



THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE

Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley

POB 1543, Paonia, CO 81428

WEB SITES: rotary.org rotary5470.org northforkrotary.org

Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22

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Guest Editor: Bain Weinberger

LAST MEETING: June 18, 2020 (Virtual Meeting held via Zoom)

President Coombe presided.

Visiting Rotarians: Peter Jeschofnig – Glenwood Springs Sunset club

Other Guests: none

Key Guest: No key guest

(Annette now has the key).

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- We had 56% turnout for the Zoom meeting today.
- The June 25th meeting ends the Rotary Fiscal Year. Paul Harris donations should be sent to Treasurer Bishop between now and July 1st.
- As it would now be legally possible for Rotary to meet in person in Town Park, a poll of the members was taken regarding who would be comfortable meeting in person. Members expressed concerns regarding safety and other issues. It was decided to continue meeting via Zoom for the time being.

PROGRAM: Friends of Guéoul

Judy Beggs introduced Elke McGuire the new Executive Director of Friends of Guéoul. She was born in Germany, near Frankfort. She speaks several languages, and is currently learning Wolof, the language most widely spoken Senegal. Ms. Beggs had been the previous Executive Director for 15 years and is still actively involved on the Board. Ms. McGuire began working for Friends of Guéoul in November of 2019.

Ms. McGuire showed a PowerPoint presentation consisting primarily of photographs of the students and their families, staff and facilities of Friends of Guéoul.

She began by thanking Rotary for having been a big help to Friends of Guéoul over the years.

A recent focus has been of providing learning technology, both hardware and software, to enable and enhance the education of the students. Backpacks with school supplies and personal items are also provided to the students.



Friends of Guéoul runs a small learning center where the girls study in the afternoon after their public-school classes, on days of no school and during the Summer. Conditions are very difficult with unreliable electricity and internet, no air conditioning, few fans and no running water in a very hot environment. It is a very remote area of the country.

The current space is being rented, but is not adequate to the need. There are 60 computers in storage that cannot be used due to lack of space. Adult education, which is also available as part of the educational software being employed, could be added if there was more space. They are currently fund raising and looking for land in hopes of establishing a second learning center.

Each year, a group of 14-15 girls is chosen to participate in the program. Each family is visited in person to evaluate the prospective student and her family. Financial support and other assistance is provided to the family to encourage them to allow their student to remain with the program. Over the last 13 years, roughly 200 girls have participated in the program and very few do not complete it. Two of the girls are now in college. Lack of role models is a problem. Girls are encouraged to return to Guéoul after graduation. They are also encouraged to delay marriage and child birth while they complete their educations.

With Rotary support, a Community College is being built (slowly) in Guéoul. A hospital is also under construction. Public education is mostly inadequate at the elementary level, but improves through middle and high school.

Friends of Guéoul has established themselves as an organization in Senegal to allow for federal grants and local donations.

Senegal is currently shut down due to Coronavirus. There are some identified cases in neighboring towns, but none has been identified in Guéoul as of yet. PPE supplies are being gathered to allow for an anticipated re-opening of the school when conditions permit.

Senegal is considered to be one of the safer and more stable countries in Africa. The government is democratic. The U.S. keeps a large presence there. The economy is fairly good in comparison to other African countries. Peanuts are a primary crop. Rice is also being cultivated, but requires clearing forests with attendant negative impacts.

“It is all about the education of the poorest girls in a little town in west Africa.”

UPCOMING MEETING PROGRAMS:

Date	Speaker	Program	Member
6/25/19	Business Meeting	New Officers installed	

