



Friends of Mongolia™

Spring 2008 Newsletter

Volume IX, Issue I

Spring 2008

Special points of interest:

- FOM Scholarship begins 3rd year
- \$34,000 sought for Gobi to Ohio program
- New officers and board members elected
- Bylaws amended

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From the Editor

Friends of Mongolia continued to expand its programs during the winter and spring of 2008 on a foundation of resources provided by its members and other supporters. The organization raised more than \$15,000 during 2007, and it looks positioned to raise this amount and more in 2008.

Interest in Mongolia continues to increase year by year, and there is no better example of this than Mongolia being chosen by Middletown, OH as the focus of their Middfest Cultural Festival October 3-5, 2008. This is a large event that attracts approximately 100,000 people each year to experience the cultural, art, and food of a particular country.

Friends of Mongolia will contribute to this event by organizing a troupe of musicians and dancers from a small rural school in the Gobi desert to perform at area schools and the festival in Ohio. Friends of Mongolia has begun raising funds for the program, which will require approximately \$30,000. At the time of publishing this newsletter FOM had received funds and pledges of approximately \$10,000.

Friends of Mongolia is a fascinating organization when you think about it. It is very small, filling a niche interest of a few hundred people who have a strong interest or connection to Mongolia. It is somewhat diffuse, and yet the organization is able to raise funds to initiate a whole host of programs that promote

education and cultural exchange. This is in no small measure due to the commitment of its members and supporters like you who contribute whatever you can whenever you can to the organization.

The Middfest program is just one of many activities FOM is involved in. The FOM Scholarship is entering its 3rd year, and FOM has the resources to expand the program to support more students than last year. The scholarship program has funded nearly 20 students in 2 years, and it has had a profound impact on students lives. It costs on average \$600 per year for each student to attend a technical school or college in Mongolia, so modest donations of \$10, \$20, and \$50 have a noticeable impact on the program.

FOM strives to improve the scholarship program, so this year FOM began conducting extracurricular activities with the FOM Scholars. The first of these activities was a group dinner at a Korean restaurant which was highlighted in the fall newsletter. During the winter the group of scholars visited the US embassy to meet with the ambassador. This is highlighted in this issue of the FOM Newsletter.

FOM has also continued to expand its community development program, and it has raised several thousand dollars to fund the program into the foreseeable future. The program was announced in the

Spring 2007 newsletter, and numerous people have donated to the program since then. More about the program is described in this issue.

In terms of community outreach and education, FOM has also continued to organize public events in the Washington, DC area. This issue of the newsletter highlights a discussion forum featuring the Asia Foundation Mongolia country director co-organized by FOM in April. FOM has held similar events in the past, and plans to hold more in the future.

Finally, FOM elected a new slate of officers and board members at the beginning of 2008. FOM is dependent on the hard work of its officers and board, and as the organization continues to grow, we are looking for more people to contribute their skills, labor, and time to the organization in various formal capacities.

FOM is a grassroots organization of the digital age. It exists because of two very important factors: the ability of individuals to communicate in unprecedented ways and the passion and commitment of those individuals to initiate positive change. This newsletter highlights more examples of what is possible if people work together in a formal way. FOM continues to make a difference, and we hope all our members and supporters take the time to congratulate themselves for making FOM a thriving organization. □

—Brian M. White



Graduation in the Gobi. 2008-2009 FOM scholars might be among the graduating class.

“Khan Bank has continued to provide enough funding for six scholarships each year.”

FOM Scholarship Begins 3rd Year

The FOM Scholarship program is entering its third year, and it continues to grow, offering young Mongolians opportunities to attend college in Mongolia. The program was initiated in 2005 with generous funding support from Khan Bank, and Khan Bank has continued to provide enough funding for six scholarships each year. FOM's members and other supporters have also increased their contributions to the program, and in 2007-2008 the program provided scholarships to 12 students. This year the program aims to support 15-18 students.

Individual contributions have increased significantly, and families such as the Crofts, Heldenfels, and Munsons have also helped raise funds for honorary scholarships. Not to be outdone by family initiatives, the M-7s also raised enough money for a scholarship this year. A full year's tuition currently averages about \$600 per year at Mongolian technical schools and universities.

In the past the program has focused exclusively on

providing scholarships to rural males who national trends indicate are least represented in higher education in Mongolia. The expansion of the program, however, has also brought opportunities to focus on females from rural communities as well. The following are all the scholarship types available this year.

F O M M e n ' s Scholarship: Targets young men graduating from high school and current college/university students from the rural areas of Mongolia who show strong personal drive and determination.

