

Takitaki

SPC assists FRIEND to expand range of products

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), through its EU-funded Facilitating Agricultural Commodity Trade (FACT) Project, is assisting FRIEND with development of trade in its value-added agricultural produce.



A dried fruit medley

Fiji is oversupplied with unhealthy snack foods and poor diets which are contributing to the rise in lifestyle related diseases, especially diabetes. With SPC/FACT support it is envisaged that local cottage industries for nutritious tropical dried fruits can be developed by FRIEND. To begin with, FACT has funded a value chain study of dried tropical fruits especially papaya, banana, mango and pineapple.

It is also supporting the developing state-of-the-art hybrid and solar driers to be used by FRIEND. These consultancies, undertaken by Mr Michael Finau-Brown and Mr



Dried Pineapples Slices

John Bennett, are currently in progress. Apart from these studies, Mr Manasa Katonivaliku, FACT technical expert, has also been reviewing food safety, quality control and nutritional aspects of their "FRIEND's Fiji Style" Products. FACT complements efforts aimed at enhancing regional cooperation and integration: this includes the policy commitment of European Union in the Cotonou Agreement in facilitating the integration of the Pacific ACP into the regional and global economies.

The FACT project is aimed at poverty alleviation and through FRIEND it aims to better target the local communities through grassroots development.

Dried Pawpaw

*By Vinesh Prasad, Information Assistant,
FACT Project, SPC*



'Birds and Bats' ...audition!!



A group of seven enthusiastic youth were selected for a spot in "Birds and Bats" play-back theatre. Auditions were held at Natokowaqa Hall on the 20th of January this

year.

WAC (Womens Action for Change), an NGO based in Suva, together with FRIEND conducted special auditions and interviews with the participants to be part of the project called



FACE (FRIEND's Art Culture Enterprise) which is funded by European Union and falls under FRIEND's Youth Development Programme.

FACE is designed for youth working towards identifying their talent and skills. It incorporates dance, music and theatre with the goal of later developing it into an income generating project. The classes not only provide these learned programs but also aid in the development of the youth's self esteem, confidence and public speaking and the art of listening and communication skills.



The group of seven are now near completion of the first phase of their training and will be ready to go out into the

communities with their messages on various social issues affecting Fiji from next month.

By J Nawaikula

Lautoka Central Students Come to FRIEND

The FRIEND Office received a very enthusiastic group of young visitors this month when a group of Class 8 students from Lautoka Central Primary School popped into the office brimming with questions.



Thumbs up for the camera

The students were on a research mission for their project titled 'How organizations help our communities' and FRIEND was part of a list of organizations they had wanted to work with. The YDP coordinators were put in the firing line of a volley of questions, 'How did FRIEND start? How does the IGP of chutneys and pickles help the workers? How do your programs help the communities?' Not surprisingly, the children knew FRIEND as an organization that does chutneys and pickles! The students later took a familiarization tour around the office and looking at the card IGP made by youths and the chutneys and pickles IGP made by women.



A New Peace Corps Volunteer at FRIEND

Originally from Chicago, Illinois, U.S. Peace Corps volunteer **Sarah Taylor** is finding her place at the Lautoka FRIEND office. She has been inundated into the organization with yearly planning meetings, brainstorming sessions, and youth activities. She is impressed by the unique work FRIEND does in the community, and its commitment to the organization's growth in the near future. Sarah states that she is "excited to work with such a progressive and passionate NGO that is dedicated to the empowerment of local communities and individuals."



Sarah (red) with her sister, Megan in a photo from 'back home'

A Youth Profile...

Anastasia Giblin has been a youth volunteer for FRIEND since 2007. She has attended numerous workshops at FRIEND, and was one of our first recruits in the Youth Employment Network program. She is now working as an Office Assistant at an international accounting firm which has a branch in Lautoka.

Q: How did you hear about FRIEND and how did you become interested in FRIEND's YEN program?

A: I heard about YEN program from a friend. I became interested because I knew that doing voluntary work would look good on my CV and also gaining the work experience.

Q: What have you learned through your involvement with the Youth Employment Network, how has this program helped you and how could it help other youths?

A: In a photography workshop, I learned to use SRL camera and the art of speaking in public. I have gained confidence in myself and it has helped me



Anastasia-below far left with a group of trainee photographers at FRIEND

become the person I am today. This program can help youths to be exposed in the working environment before taking on a permanent job.

