tickets to worry about. How can I look to them for my selfish needs?" asks Zakia Griffin.

With other NGOs suffering

from similar budget cuts, the only viable option for many volunteers has been scouring for project materials from the bountiful trash heaps adorning most Mauritanian cities. Several innovative projects have been funded this way, including the Health-themed "How sick will this make you?", SED-based "Try and sell *this*," and the English counting game "99 bottles of pus on the wall."

Volunteers who teach plastic bag crocheting didn't notice the change.

The phenomenon isn't limited to the professional sphere. Short on cash, Volunteers have

created a new currency from discarded Mauritel recharge cards. They use the money system, called Mauribucks, to barter among each other for common items like soap, clothes, and sexual favors.



One MauriBuck, the new currency of volunteers, can buy up to ten meals cooked by Matt Britton, or one cooked by Lee George.

Currently it has a value that varies in different cities, depending on the availability of discarded cards, but SED volunteers Sam Bryar and Leah Dale are planning to release the currency into the world's financial markets in order to stabilize its value.

"Once I can start trading Mauribucks against the dollar, my steady stream of hookups-for-cash will be assured!" said a shifty-eyed Bryar. "That, and I can finally buy that X-Files chess set I've been eyeing."

Mr. Shaw and AO David

(Continued on page 13)

December 1st: World AIDS Day 2006

What did our volunteers do?

Boghé held a formation on AIDS including a full musical production of RENT performed by the GMC girls and staff. April gave a stunning performance as Maureen and Aaron Dibner-Dunlap was sassy yet innocent as Mimi.

Selibaby invited a local nurse to speak to the GMC girls and he gave a full presentation which included contraceptives and a big wooden dildo. He also offered free massages to all the PCVs. You can contact the editor for more information.

Atar held a wet mulafa contest followed by a kis-kis eating contest and face painting. Also, someone came to speak about AIDS.

Kaedi forgot what day it was.



Tidjikja held an AIDS awareness festival. Traditional Maure music and dancing took place and went on for 7 hours. One woman had to be rushed to the hospital after a nasty fall. Onlookers attributed it to a combination of high heel shoes in the sand and heat exhaustion.

Rosso held a hip-hop dance contest judged by PCV and hip hop dance expert Dan Zhu. Dan also took home a flat screen T.V. as first prize winner in the contest.

Nema's Newest Volunteer Checks In

Greetings and salutations! Let me introduce myself. *Je m'appelle* Julius Wharthington III and I'm your newest volunteer! I just flew here (and boy are my arms tired! Ha ha) so I thought I'd tell you about little old me.

Growing up in the Hamptons, I always felt like something was missing. Sure, I learned a lot about the world at debutante balls and cotillions, and I learned what it means to be competitive during my time on the polo fields. But one day a filthy beggar asked me for some money. It figures: I was in front of a Target store. Yet as I was kicking him, I realized that my perfect life lacked his proletarian roughness, a certain knowledge of "the people". To counter this I dabbled at Old Navy, but the sorts of encounters with the clientele still left me incomplete. So I decided to go whole hog and join the Peace Corps.

Thanks to my Dad's connections in the State Department, my first "stint", as they say so charmingly, was in PC Bahamas. Boy, did I ever meet some interesting folks there. Such happy people! All of them on vacation: some came from Beverly Hills, some from as far as Paris or the French Riviera. I got my first initiation into French with these fine foreigners, learning words like *cocktail*, *noix de coco*, and *rhum*. *Monsieur, puis-je avoir un autre citronnade, s'il vous plait?* It was all so much fun, learning new languages. But I didn't just lounge on the beach, no sirree. I was there as a Water/Sanitation volunteer, and I took my job very seriously. I scoured all the islands, searching for the cleanest, most crystal-blue water (I finally found it at a resort called Crystal Bay – how fitting! Ha ha).

It was all so much fun, learning new languages. *Monsieur, puis-je avoir un autre citronnade, s'il vous plait?*

My first two years having finished, I decided to extend my experience because it was going so "swimmingly". But to be honest, two years of white sandy beaches and cold lemonade was growing rather mundane, so I decided to take my new-found French to a different locale, which is why I'm joining you, desert buddies!

