



Newsletter of the Friends of Ghana

# The Talking Drum

Volume 14, Number 3

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## Profile: Alicia Sully, Roving Filmmaker

Submitted by Ken Autrey

Alicia Sully's interest in the Peace Corps came honestly; both parents were PCVs, her mother in Swaziland and her father



Alicia Sully on location.

in Colombia and Liberia. Following her graduation from SUNY-Purchase in 2006 with a degree in cinematography, she applied and was nominated for Ghana's deaf art teacher program.

Sully recalls, "I was very excited. I had studied visual arts seriously in a high school magnet art center and thought it would be a great chance to get back into it. Not to mention that film is a great medium for people who are hearing impaired."

However, instead, she was asked to go to Tanzania. But then, she says, "I got a phone call when on a kayaking trip with my family saying that I'd be going to Ghana after all, but with a water/sanitation program."

After this rather disorienting start and a two-day briefing in Philadelphia, she and 47 others in her training group flew to Accra for four days of meetings. After that, each volunteer was sent to visit with a volunteer already in the field, a program called "Vision Quest." She spent five days with a science/math teacher in the Lower Volta region and shortly thereafter joined the other trainees in Techiman. One of the most positive aspects of her training was her placement with a local family with three kids, whom she remained close to.

Before long, Sully was drawing on her background in the arts. During training, between language instruction and water/sanitation classes, she and several other volunteers worked with local students to write and produce a play for the community.

In late November, she proceeded to her assignment at Voggu in the Northern Region. In her blog <<http://marymeep.blogspot.com/>>, Sully wrote, "I am happy with my site. It is an hour outside of Tamale, a big central city, but I am in a small village

of 1,619 people. I will not have electricity or running water but I will have my own house. It is a new site near other new sites to focus on Guinea Worm eradication. My primary focus will be creative Health Education in the community of farmers. I will be encouraged to develop novel health education tools and programs."

Like Peter DiCampo (profiled in the Summer 2009 issue of The Talking Drum), she began immediately to look for ways to use her visual background to address the health issues she saw in the community. In April 2008, she and friends produced a video drama based on the guinea worm problem in the area.

Another project began to consume Sully's time, this one related to a health problem among northern women particularly. During training, she learned of the kayayo, women from northern towns who travel south, mostly to Kumasi and Accra, to work as porters in the markets, thereby earning money to bring home. An

**Sully:** Page 3, Column 1

## Aaron Williams Confirmed as Next Director of Peace Corps

From Peace Corps Polyglot, the blog of the NPCA



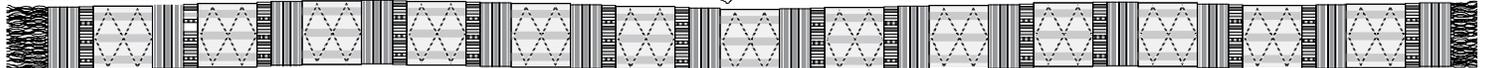
Newly Confirmed Peace Corps Director Aaron Williams

August 7, 2009. RPCV Aaron Williams (Dominican Republic 67-70) has been confirmed to become the 18th Director of the Peace Corps. The United States Senate unanimously confirmed his nomination today in one of its final actions before a five-week recess.

"The Peace Corps community is thrilled with Aaron Williams' rapid confirmation", said NPCA President Kevin Quigley. "We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Aaron and eagerly look forward to working with him to build a better and bolder Peace Corps that realizes much more of its promise."

During a non-controversial hearing on July 29th before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT) - also a Dominican Republic RPCV - indicated his hope the

**Williams:** Page 2, Column 2



## Officers of Friends of Ghana

Frank Yates  
President  
152 Sac Road, Unit 1B  
Sunrise Beach, MO 65079  
(573) 374-1070  
[fmyates@mac.com](mailto:fmyates@mac.com)

(Vacant)  
Vice President

Stephanie Arnold  
Secretary  
American Embassy  
2120 Cotonou Place  
Dulles, VA 20189-2120  
(703) 533-6771  
[msarnold@chicagogsb.edu](mailto:msarnold@chicagogsb.edu)

Debby Prigal  
Treasurer  
1625 Q St. NW, #207  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 265-3145  
[dprigal@aol.com](mailto:dprigal@aol.com)

## Other Leaders

Ken Autrey  
Newsletter Editor  
1649 Omarest Dr.  
Columbia, SC 29210  
(803) 731-9745  
[autreyken@gmail.com](mailto:autreyken@gmail.com)

Roger Myers  
Newsletter Layout Editor  
9355 Brentwood Street  
Westminster, CO 80021  
(303) 421-1853  
[rw.myers@q.com](mailto:rw.myers@q.com)

Ron Yamamoto  
Database Guru  
742 Arce Street.  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
(831) 724-6177  
[rkyamamoto@aol.com](mailto:rkyamamoto@aol.com)

# Message from FOG President Frank Yates

Greetings to fellow Friends of Ghana members.