M - 7 W o m e n ' s Scholarship: Funding generously donated by former Peace Corps volunteers who served in Mongolia in 1996-1998 will support one female student studying in any field. The M-7 group has chosen to support women's education because even though more women attend college than men, women still face significant barriers in Mongolian society.

The Stanley Munson Memorial Engineering and Vocational Scholarship:

This scholarship for one student was given by the Munson family in loving memory of Stanley Munson, the grandfather of a former Peace Corps volunteer in Mongolia. He was an electrical engineer and enjoyed woodworking and other such activities in his spare time.

The Croft Family Bayanhongor Soum, Bayanhongor Aimag or Bayanchandmon Soum, Tuv Aimag Scholarship: The Croft family, Layton and Allison and their two sons, have graciously funded several scholarships this year. Layton served in the Peace Corps in Bayanhongor Soum and Allison served in Bayanchandmon soum and this scholarship is to honor students from those two towns.

Applications for all scholarships are available on the FOM website (www.friendsofmongolia.org) in both English and Mongolian. The deadline for submitting the applications is July 1, 2008. FOM will announce the awards in mid-July. □



Bill Infante gives an interview (top), and the audience poses some tough questions for the forum (bottom).

FOM Co-Organizes Discussion Forum

In April FOM in cooperation with The Asia Foundation, held an event at the Mongolian School of Arlington entitled: "Securing our Future Community, Environment, and Governance in Mongolia."

The forum featured Mr. William Infante; The Asia Foundation's Country Representative in Mongolia and was moderated by Ambassador Alphonse La Porta, former Ambassador to Mongolia and FOM Board member. The event had an excellent turnout and the audience included members from Friends of Mongolia, the Mongolian Cul-

tural Center, and the Mongolian Community of the Washington, DC Area (MCWA). The discussion focused on the environmental issues currently facing Mongolian communities, including natural resources management, local development, and the quality of governance.

The informed and interested audience contributed to a lively question and answer session during the forum. Participants also had the opportunity to enjoy Mongolian food including hushuur prepared by the Mongolian Barbeque restaurant in Washing-

ton D.C. and buuz prepared by Ms. Khandmaa Wyckoff, a teacher at the Mongolian school and active member of Friends of Mongolia.

This forum was part of other public events FOM has organized or directly supported in the last few years, which have included academic panels and cultural events.

In the coming months FOM will organize a similar forum style event focused on examining the role of the U.S. Peace Corps in Mongolia's sustainable development. □

FOM Scholars Meet US Ambassador

US Ambassador Mark C. Minton took time from his busy schedule to meet with the FOM Scholars at the US Embassy in Mongolia in December. The purpose of the meeting was to allow the FOM Scholars a chance to have an informal conversation with a prominent figure working in Ulaanbaatar. The scholars used the opportunity to ask questions about how Ambassador Minton became a foreign service officer, what he did as a college student to prepare for his career, and what advice he would give them to prepare for their futures while in college.

The scholars learned that Ambassador Minton worked for the daily student newspaper while he was a student at Columbia University, where he earned a B.A. in literature. He stressed several times that the FOM Scholars should use their college years to experience new things and to participate in activities outside their specialized fields of study. He recalled how during his masters degree program at Yale University, where he was studying History, he audited an African Art course simply because he had a desire to learn something new and interesting outside his prescribed course schedule. He told the scholars that they should find ways to expand their knowledge of the world

through participation in extracurricular activities.

Ambassador Minton also spoke of the strengthening relationship between the United States and Mongolia, and the recent agreement between the two governments to improve infrastructure in Mongolia with a \$285 million Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC) agreement. Ambassador Minton arrived in Mongolia in September 2006 for a three year tour, and the MCC agreement was a significant accomplishment for him and his embassy staff. This major accomplishment complimented many small but significant activities over the year that demonstrated his commitment both professionally and personally to strong relations between the two countries. He has remained a very accessible government official meeting with local US and Mongolian citizens both formally and informally on a regular basis, and he has been a strong promoter of Peace Corps and Friends of Mongolia. His meeting with the FOM Scholars further solidified this reputation as an approachable and affable person, and he expressed his pride as a dues paying member of Friends of Mongolia that, even if measured in pennies, he had personally contributed in some way to the success of

the FOM Scholarship Program for 2007-2008.

The FOM Scholars had several opportunities to ask Ambassador Minton questions related to his work as Ambassador and his personal life. For most of the scholars Ambassador Minton was the most prominent figure they had had a chance to meet in their young lives. As stipulated in the program's requirements, FOM Scholars must come from areas outside of Mongolia's capital city Ulaanbaatar, because the program focuses on providing underrepresented rural males opportunities to study at the post-secondary level. Several of them were noticeably nervous and impressed by the facilities at the embassy. The meeting overall was a great success, and Friends of Mongolia and the FOM Scholars were extremely grateful for Ambassador Minton contributing to the program in such a meaningful way by sharing his time with the group.