I was a bit disappointed getting off the plane, because at first glance it looked very similar to the *plages* that were too common over there. But then I realized that these beaches *never end*! At this thought, I squealed with delight and my hands did a little clap. The wardrobe is pretty similar, too. Board shorts may be a no-no, but flip-flops and my favorite flowery shirts fit right in! I knew we would be best friends when Macire met me at the airport wearing a shirt almost identical to mine.

After briefly meeting the friendly Nouakchott staff, Obie promptly bundled me off to Nema, where I'll be replacing a volunteer who just left, Mr. Rensdorf. I moved into his home where the dust hadn't even settled over the few belongings he left behind: a cane, some dentures, and over three hundred issues of Reader's Digest.

And do you know what happened, faithful readers? His wife came back! Soon after I moved in, little Aichetou showed up with a confused look and an armful of couscous. "Tupp? Tupp?" she kept whimpering. Thankfully, at this point Sidi, my newly hired translator, showed up. Even after he explained to her that Mr. Rensdorf had departed, she insisted on staying. According to custom, Sidi said, the wife stays with the brother of the deceased. Well I need hardly tell you that I am not Mr. Rensdorf's brother, except maybe in an Ebonics way, but they were unrelenting. Not one to argue with tradition, I succumbed.

It was clear to me immediately that Aichetou did not benefit from the stellar up-bringing of my previous girlfriends, Meghann and Skye. My first weeks, therefore, have been dedicated to a type of My Fair Lady-esque transformation. It isn't going very well so far. For example, during our dance lessons, I

started her off on a very easy Boston Two-Step, but when I placed my hand deftly around her waist to guide her, she ran screaming from the room. Maybe this is what they mean by "the toughest job you'll ever love"!

Well, it's time for me to sign off for now—we've got a Table Etiquette lesson coming up. TTFN!

—JWIII



Nouakchott Notes Staff

Jess Palmer

Grand Poobah

Aaron Dibner-Dunlap

Lord High Executioner

Michael Donovan

Skippy

Lee George

Techie Savior and Cooking God

Jake Newberry, Heidi Gehret, Zach Petersen, Julius Wharthington III

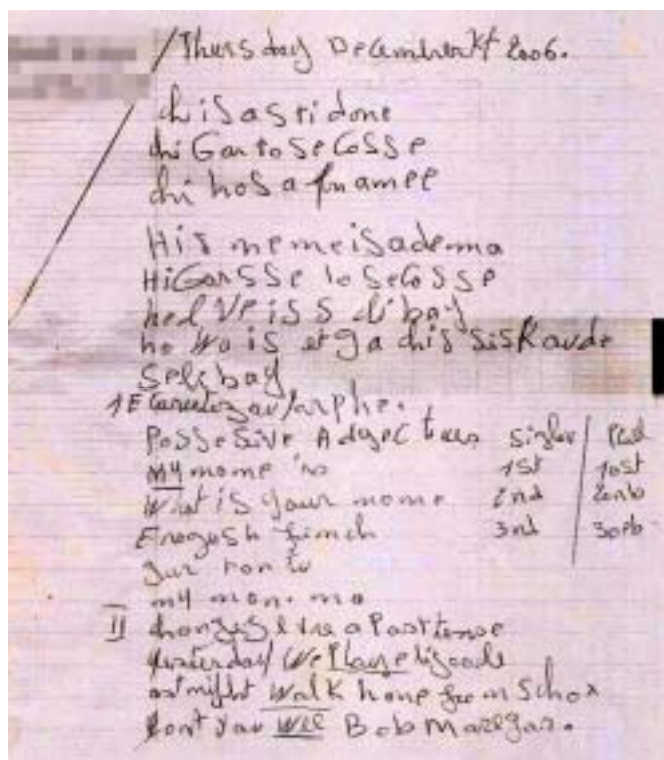
Contributors

nouakchottnotes@gmail.com

(Elections, Continued from page 1)

he responded simply with, "Oh."