Thanks to Debby Prigal for representing Friends of Ghana at the NPCA Annual General Meeting and Group Leaders Forum in Washington, DC on the last Saturday in June. Please read her excellent report in this newsletter.

Peter DiCampo has also contacted us with a request for funding the Kayayo film presentation in villages in northern Ghana. Please read about the film, by Alicia Sully, in this newsletter. Peter and Alicia need about \$10,000 to present the film. We may be able to fund some of these expenses from our Treasury.

I have been looking for Ghana-related iPhone applications in Apple's iTunes App Store. So far, I have found some travel applications and one game, Awele. I plan to write a review of them in the next issue of The Talking Drum. Please let me know if you have found some apps that are useful.

The Friends of Ghana group on the Connected Peace Corps site (<http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/>) now has 56 members. To join the Friends of Ghana group on the Connected Peace Corps site, click on the blue link "Join Friends of Ghana" on the right side above the array of Members photos. If you haven't yet joined, you can show brief information about yourself in your profile, post text messages, photos, videos, blogs, and comments to other members. As more of our members join this site, we can provide lists by year of service to facilitate the organization of reunions.



## Friends of Ghana Privacy Policy

Submitted by President Frank Yates

Annually, the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) provides Friends of Ghana (FoGh) access to the NPCA Database for the purpose of sharing the names and contact information of FoGh members. This exchange of data is essential for maintaining a complete, up-to-date database. The information shared include, but is not limited to: full

name; country of service; dates of service; home mailing address; email address; phone number; and spouse/partner name. This information is not sold or transferred to any third party by FoGh and has been and will be used strictly for communication purposes with our members.

FoGh will use the shared information received from NPCA and our members for 1) Recruitment and retention of members to FoGh and NPCA; 2) Helping Ghana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to organize reunions of their Peace Corps groups; and 3) Assisting requestors to find Ghana RPCVs by sharing the requestor contact information with the Ghana RPCV (allowing the Ghana RPCV to decide whether to make contact with the requestor).

FoGh may be asked to provide the information in our database to NPCA. The use, by NPCA, of the information contained in our database will be governed by the same policy as FoGh. Members of FoGh have the opportunity to decline to have their data shared with NPCA. If you do not wish to have your data shared with NPCA, please email Ron Yamamoto at [rkyamamoto@aol.com](mailto:rkyamamoto@aol.com), or write Ron at 742 Arce Street, Watsonville, CA 95076 to opt out. ★

Friends of Ghana Newsletter

## Friends of Ghana Online Newsletter

Submitted by Ken Autrey

Increasingly, we hope to rely on the online version of our newsletter to stay in touch with Friends of Ghana members. Newsletters will continue to be posted on our website: <http://www.friendsofghana.org>.

Our hope is that as many members as possible will agree to forego the printed newsletter in favor of the online version. There are several advantages of a web-based publication over a printed and mailed newsletter. It saves money that could better be spent supporting projects in Ghana, it provides more possibilities for photos and other graphics, it has the advantage of immediacy, and it is less cumbersome to produce and distribute. We will continue mailing newsletters to those who prefer this format. **But if you are willing instead to receive an e-mailed notice with a newsletter link, please e-mail Ron Yamamoto ([rkyamamoto@aol.com](mailto:rkyamamoto@aol.com)) if you haven't already done so, and tell him to add you to that list.** ★

**Williams:** (Cont. from Page 1, Column 2)

confirmation could come before the August recess and said on several occasions he is excited at the prospect of working with Williams. That sentiment was echoed by Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) who told Williams "I commend the President on your appointment."

Harris Wofford introduced Williams during the hearing, drawing comparisons to Peace Corps founder Sargent Shriver, adding "I am sure he would recognize Aaron Williams as the kind of leader the Peace Corps needs today."

"Peace Corps is a cost effective way for the United States to expand its humanitarian presence," Williams said he looks forward to working to strengthen, reform and grow the agency. Further information on the hearing and on Williams is available at the Peace Corps Polyglot website. ★

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**Sully:** (Cont. from Page 1, Column 2)

unfortunate side effect for some of these laborers is the need to resort to prostitution, with the accompanying threat of HIV / AIDS in order to survive.

