

## NEWSLETTER March 2009 (No.4)

# Friends of Conakry Refugee School

### News from the School

#### *School Meals Programme:*

The Free School Meals Programme, which began in April 2008, has gone from strength to strength, originally feeding 380 pupils and now risen to a current figure of 550. Many eligible children were unable to attend school because they had to help earn money to help feed their families. In the knowledge that they would receive a meal at school enrolment has increased significantly. (Due to significantly increased costs and class sizes no more pupils are currently being enrolled.) FCRS is presently struggling to fund the programme due to increased food costs, exchange rates and the extra number of pupils to feed.

*"My greatest thanks go to all the wonderful donors, sponsors and the members of the FRIENDS OF CRS. You have not just put food on the table, neither have you just provided low cost education, but you have made the hopeless to have hope in the future, the neglected ones to be cared for and the useless to now be counted among the useful."*

Isaac Phillips, Principal, CRS

#### *Graduates of 2008:*



A Graduation Ceremony took place last July for the twelve Grade 12 students, all of whom were successful. FCRS funded the graduation ceremony, gowns and hall hire. Other students were also presented with achievement awards.

*"If opportunity doesn't knock build a door."*

Ansumana M. J. Kromah,

Assistant Headmaster, CRS

#### *CRS takes part in 1<sup>st</sup> Inter-school Debate:*



Benedict Gbokokollie Grade 9

Last month CRS took part and won the first inter-school debate to be held in Conakry, hosted by Tongil International School. Other participating schools were the Nelson Mandela English Academy and Sabu International School.

CRS debated against Sabu International on "Co-education should be abolished in secondary schools". CRS supported the motion and defeated their opponents. The two other schools debated the topic "Science has done more harm than good". The grand final was between CRS and Tongil International debating "The place of a woman is in the kitchen". CRS emerged victorious! We'll have to find out which side were they on!

## *Sporting Activities:*



At CRS sport is considered an essential part of the learning process. The School is organised into four colour "Houses" to encourage students to participate in football, volleyball and athletics, culminating in a week of inter-house competitions in March.

There are no organised sporting tournaments between schools but CRS students take part in a number of invitational "friendly" matches, mostly with local English schools. Recently CRS girls emerged winners from five schools taking part in an athletic match - congratulations to them!

CRS has only two sets of sportswear including a set of football shirts donated by a charity in England through FCRS. Otherwise they have to rent them. Teachers would like to be able to offer more sporting opportunities and challenges for its students but needs funding to create sporting facilities in order to do so. FCRS plans to apply for a sporting grant to help make their dreams a reality.

## *News from FCRS*

### *FCRS is now a Registered Charity!*

In June 2008 Friends of Conakry Refugee School received charitable status from the Charities Commission and formed a Board of Trustees. Special thanks goes to supporters Ann Wishart and Jill Hallam for their work on the application. FCRS is now able to claim Gift Aid from the Inland Revenue which adds 28% to every £1 donated!

## *Fundraising Achievements*



'Daylevel' perform at CRS concert

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual musical event held recently at the Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley, was a huge success yet again. Both performers and audience really enjoyed themselves and, together with the raffle, raised £1,845.

FCRS supporters did a great job in producing attractive £5 and £10 Gift Cards to raise money

for the School Meals Programme and to provide transport to school for pupils who walk long distances each day. They proved very popular and raised £1,100.

Other significant fundraising since April last year has been:-

- Continued sales of a CD of Circle Dance music produced specifically for the charity by FCRS supporter Judy King
- The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Circle Dance Day organised and run by FCRS supporter Judy Harvey

- A collection by Shrewsbury choir Phoenix Singers during their Christmas concert
- Various generous donations by individuals, organisations and schools including £2,500 from the Tibden Trust and a £1,000 private donation
- Wine & cheese evening
- Sale of a donated, purpose-made tapestry of the Ironbridge

### *Fundraising for the Future*

The current economic climate has, of course, had a huge impact on the School and on our Charity. Funds sent to CRS are now worth 25% less than at this time last year. In addition, the cost of food, transport, school materials, etc. have all risen exponentially. This means that FCRS is struggling to raise enough funds to keep the School functioning.

### *Can you help with the Standing Order Drive?*

Regular financial donations from individual supporters of FCRS would ensure that the Conakry Refugee School regularly receives the basics it needs to function, which are *\* rent payments \* school materials & cleaning supplies \* free school meals for pupils \* basic salaries for teachers*

**It is important to remember that CRS receives NO OTHER FUNDING apart from tiny school fees from families who can afford to pay them.**

FCRS needs to encourage people to support CRS on a regular basis, however small the donation. Eye-catching information leaflets about the Charity and the School have recently been printed with a Standing Order form on the back. We will shortly be sending you several of these leaflets in the post.\* ***IF EACH FCRS SUPPORTER FINDS JUST 2 PEOPLE TO GIVE A DONATION ON A MONTHLY BASIS THAT WILL BE A GREAT START!***

### *Plea to help FCRS find volunteers!*

FCRS successes are literally changing lives for the refugee staff and children at CRS. However, if we are to continue this work and look to a more sustainable future for the School we need more people involved. There is too much work for the mere handful of volunteers who presently give their time. As a supporter of FCRS you may not have any spare time yourself ***BUT*** you may know retired people who have some spare time. Please will you suggest FCRS to them and give them a \*leaflet to read? They do not necessarily need to live locally. Having small fund-raising and awareness activities happening around the country is one of our aims. ***PLEASE DO NOT DELAY - DO IT TODAY!!***

### *Help Received!*

Last summer FCRS Pauline Levesley offered her services as a volunteer. FCRS welcomed her with open arms. Pauline looks after all the day-to-day finances, and has become a huge asset to the Charity with her diligence, integrity, expertise and cheerfulness. She has also become a great support to the Director of FCRS (Ruth Walmsley) and looked after the Charity well whilst Ruth and Mark (FCRS Treasurer) took a three month holiday in 2008.

FCRS has also recently welcomed Suzannah Morris and Jackie Watkins as volunteers. Suzannah is organising the latest fundraising endeavour (a Line Draw - rather like a raffle without tickets) and FCRS would like to take this opportunity of thanking her. Jackie is keen to help raise awareness of CRS and do some fundraising in the area of Shropshire where she lives.

## *Website*

Progress is being made on improving and expanding our website [www.fcrcs.org](http://www.fcrcs.org). Once it is properly up and running we hope it will receive more 'hits' and encourage people to sign up for a regular donation via Standing Order.

I would like to conclude by quoting CRS Principal, Isaac Phillips and students Mansangay and Fatu Fofana, which says it all.

Staff at CRS with Tanya & Ruth Walmsley



*“Thanks very much to all of you who have been working very hard for the school. Words cannot express how much we really appreciate your care, love, concern and support. Your name will forever be in the hearts of thousands of people here in Africa. You brought light to the school, fed the hungry kids and have provided a good and spacious learning environment for them., not forgetting*

*the library.”* Isaac Phillips, Principal, Conakry Refugee School

*“Receiving financial assistance has changed our lives at home. Our ill mother is able now to keep our rent payment up and buy 1 bag of rice a month. Before, we were going to school late because we had to sell at night, but now that has stopped. We are trying to catch up at school. There is now happiness in the home. We love CRS because it was CRS that first love us.”* Mansangay and Fatu Fofana, Grade 10 students

With very best wishes

Ruth Walmsley  
Director