To the contrary, Selibaby first-year PCV Amanda Owens seems to be happy with the results of her first months spent at site. "I feel really, really good about the work I've done so far. I've actually been teaching full classes every day on top of having successful GMC sessions. My first exam proved how much my students have learned. I'm so proud!!" So proud, in fact, that she provided NN with an actual copy of one of her star student's exams.*



The English exam of Amanda Owens' star pupil.

PC staff, as always, has shown tremendous support of volunteers who have found themselves suffering from ennui.

"There are many ways that a Peace Corps Volunteer can alleviate the stress of idleness and boredom that seems to be accompanying the current elections," advises Director Obie Shaw. "Although the Peace Corps is contingent on not being identified with any local political issues or movements, PCVs can occupy much of their time by avoiding becoming involved in the political affairs of Mauritania."

So, education volunteers and other PCVs, NN wishes you nothing but the best, and may the upcoming few months be as productive as the last.

*NN has omitted the name to ensure the privacy of the student, who may or may not be named Mamadou Seck and may or may not live in the Guidimakha.

(Aw, Continued from page 5)

Aere Mbare in Brakna, Belinaabe and Tokomadji in Gorgol, Wouloumboni in Guidimakha and two schools in Kankossa in the Assaba region.

PREDAS is a Sahelian project promoting efficient use of domestic energy. I had a brief meeting with them a couple of days ago. They would like to promote the transformation of *Typha australis* into charcoal. *Typha australis* is an obnoxious weed that grows in the Senegal River particularly in the Trarza region, destroying the River branches, beaches. It has a terrible environmental and agricultural impact. Peace Corps have already started working on this. The villages of Dieuk and Breun and some representatives from other villages have already been trained on the techniques of charcoal production using this weed. PREDAS is interested in installing a semi-industrial unit for the production of this charcoal for a wider use in the country and particularly in Nkc. They will be in touch with Kane on what should be the next step.

Thanks and Happy gardening and holiday season!

(Money, Continued from page 11)

Solomon are flabbergasted by the trend.

"But...we sent out the Living Allowance Survey and everything! I specifically told people to itemize everything they had ever bought, thought about buying, or seen anyone else buy. If you didn't accurately report, it's your own damn faults that you're poor," says Solomon. Then, turning to his patiently waiting wife, he said, "And you! Don't expect me to reimburse you for that baby stroller; FY06 is over!"

"When I was a volunteer in Tunisia," says Shaw, "we had everything we could have ever wanted right at our fingertips. ... What was the question?"

Dibner-Dunlap Wins Best RC Award

Country Director Obie Shaw recently awarded the Best Regional Coordinator honors to Boghé volunteer Aaron Dibner-Dunlap. He was lauded by all of the Nouakchott staff as the most productive, charismatic and beautiful Regional Coordinator since the position's inception. Jealous site mate April Wilhelm turned maroon with rage. After loudly proclaiming the praiseworthy work as her own, she forcefully left the scene, muttering anathema about Mauritel bills and internet time. Mr. Dibner-Dunlap is expected to excel at his job for a long time to come.

(Brian, Continued from page 6)

that consulting and teaching are the primary roles of our PCVs. We will seek more of such skill sets in future volunteers as we continue to place all our new PCVs outside of Nouakchott. The report continued to show our strong commitment to Girl's education and cross-sectoral work like CéréAmine and English tutoring. Lastly it indicates some newer forays into multi-media and tourism.

Some of these aspects of the report were planned and volunteers were positioned to take action. The good news is that they have. Dan has been busy down in Rosso and elsewhere with video, dance and the music business while Sam continues to refine a really nice report on tourism in the Adrar that we will soon shop around to various agencies. Tyler got a chance to put on his computer application youth training in Atar with Chris and Leah. Aaron, Leah and Sam conducted a couple business youth trainings/intern programs in Kiffa, Boghé, Kaedi and Selibaby with the help of Ann and Michael. There is more and much of it will be talked about next Notes.