Sully turned her drama and filmmaking skills to this problem, enlisting the help of others in Voggu to make a video in Dagbani. Part of her motivation was a video competition for HIV / AIDS in Africa that an Assistant Peace Corps Director told her about.

She explains the process as follows: "I chose a new counterpart, Abdulai, who had skills in art and technology (painting, radio repair, and carpentry). The story for the video was simple. A young girl goes Accra to work as a porter and returns with a lot of merchandise but dies of HIV / AIDS. We recruited a local woman as an actress, and she was excited about this. Then we cast the other roles and wrote the story together. The script was in Dagbani, so I only understood it fully when we subtitled it much later."

One of the challenges of video production was editing in a town that had no electricity.

A local entrepreneur charged admission for nightly video shows in the village using a TV and speakers operated by a generator. Says Sully, "Often we would attend the video show and plug into the generator. We worked in a room behind the TV, although it was loud. We charged our batteries with a solar panel. Sometimes we traveled to the Peace Corps Sub-office in Tamale to work."

Working from a ten-minute preliminary version of the kayayo story, Sully and her team developed a two-part twenty-minute film in Dagbani with English subtitles. At one point, she visited a kayayo community in Accra to meet some of the women. The videos are available on YouTube:

**Part I:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9IJ25rlhzE>

**Part II:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXdE1HEVoyk>

The success of this endeavor led to other video projects. Sully recalls, "Abdulai and I went to the Volta Region to work with two PCVs on a 25-minute video in Twi about family planning. We also led a HIV / AIDS movie making bike ride to 6 villages in the Tolon / Kumbungu District. Six to eight PCVs traveled on bikes every day to a different village. We split up, taught lessons on HIV / AIDS in the school or community, then brainstormed with the group to come up with a related video--whether drama, music or dance based. We taped each drama and in the evening showed it to the whole community."

After thirteen months as a PCV, Sully terminated, in part because the video projects were taking her away from her home village more and more. She says, "I loved my work with the Peace Corps, but editing video can take a lot of time and needs electricity! I think if I had been at a site with lights I would have never left the village."

In fact, after a brief return to the U.S., she did return to Voggu last November. She continued to edit and refine the kayayo videos and held a premier showing in the village this past March.

Since May, Sully has been working with What Took You So Long (WTYSL), a small multinational group of volunteers committed to publicizing the work of successful Non-Governmental Organizations in Africa. She learned of this group through Sebastian Lindstrom, one of its leaders, because of

Lindstrom's affiliation with a project in Kumasi.

The group is now in the middle of an ambitiously long journey using local transportation which started in Morocco and will proceed down the western coast of Africa to South Africa. Thus far, the team has traveled through Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Togo and is headed south for stops in Nigeria, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The group's itinerary in Ghana included visits to NGOs in Hain, Wa, Kumasi, and Accra.



*Alicia Sully behind the camera in Mauritania*

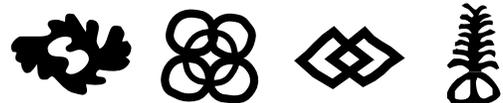
Sully's responsibility along the way has been to shoot and edit video spots on the various NGOs visited. These are available on the WTYSL website <<http://whattookyousolong.org/2009/06/what-took-you-so-long/>>

She states, "Right now we are putting clips online, mostly as teasers, to get people more interested in what we are doing. In the future the footage will be edited into a documentary or many sequences with more substance for a broader audience." The eventual goal is to raise awareness of—and funding for—the various organizations visited.

When her current odyssey with WTYSL ends, she hopes to collaborate with photographer Peter DiCampo on a tour around the Northern Region, publicizing their documentary work on kayayo women. (See the related article by DiCampo starting on page 4 in this issue of The Talking Drum.)

"Another plan," she says, "is to move to Liberia in January to make a film about the reintegration of child soldiers into modern life. Peter hopes to take part as a photographer. We will focus on true stories made by locals, for locals."

Despite her travels elsewhere in Africa, she says, "I don't think my future with Ghana will end. There are many more opportunities to explore. I have family there and right now I call it home. But I like to have many bases I can jump to. I am always looking for like-minded people to work with. Although I love the classics and refinement of the film medium, I love to experiment and help people find new ways of expressing themselves." ★



# Update on Peter DiCampo's Documentary Project in Ghana

Submitted by Peter DiCampo

*Editor's Note: The Summer 2009 Talking Drum contained a profile of RPCV documentary photographer Peter DiCampo. Recently, he sent the following update on his plans for continued work in Ghana.*

This November, I'll have yet another chance to give back to the communities that hosted me for two years of my life. Accompanied by filmmaker and former Ghana PCV Alicia Sully (See related article in this newsletter) and the NGO Camfed (Campaign for Female Education), I'll be embarking on an innovative and educational community outreach program in 20 villages across Ghana's Northern Region.