For more information about the program visit the FOM Scholarship section of the FOM website. Friends of Mongolia's resident Mongolian representatives are planning meetings such as this one, especially with prominent Mongolian business leaders and officials, for the 2008-2009 scholarship program. □



Amb. Minton and the FOM Scholars (top), Amb. Minton hands out souvenirs (bottom).

“He told the scholars that they should find ways to expand their knowledge of the world through participation in extracurricular activities.”

FOM Scholars Appear on Mongolian Television

Several of FOM's 2007-2008 scholars recently appeared on the Mongolian television show “Let's Sing Together.” The show is produced by the National Education Channel, a public station primarily modeled after PBS in the United States. The show uses English language pop songs as a way of teaching English to people of all ages.

The show is hosted by Anne Riordan (M-14) and James Tallant, with guitar accompaniment by N. Chimgee. The FOM Scholars participated in the show as the in-studio audience that sings along and interacts with Anne, James, and Chimgee as they introduce the lyrics of the song and, of course, sing to-

gether as the show's title suggests.

FOM Co-Director Sadie Munson is the producer of the show, which provided the opportunity for scholars, as well as FOM In-Country Representative Munkhzul, an exciting opportunity to not only participate in a television show, but also to see how one is produced. □



Munk-Erdene, Munkhzul, and Gungajav pose for a photo between takes.



Hanhongor musicians.

**“\$10 donations
or \$10,000
donations bring
these
wonderfully
talented
students that
much closer to
the goal of
bringing the
Gobi to Ohio.”**



Hanhongor dancer.

Gobi to Ohio Fundraising Campaign

Friends of Mongolia has begun raising money to support a program to bring dancers and musicians from the Hanhongor School of Performing Arts in South Gobi Province to participate in the 2008 Middfest International cultural festival in Middletown, Ohio, which in 2008 will showcase and celebrate Mongolia's culture and people.

Twelve students from this secondary school in the Gobi Desert will perform traditional dances and music at the festival and schools in southwest Ohio from September 27th to October 6th, 2008. This program is an exciting opportunity for talented students from a remote part of the world to share their culture with

people in the heartland of America. The students will participate in home stays and visit local attractions, also providing them the opportunity to experience the dynamism of modern American life.

In order to send these 14 students and 2 adult chaperones, Friends of Mongolia is working with Middfest International, Hanhongor School, and other partners to raise \$34,000 for international travel. Middfest International will provide support for travel and lodging within the United States, and Hanhongor School will provide support for travel and lodging in Mongolia. That leaves just over \$2,100 per person for roundtrip airline

tickets, passports, and other travel documents and incidentals.

Friends of Mongolia is a US registered 501(c)3 non-profit, education and cultural exchange organization. Donations made to Friends of Mongolia for this program are tax deductible in the United States. Please provide as much support as you can, as \$10 donations or \$10,000 donations bring these wonderfully talented students that much closer to the goal of bringing the Gobi to Ohio. You can donate to this program by using the form on page 7 of this newsletter or by visiting the FOM website at www.mongoliacenter.org/donate. □

Gobi Facts

- Omnogobi (South Gobi) Province's population density is 0.3 people per sq km.
- Hanhongor's population is 3,500, with approximately 500 people living in the village center.
- Hanhongor Secondary School is a performing arts school for students in grades 7-11th as well as a general education school for students in 1-11th grade.
- Approximately 340 students, 24 teachers, and 17 workers are at the school.
- 80 students take performing arts classes including the morin huur, shanz, wind instruments, drawing, and dance.
- Approximately half of the students are from the countryside and during the school year live in the school dormitories or with relatives in the village center.
- Students pay 20,000 tugriks (\$18) a year to be music students and borrow their musical instruments and costumes from the school.
- Performing art students attend their music and dance lessons in the afternoon at the community center.

Ohio and Middfest Facts

- 50% of the United States population lives within a 500 mile radius of Columbus.
- Ohio has an area of 116,103 sq miles. It ranks 34th in state size.
- Ohio is known as the Buckeye State. A Buckeye is a nut.
- Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. He was from Wapakoneta, Ohio.
- Ohio became the 17th state on March 1, 1803 .
- Cleveland became the world's first city to be lighted electrically in 1879.
- Middfest attracts regional Midwestern audiences of approximately 100,000 each year.
- Over 1,000 volunteers bring Middfest to reality: 300 individuals work year-round to develop programs for the final event, which culminates the first weekend in October each year.
- Information about Middfest educational projects is disseminated to approximately 50 schools in southwest Ohio.