Thanks to RCs

Lastly, I want to thank Michael, Leah, Chris, Tyler, and Dan in the SED and IT sectors for stepping up to be PCV-RCs. Coordinating has kept you all busy with assisting APCDs, PC Admin and especially your new site-mates with their assimilation. I've heard nothing but nice comments from the new folks about your levels of support and advice. We really do appreciate it!

Until next time, try to figure out why the sand is both red and white in the same area on the Boutilimit-NKT leg of the country.

(Sidna, Continued from page 8)

ments made in January. We will positions for language facilitators, cross-culture coordinator, technical coordinators and assistant coordinators.

Second year PCVs who are interested in training careers are invited to apply for these positions.

We're sick of pretty pictures!

For the next issue (March), we want you to send us your ugliest, most awful pictures of you and your fellow volunteers. This could be the beginning of a disgusting relationship...

We can always be contacted at:
nouakchottnotes@gmail.com

Volunteer Stares at Toubabs, Sets Record

When Jeremy Miller, Kankossa Ed PCV, stood on a wall with 23 Mauritanian children over Thanksgiving weekend, he didn't know big things were about to happen.

"I saw the kids there, standing on the wall and staring at us, and I figured I had to go and be there with them. You know, really understand things from their point of view. What do they see, besides gorgeous white people?"

Miller promptly mounted the wall, wedged himself between two youngsters, and stood. He occupied his time by shifting his weight, returning salutations in up to four local languages, and staring at the nearby whities.

After 47 minutes of standing, the official record-keeper of the



Guidimakha happened to walk past.

"By Allah, that's the longest bout of Ironic Wall Standing I've seen since the days of Ould Dad-dah. I believe he may be setting a new record," he said.

After four more minutes, an exhausted Miller jumped off the

wall, where he was cheered by onlookers as he was notified of his new record. Friends asked him what he noticed while on his perch.

"I didn't really see anything besides the white people, although they looked a little smaller from on high. But still—what's the big deal?"

Secret Spies from the Planet Zendar?

PCVs experience a close encounter of the attractive kind

PCVs in Selibaby have recently reported that three strange young American men have moved into their fair city. Amanda Owens and Michael Donovan spotted them in the market one afternoon and easily recognized them as Americans. "They were wearing track pants and vintage t-shirts, one of which said 'Hicksville soccer.' They looked like they had just walked out of a college cafeteria. And they weren't wearing berets or smoking, so they couldn't have been French," Amanda observed.

The two volunteers approached and questioned them, speaking perfect French, to be sure of their nationality.

PCVs: "Est-que tu sommes Francy?"

3 dudes: "Non, Angleesh."

PCVs: Oh, we are American.

3 dudes: So are we!

PCVs: Wow! So...shall we? {They all sing the star spangled banner in unison.}

3 dudes: Well, that was nice.

PCVs: So, what are you all doing here? Are you PCVs from another country? Because we have written a Peace Corps song too. {The PCVs sing that song together, accompanied by a growing number of can kids singing 'Tubaab' as the chorus.}

3 dudes: That's nice. But no, we are just here learning about the culture and language and stuff.

Amanda: Oh ok, so are you single?

One dude: What? Um, well, he is, but I have a girlfriend back home. We are engaged.

Michael: Oh that won't last. And what's your sexual orientation, if you don't mind me asking?

Other dude: What? Ummm...

Amanda: ...I think we need to get going. Nice to meet you and we'll see you around, I'm sure.



Mr. George, seen here as a panda, whose current whereabouts are unknown.



One of the employees of "the company," seen here demonstrating lethal poisoning techniques to a young Pulaar girl. He may be a spy.