If you've spent much time in Accra's markets, or anywhere in Kumasi, you've most likely seen the kayayo porter girls lining the streets with their white basins, waiting for work. The kayayo are a class of thousands – nearly every woman or girl from the north travels south at some point in her life looking for work.



*Kayayo girls from northern Ghana wait for work at an intersection in Kumasi.*

In the cities, they sleep ten or twenty to a room in urban slums, carry heavy loads of goods on their heads for, at most, a few dollars a day (and usually much less than that), and often turn to prostitution to supplement their tiny incomes and have a roof over their heads. The practice of kayayo contributes to keeping the north's female population subservient and uneducated with increased susceptibility to rape, teen pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS.

Earlier this year, I received a grant from The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting to photograph the kayayo and tell their stories. Now, I'll take the finished project across the north in an effort to raise awareness amongst villagers on the conditions the kayayo live and work in.

Along with the photographs, Alicia will show a film on the same topic that Ghanaian villagers wrote, directed, and starred in. Camfed's enthusiastic local staff will give a presentation on the benefits of girl child education and help village women's and youth groups plan for alternatives to kayayo. In order to ensure sustainability, we are targeting villages that currently host PCVs, who can help to get income-generating projects off the ground in their respective communities.

The project is still dependent on funds. If you're interested in Friends of Ghana Newsletter

contributing, or would like more information, please contact me directly:

Peter DiCampo  
[peter.dicampo@gmail.com](mailto:peter.dicampo@gmail.com)  
(508) 471-7174  
120 Blackstone Street  
Mendon, MA 01756 ★

## National Peace Corps Association Meeting Report

Submitted by Debby Prigal

The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Group Leaders Forum (GLF) met in Washington, DC on Saturday, June 27, 2009.

The AGM opened with an upbeat treasurer's report announcing that the NPCA was in the black for the first time in a few years due largely to a \$500K grant from the Gates Foundation. Thus, the NPCA was able to pay off its line of credit. Expenses are also down.

However, like membership organizations of all types throughout the country, paid memberships are down. The group discussed reasons why, such as the amount of free material on the Internet that makes paying for information less necessary. The NPCA is currently looking into an alumni type model where everyone in a group is a subscriber and donations fund expenses.

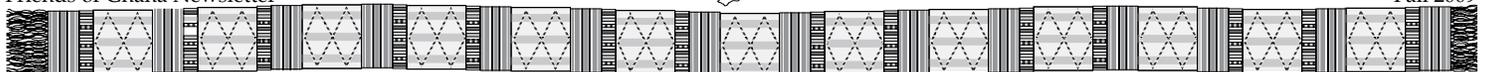
NPCA President Kevin Quigley discussed some past problems with the web server that delayed some rebates to groups and reassured the group that the problem had been fixed.

Then GLF participants discussed the issue of "virtual groups" and the social networking site [www.peacecorpsconnect.org](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org), which has almost 13,000 member profiles.

Discussion moved to the "More Peace Corps" campaign. NPCA staff described lobbying efforts to secure \$450 million for Peace Corps in FY2010. Good contacts have been made on Capitol Hill. The first afternoon session focused on the 50th anniversary and the role of RPCVs. Of the 137 affiliated groups, 56 have so far appointed liaisons for the celebrations. The second session discussed web site and media issues, and the new Africa Rural Connect.

The social gathering of the weekend took place the Friday evening before the meeting. Photos of PCVs in the inaugural parade were shown, as were photos of a recent "Bold New Peace Corps" rally at the White House. The 2009 Sargent Shriver Award for Distinguished Humanitarian Service was presented to John Hatch, creator of Village Banking and the micro-finance organization FINCA International. Timothy Shriver, Chair of Special Olympics and son of Sargent Shriver, presented the award. Representatives of the NPCA, Colgate-Palmolive, Women for Women and RESULTS were present.

After the ceremony, participants watched the Washington premiere of the film Youssou N'Dour: I Bring What I Love. N'Dour, a renowned pop singer in Senegal, shared his message of peace, understanding and tolerance of other countries, cultures and religions. ★



# President Obama Visits Ghana

From BBC News reports

During a one-day visit to Ghana on July 11, President Barack Obama, on his first trip to sub-Saharan Africa since taking office, said Africa must take charge of its own destiny in the world.