Fact Sources: www.50states.com/facts/ohio.htm and www.middfestinternational.org/

National Center Against Violence

In the early part of 2008 Friends of Mongolia received word from National Center Against Violence (NCAV) in Tov Aimag (Tov Province) that the apartment used by the center was being seized by the provincial government. In 2005 Friends of Mongolia was the largest donor, contributing over \$8,000 to the project, to purchase the apartment and establish the center, which also received support from the Asia Foundation, Mercy Corps, and the US Embassy. The news of the seizure was extremely troubling.

The circumstances of the seizure were relayed in bits and pieces, but it became clear that a program officer working for NCAV at the time the apartment was purchased surreptitiously placed her own name on the apartment deed. She then claimed in early 2008

that, in fact, the apartment that housed the shelter was hers and she wanted to donate it to the provincial government, oddly and ironically, to open a human rights center. NCAV took the issue to court at the provincial level and lost the case.

Upon appealing the case in the national courts, NCAV contacted all the major donors to request official letters stating the apartment and all items within it had been purchased with the intent of establishing a domestic violence shelter. Friends of Mongolia quickly responded to this request and provided a letter.

The program officer, for her part, claimed that she had purchased the apartment with her own money, and seemed to base her entire defense on the hope that NCAV would

have no way of disproving this claim. The official letters from the donors along with extremely good record keeping on the part of NCAV made her defense all the more tenuous leading up to the appeal. The case went to the national courts, and NCAV won the case. The program officer had two weeks to appeal the decision, but she did not. As such, the courts ordered the provincial government to modify the apartment deed to reflect that it was owned by NCAV.

Although things appeared bleak when NCAV first contacted Friends of Mongolia, everyone was pleased to see justice carried the day in this case. The shelter continues to operate and provide services to victims of domestic violence. □



Scholars Honor the Girvin family at this year's award ceremony.

“FOM has been grateful to participate as an active contributor to the Girvin Scholarship Program over the last two years.”

FOM Grant Program Continues to Grow

The FOM community development grant program received a significant boost during the year from \$6,000 in donations from members and supporters. The program was first announced in spring 2007, and it is intended to support small scale community projects in Mongolia, and occasionally in the US. Since that time FOM has disbursed approximately \$2,000 to three community projects in

Dornod, Dundgovi, and Khovd Aimags (Provinces).

The program is aimed at providing small amounts of money critical to completing community focused activities, especially in education and cultural exchange. The application for the program is on the FOM website at www.friendsofmongolia.org.

Those who are interested in donating to the program can do so online at

www.friendsofmongolia.org/donate. Or, you can donate by using the donation form on page 7 of this newsletter. Even small contributions of \$10, \$20, or \$50 go a long way, and FOM encourages individuals to do a little fundraising among their friends and family because \$50 times 5 people is enough to potentially fund a project in a worthy community. □

FOM and Girvin Scholarship Cooperation

FOM completed its second year of cooperating with the Girvin Scholarship Program by disbursing scholarship funds to students in Mongolia and managing the Mongolia related administrative aspects of the program.

The Girvin Scholarship Program was established in honor of Matthew Girvin who

died in a helicopter crash in Mongolia in 2001 while on assignment with UNICEF. The program supports students in health sciences, medicine, and social work.

This year the scholars in the program honored the Girvin family with a certificate of recognition for their continued support of the scholarship program, and

FOM representatives were on hand at the scholarship award ceremony to share in the gratitude expressed by the students.

FOM has been grateful to participate as an active contributor to this program over the last two years, and it looks forward to contributing to the program in the years that follow. □



Girvin Scholarship recipients.



In-Country Representative Munkzul (Zula) graduated from University this spring.

“If you did something noteworthy, then chances are someone, somewhere in Mongolia still talks about it occasionally.”



Enkh and his piece of Peace Corps history.

New Officers Elected

A new slate of officers began their duties on March 1, 2008. Each January FOM holds officer elections, and this year's elections ushered in minor changes to the organization. Shawn Kairis (M-12) stepped down as Membership Coordinator, and Ariel Wyckoff (M-11) left his position as Co-Director to replace Shawn. Diana Fernandez (M-15) stepped in to fill the vacant Co-Director position, and Sadie Munson (M-13) stayed on for another year as the other Co-Director. Brian White (M-13) accepted another year as Communications Coordinator, and Jason Stewart (M-13) graciously acquiesced to pleas for him to stay on another year as Treasurer in spite of his over extended schedule.