Lee George, a PCV in the nearby Soninke village of Woolenboner, questioned them further. "They seemed nice, and very attractive, but they only referred to their organization as 'the company' and would never really elaborate more. And when I saw them in the cyber, they spent a half hour putting in various passwords to get into their email." While passing a donkey carcass on the street, they pointed and loudly compared it to their last "hit" in Kuala Lumpur. After much dodging of the issue, Mr. George finally asked them what "the company" really was. They replied that they were not giving out that information at this time. "I think they're KGB spies," postulated Mr. George. "Why else would they be hiding their identity? Hmmm?" Mr. George has not been seen since making his inquiry. He is presumed dead, or maybe just still in his village.

"I don't care if they are spies, I'm just happy to get some more man candy up in the Guidy. I've got a sweet tooth that needs fixing," said Caren-Rubin Brown, a PCV in the town of Hotboob.

Daryn Crowell, local expert on missionary work in Africa, says, "I think they are secret missionaries, part of a larger legion established by the Pope, the 700 Club and Walmart."

Regardless of their true identity and affiliation, this reporter warns all PCVs to be on the lookout for young hot Americans moving into their neighborhood. Beware. And don't drink their Kool-Aid, even if it is Tropical Punch.

PCV Injured During Self-Defense Seminar

By Zack Petersen

Last Thursday, PCV Preston Neilson suffered a third-degree concussion after hitting his head on bare concrete while conducting a self-defense seminar as part of his "Go Nuts" campaign in the Trarza. While dressed in Cobra Kia Dojo regalia and prancing around in front of thirty mulafa-clad women, Neilson was injured in the groin and fell and hit his head. He then suffered the subsequent concussion and swelling (during a lesson on fending off the kids that try to sell mint).



Women attending the self-defense seminar, one of whom elicited screams and tears from Nielson.

"She caught 'em just perfect," said Neilson from his matella in Dieuk. "She was like an animal," he added, fists clenched, of the woman whose forceful foot sent him into a self-proclaimed "state of emotional bankruptcy."

The incident occurred at the Maison de Jeunes during a scheduled weekly animation in self-defense. "I was demonstrating our "No Means No" defense tactic when it happened," said Neilson.

Fati Kane, a first-time attendant who witnessed the event, was in the first row during the demonstration. "It sounded like someone popped a balloon in my face. There was a lot of crying and swearing," said Kane.

Mr. Neilson denies, adamantly, both swearing and crying.

"It was the adrenaline. There were no tears. I mean, look at me. I don't cry. I lift weights! And as for the swearing, I will go on record as saying that "whore" is not a swear word."

We'll let the Christian Coalition be the judge of that.

Neilson does not know if he will continue instructing his self-defense classes.

"I mean, we had a pretty good turnout there for a while. When I had to re-schedule for the tenth time I thought it was a waste, but after I started giving away bottles of water they were coming in droves."

Other witnesses tell the story differently than Mr. Neilson. Howli Ba, a local Casanova merchant and advocate of self-defense, corroborates Mrs. Kane's account. "He was babbling about Starla and round-house kicks to the face. He started asking for a volunteer and when Habi stood up he approached her and screamed "NOW" in her face. She reacted the same way anybody would!"

Neilson has not decided how the incident will affect the remainder of his service. "I don't think I will go home. I mean, Rocky VI isn't even out yet!"

Whatever happens, we can all rest assured that he indeed facilitated a cross-cultural exchange.

No charges have been filed at the time of print.

(Chalk Chat, Continued from page 9)

tion (clapping hands twice) or for students to speak (putting up hands).

- Be organised: plan, plan and plan again ! If you will be alone with groups decide how you will introduce yourself and plan a task to get to know students. What will you write on the board? How long will the activity last ? What will you do if they get too noisy?
- Be positive: smile, even if you are feeling a nervous wreck. Concentrate on giving students positive attention with encouraging smiles and praise for answering questions.

- Show real interest: listen to their answers and react "That's a good answer" "I like them too. Have you got their latest CD?" Keep your response as natural as possible.
- Make an effort to learn and use their names: Make name tags, cardboard name plates for desks or mark names on a seating plan of the room.
- Be patient: You may be the first native speaker they have ever met. Give them time to ask you questions and give them time to get used to your voice:
- Have fun: try to relax and enjoy yourself. A sense of humour helps too!