After a breakfast meeting with Ghanaian President John Atta Mills, Obama told the Ghanaian parliament that good governance was vital for development. Major challenges awaited Africans in the new century, he said, but vowed that the U.S. would help the continent.



President Barack Obama and Ghanaian President John Atta Mills confer during a breakfast meeting.

The U.S. president's trip came after a summit of eight of the world's most powerful nations, held in Italy.

Ghana was chosen as the destination for the president's visit because of its strong democratic record.

After his speech, Obama headed to Cape Coast Castle, a seaside fortress converted to the slave trade by the British in the 17th Century. He was accompanied by his two daughters and his wife Michelle, a descendant of African slaves.



President Barack Obama strides from the podium following remarks at Cape Coast Castle.

People crowded into a public area outside the fort to greet Obama, with those unable to get a place in the throng climbing onto nearby roofs and filling balconies just to catch a glimpse of the U.S. leader.

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Speaking after a tour of the fort, Obama said the fort should be a source of hope as well as repository of painful memories. "It reminds us that as bad as history can be, it's always possible to overcome," he said.

"I have come here to Ghana for a simple reason," the U.S. president said: "The 21st Century will be shaped by what happens not just in Rome or Moscow or Washington, but by what happens in Ghana as well."

Obama said four key areas were critical to the future of Africa and of the entire developing world, citing democracy, opportunity, health and the peaceful resolution of conflict. He hailed Ghana's democratic society, calling for strong parliaments, honest police, independent judges and a free press across Africa.

However, there were some blunt words directed at other countries, many of which have been undermined by despotic leaders and corrupt politicians.

"Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions," Mr Obama told his audience.

"No person wants to live in a society where the rule of law gives way to the rule of brutality and bribery. That is not democracy, that is tyranny."

He pledged to continue strong U.S. support for public healthcare initiatives in Africa, and called for sensible use of natural resources such as oil in the face of the threat of climate change.

He left after dark on Saturday, offering a final thanks to Ghana. "As somebody whose father comes from Africa I am pleased this visit has been particularly meaningful for me," Obama said. ★

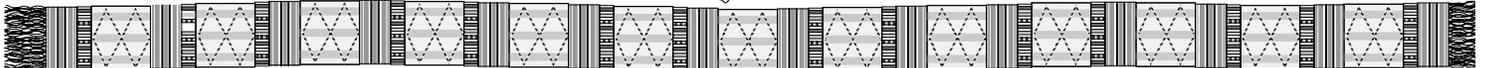
## Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Plans

Submitted by Debby Prigal

Plans are shaping up for Peace Corps 50th anniversary. Celebrations will be in Washington, DC, throughout the US and in all current countries. The first event will be on October 14, 2010 in Ann Arbor, MI where presidential candidate John Kennedy first talked about "A Call to Service" in the developing world to gathered students. The year-long celebration will end in September 22 to 25, 2011 with a series of events in Washington, DC, marking the anniversary of congressional funding for Peace Corps.

On March 1, 2011, the anniversary of the introduction of Peace Corps legislation, service awards will be presented at the JFK Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, MA. Details for other events have not yet been released. However, a celebration will definitely be held in Ghana, as in all other Peace Corps countries. As Peace Corps "first" country Ghana is likely to have a larger than average celebration - the first PCVs to serve anywhere in the world swore in on August 4, 1961 in Accra.

Friends of Ghana will provide details on events in Ghana, and elsewhere, as they become available. ★



# Help Us Find New FOG Members!

(Pass this form on to any Ghana RPCVs you may know.)

Yes! Sign me up in the Friends of Ghana and the National Peace Corps Association

## Membership:

- Regular: \$50 (\$35 for NPCA, \$15 for FOG)  
 Add \$10 for overseas mail  
 Special Donation to FOG \$ \_\_\_ NPCA \$ \_\_\_ (thank you!)

**Newsletter Delivery Preference:**  Regular Mail  Email  
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- Newsletter  Membership  Projects  
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## Please make check payable to NPCA and mail to:

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*NPCA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Membership dues and contributions may be tax deductible. Consult your tax advisor.*

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Current Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Current Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Country(ies) of Service \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_

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Assignment(s) \_\_\_\_\_

I only wish to join Friends of Ghana at this time.

**For FOG membership only, enclose a check for \$15 Payable to Friends of Ghana and mail to:**

Debby Prigal, Treasurer  
1625 Q St. NW, #207  
Washington, DC 20009

  
**The Talking Drum**  
Newsletter of the Friends of Ghana  
c/o Susan Caster  
310 Bloomfield Ct.  
Roswell, GA 30075