Q: As an Office Assistant, what does your job entail? Could you describe a skill used in your organization that you learned from the Youth Program?

A: My job is to assist in the office where ever I am needed. One thing that I can say is that from the YEN program I have learned to have an open mind and speak out and question things that I don't understand.

Q: What is the most important piece of advice you could give to youths seeking employment?

A: Never lose hope and always be patient.

Q: Who is one of your most influential role models & why?

A.: My Grandmother, because she is always there when I need advice.

What do you believe are some of the biggest challenges youths face and how it can be solved?

A: Peer Pressure!! This can be tackled if youths stop worrying what people think and what their friends say negative things about them and make good strong and right decisions. This will help them move forward.

Front Porch Medicine

Animesh Sinha, M.D. is a US-based general practitioner who has devoted his medical skills to serving the homeless and Native American population domestically and the underserved internationally.



A couple of months back, I arrived at the Sacramento, California home of Mrs. Damyenti Chandra, the founder of Fiji Aid International (FAI), a nonprofit public benefit corporation responsible for providing free medical care to the people of Fiji for nine years running. It was at that time Damyenti Auntie informed me of the devastating floods in Fiji during the recent rainy season. With no specific plan in mind, she was determined to go and find a way to help. She asked if I was up for the journey.

Aside from the disease we were prepared to see, we arrived in Nadi with no clue on what to expect. Also, there were no prior medical teams or advance directives guiding us on which communities were most hard-hit and consequently, what to expect medically. Thankfully, Sashi Kiran from FRIEND stepped forward, providing us with transportation, funding for medications and an abundance of information and contacts for the communities in greatest need. And we set forth on our front porch journey. Our medical team consisted of three volunteers: Auntie, an Australian nurse and myself. We traveled with a rental van full of medicine and our typical outreach equipment. Often times, when we arrived, there was no point of contact. Auntie would simply walk up to whichever household had the largest porch and, if they agreed, we would set up shop. Village after village we encountered pervasive dampness, mosquitoes hovering over stagnant pools of water and the stench of scattered trash and sewage.

We saw a wide array of diseases, including various forms of respiratory and skin disease, diarrhea and vomiting. We met a large number of people whose chronic medications had simply “floated away” and were reporting to us with dangerously high blood pressures and blood sugars. A few had lost family members to leptospirosis or other flood-related illnesses and were scared they were exhibiting similar symptoms. The situation was further complicated by hopelessness and increasing tensions within families resulting in a higher incidence of domestic violence, anxiety and depression.

Despite the seemingly bleak nature of things, Fijians remained Fijians. Not once were we denied the use of a porch. Although many households were without basic provisions, food and drink was offered paired with heartfelt affection and warm smiles. Children played and men and women laughed, allowing peace and warmth to prevail. We were welcomed onto several porches in Navakai, Kerebula, Korovotu, Navaka, Kareras, Votualevu, Koronubu, Raviravi, Korosiga and many other locales. We utilized roughly \$50,000 worth of resources and evaluated and treated approximately 800 patients. Despite all of this, questions linger in my mind. Why is truly important work, work that targets the most basic of human need, not recognized and provided enough resources and funding to function? Why exactly do the people of Fiji not have access to basic medications? Why do people feel misdiagnosed, undertreated and, worst of all, unheard by the healthcare system? Will there ever come a time when specialist care will be regularly available in non-industrialized countries and endless waits to see a doctor will be a thing of the past? In spite of my concerns, one thing remains constant--the opportunity to serve the Fijian people is an opportunity to be inspired. Those days on the front porches of the physically broken will live with me forever. As will the strength of a resilient people whose spirit cannot be broken... even by the floods of tragedy.

Recipe Corner

Fish Cakes - A budget recipe for those with exotic tastes

Ingredients:

2 cans tuna fish 1/2 onion, chopped 1/3 c. bread crumbs 2 eggs *Friend's Fiji Style*® Chilli Chutney
Cooking oil to fry

Method

1. Mix all including a tspn of *Friend's Fiji Style*® Chilli Chutney together really well.
2. Form into thin cakes.
3. Shallow fry in oil on both sides or can be tossed onto a health grill too.
4. Serve hot as a snack or you can even use it as a fish patty for your healthy burger.



(For those who want the extra zing use Friend's Fiji Style® Chilli Chutney as a dip)
With Sandhya Narayan