Divertissements

Your RIM Horoscopes



ARIES (Mar 21- Apr 19)

A fortuitous configuration of the cosmos shall yield great dividends to you out in the field. You will achieve total integration by introducing the concept of body shots to your village, substituting sniffing tobacco for salt and tea for tequila.



TAURUS (Apr 20- May 20)

The stars indicate that had you not accepted your PC RIM invitation, your profession would center around panhandling aggressively in a New Jersey bus station, decked out in a priest costume.



GEMINI (May 21- June 21)

You couldn't possibly care less about the fact that Saturn begins to orbit your sign around the first of February. Much more of an immediate concern will be posed by the seemingly incessant orbiting of your courtyard by a rather trollish and highly repugnant, muttering, hunchback *sheybanni*.



CANCER (June 22- July 22)

Take heed: the sun enters your

sign and exerts a strong influence throughout the winter months. And cancer is exactly what you will get unless you vigilantly apply SPF 45.



LEO (July 23- Aug 22)

Your idea of opening up a "Turban Outfitters" will be a grand success as long as the local market value of ironic secondhand tee-shirts remains high.



VIRGO (Aug 23- Sept 22)

Girl, you'll be a woman soon. Inshallah sometime around WAIST.



LIBRA (Sept 23- Oct 23)

With Venus going into retrograde, we shall see changes in your appearance. Cher, Björk, and David Bowie will be the celebrities who inspire you to maximize the sexiness of your local wardrobe.



SCORPIO (Oct 24- Nov 21)

Alas Scorpio, your plight in Mauritania is quite dismal. After being found hiding under a mat, you will suffer a fatal beating at the hands of a flip flop-wielding 8-year-old. Had you been sent to PC Mexico, you could at least have been embalmed in a bottle of tequila.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22- Dec 21)

As Neptune begins waxing and Mars pursues an as yet uncertain trajectory, you will concede to a painful and awkward arm hair removal session. While the immediate benefits remain unclear, it will be benevolent on a cosmic scale.



CAPRICORN (Dec 22- Jan 19)

An astronomical misfortune is incipient, but there is still time to ET. Michael Jackson is your future site mate. He will outperform you in his accommodations to the host culture by consistently donning a veil, and spending his entire living allowance on skin lightening cream and *mishwi*.



AQUARIUS (Jan 20- Feb 18)

Your (inane, deluded) love affair with parentheses is coming to a (bitter, long-overdue) close, and will take with it most of your (lame, contrived) identity as an author (and sooner than you think).



PISCES (Feb 19- Mar 20)

Jupiter enters your sign at the end of January, prompting your host mother to augment the piment in her banava recipe. This is likely to light a fire under Uranus.

By Professional Seer Heidi Gehret

Jake Break!

Jess and Aaron, congratulations on your new posts as editors of Nouakchott Notes. I consider it an honor and a privilege to write under such amazing and accomplished individuals as yourselves. I will expect strict discipline and demand of quality from both of you.

You asked me how site was going. Well, I have a fence going up slowly but surely. I have had some hook-ups with it. You know, like people wanting money for work that they pledged as a community contribution, people showing up to work and sitting and talking instead, those sorts of things.

I had these same problems in America with people not doing anything but complaining about everything that was done. That does not work in a communal operation where everyone is invited to play a role. But anyway, that is how it goes.

I need to re-calculate my times and schedules. I thought that it would take a week to build this fence, and this would be week three. However, work is steady and moving along.

You asked about play at site. Sorry, I don't play here. I work, sleep, write, read, and take a one-hour walk a day. I am saving up play for Christmas and New Years. I don't remember much about Christmas last year. I know I went to Obie's, watched "It's a Wonderful Life," and ate lots-o-food. I must have had a few drinks because I remember one of the embassy guys having to tell me, "No, your name is Jake. My name's Jeff." But anyway, this year it is New Years in Nouadhibou! Until then, I look forward to having a merry Christmas with all of you.



The Back Side

Swear-in and party