As is often the case, each officer ran unopposed and secured a majority of votes cast from the membership using an online ballot. The officers are the driving force behind FOM, and it requires a serious time commitment to serve, which may explain the lack of electoral competition on the ballot. The significant time commitment without countervailing financial compensation is probably a significant vetting instrument.

In addition to the officers, FOM also elected two new members to the Board of Directors on the same ballot. G. Ganzorig and D. Enkhbaatar join the board with long histories of association with FOM and Peace Corps. The Board of Directors provides governance oversight and ensures that FOM operates within its stated mandates as a non-profit, educational organization. Board members are elected by the membership for 3 year terms, and they are afforded voting rights for operational decisions.

In somewhat related news, FOM In-Country Representative Munkzul, known around FOM as Zula, graduated from her University this spring. Congratulations Zula! □

FOM Amends Bylaws

Friends of Mongolia amended its corporate bylaws at the beginning of the year using an online vote of its membership. The amendments changed the wording of 3 sections to more accurately reflect how FOM operates in practice. The following are the amended sections.

1. Article V .3 and references contained in all Articles this amendment to first point: "The title of Program Co-Coordinator is hereby changed to Co-Director." (adopted 01/03/2008)

2. Article V .7: Replace previous text with "Nominations for elective positions shall be accepted annually from December 1 until January 10. Electronic balloting by the membership will commence no later than Jan 15 and conclude no later than Jan 31. Terms of elective office shall commence on March 1." (adopted 01/03/2008)

3. Article VI .2: Replace previous text with "Annually, the Chairperson and retiring elected members of the board shall process nominations and conduct elections as outlined above for officers." (adopted 01/03/2008) □

New Board Member Shares Peace Corps History

D. Enkhbaatar was recently elected a member of the Board of Directors of FOM, but his relationship with Peace Corps volunteers goes all the way back to the beginning. He was a counterpart and host to M-1s through M-7s in Bayankhongor Aimag, as well as trainer in several pre-service trainings for volunteers. Enkhbaatar, like several of the long time employees of Peace Corps, can tell countless stories about the early days of Peace Corps in Mongolia and the various personalities that have had both positive and negative impacts on the program. If you did something noteworthy, then chances are someone, somewhere still talks about it occasionally.

In a recent conversation with Enkhbaatar, he showed the editor a box of markers that his M-1 volunteer gave to him as a gift in 1992. Enkhbaatar remembered how rare things like markers were at the time, as even food was a very rare commodity. The markers still work to this day, and Enkhbaatar has offered to donate them to the "Peace Corps Mongolia Museum" if ever one is established.

Do you have any interesting stories about life in Mongolia, being a volunteer, or FOM? Please send them to bwhite@mongoliacenter.org for possible inclusion in the FOM Newsletter. □

Friends of Mongolia Membership and Donation Form

Your Contact Information

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Phone: _____
 E-mail: _____

Why Membership?

Membership Dues are an important source of funds. Your membership dues are what make FOM possible. In addition, membership allows you to stay directly connected to Mongolia and PCVs.

Membership Options

- \$25 FOM Individual \$45 FOM Family (2 Individuals)
- \$50 FOM/NPCA Joint Individual \$50 FOM/Mongolia Society Joint Individual

Donation Options

Gobi to Ohio Donation

Community Grant Donation

Scholarship Fund Donation

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$_____ |

Total Amount Enclosed \$_____

Please make checks out to Friends of Mongolia.

US Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 44132,
Washington, DC 20026

Email Contacts:

members@friendsofmongolia.org
admin@friendsofmongolia.org

You can also join FOM and donate online at www.friendsofmongolia.org

Thank you for your contribution to Friends of Mongolia!

Friends of Mongolia is a US Registered 501(c)3 not-for-profit, education organization. Donations and membership dues may be tax deductible.

FRIENDS OF
MONGOLIA

PO Box 44132
Washington, DC 20026

www.friendsofmongolia.org

Friends of Mongolia (FOM) is an incorporated 501(c)3 not-for-profit, education organization operating in both Mongolia and the United States. It is an affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association and its membership includes both Americans and Mongolians. It is organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational and developmental purposes. Friends of Mongolia exists to develop partnerships with the people of Mongolia in furtherance of cultural exchange and human development.

Special Contributors to the FOM Mission

General Fund:

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Patrick Sommerville
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John Thoreson
Scott Weinhold
Anonymous

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FOM Newsletter:

Diana Fernandez
Sarah Munson
Ariel Wyckoff



And, of course, all of Friends of Mongolia's Members,
Thank You!