June 4, 2016 - Tooro American Association (TAA) Meeting Minutes

Chairman’s quarterly update

Prayers and Introductions

General:

* The Chairman welcomed, and thanked the TAA Board and Executive members, Pioneer members, and all members and Friends of Tooro who were in attendance, for their dedication, efforts, and time – to keeping the organization moving forward. The Chairman reiterated the mission of the organization – its useful purpose as a platform to unite, and empower the sons, daughters, and Friends of Tooro in the US.
* The Chairman commended the members for helping to grow the finances of the organization – ensuring the organization stayed in ‘black’ – even after an expensive launch event last April. “However, for this organization to make a meaningful impact in our lives, and the lives of those we love and care about – here and back home, more must be done. I know we have the resources – money to be exact, and even those of us who say we don’t, chances are that we have access to it – through friends, employment, churches, and other social clubs/units we belong to”, the chairman added.
* On the, the medical supplies (babies incubators) project discussed at our last quarterly meeting, the Chairman explained why there was a ‘deliberate delay’ in forwarding the project proposal to the prospective donor of the supplies. The Chairman explained to the group that the TAA Board and Executive Members had briefly discussed the matter and agreed that it was not a good idea to rush a proposal (to the donor) that does not indicate adequate funding necessary to ship those medical supplies to Uganda. The group was challenged to first raise the organization’s account balance to at least between USD $10,000 and USD $15,000, before the proposal is submitted.
* Also, the organization’s 501 (c) application has not been approved by the IRS – and without that approval, major donors will be reluctant to give/donate large amounts of money that they won’t be able to deduct on their taxable income at the end of the year. The projected approval timeline for that application is September.
* The Chairman also addressed concerns and grumblings that some members had heard coming out of different circles of Batooro and friends of Tooro in the diaspora. “This is a completely transparent organization, and everyone who is genuinely interested in joining us is welcome. We appreciate all input – ideas, resources, etc. And, even criticism – but, it has to be constructive criticism that builds us. TAA was launched just over a year ago. We are a very young organization, and we are open to learning and improving our ways. Therefore, we ask all who are interested in this organization to not just criticize what we may not be doing right, but to also join us and make this a great organization. We will continue to reach out to all Batooro and Friends of Tooro in the American Diaspora and beyond to try and grow this organization.” The Chairman added – before introducing the Finance and Events/Publicity executives to give their quarterly reports.

Executive Reports: Finances

* Status of Org. Finances: The Treasurer apprised the meeting on the status of the organization’s finances, fundraising efforts – reiterating the Chairman’s message that the organization was running in ‘black’, but more funds were needed.
* Membership Fees: He challenged members to register and pay their membership fees – to help improve the financial standing of the organization. Membership fees are $120/year; and, donations are welcome. Payments can be made as a lump sum, or in installments. And, payments can be made on the website, by check, or cash.

Executive Reports: Public Relations

* TAA Website: The Events/Publicity Secretary reminded the group that the website (www.tooroamericanassociation.org) was now up and running again, and how several E-mails have been sent to let TAA members and Friends of Tooro know that online membership registration is now available.
* Communication: Members were kindly requested to respond and/or acknowledge receipt of e-mails, text messages, and other forms of communication from the organization. That way, the sender can know that messages are reaching the right people.
* UNAA BOSTON: The Events/Publicity Secretary told the group that Boston Convention is coming in September, and TAA will have a table and a big presence at the Convention. TAA will be teaming-up and coordinating the display items (on the table) with a couple of enthusiastic ladies that will come to sell the Tooro sub region as a Tourism destination. Volunteers will still be needed.
* TAA Meeting in Boston: We are exploring the logistics of holding a TAA meeting on the sidelines of the UNAA convention in Boston. The Events/Publicity Secretary will reach out to the Boston Tooro and Friends of Tooro fraternity and key community leaders like Pastor Balinda Apuuli and Prof. Kisembo Akiiki to organize such a meeting.
* TAA 2017 Convention: The organization is beginning the planning of another event (similar to the launch event we had last April) in the spring of next year.
* The Events/Publicity Secretary also promised to liaise with other publicity officers of sister-organizations, to compare notes of effective communication strategies.

Open Floor Discussion:

* Members suggested that a more robust communication strategy should be developed – for effective communication that will reach more Batooro and Friends of Tooro in America.
* Some members suggested that in addition to the Website and other social media outlets the organization is heavily relying on, communications should also include traditional writing campaigns and phone calls (cold calling).
* Pioneer members Mr. Bagonza and Mr. Kagezi suggested that as a consideration for members (and prospective members) who are not computer savvy and/or cannot visit the website, formal letters should be sent out to request/solicit membership fees; and, that there should be even more payment options.
* Suggestions were also made that the organization should get a permanent conference call-in number, for monthly conference calls at the same date and time; and, a Whattsapp user group.
* TAA Chapters: The meeting also discussed ways to grow the organization – including instituting independent TAA chapters in major US cities like Boston, Dallas, LA, and others that have large concentrations of Batooro. The idea was recommended for the proposed TAA meeting in Boston.
* One member suggested that we should maybe revisit the amount for membership.

Other Business:

* Summer Picnic: The majority of those in attendance resolved to host an independently funded summer picnic under the auspices of TAA, and the chairman and executive endorsed that proposal. The effort will be led by Pioneer member Mr. A. Biingi.

Closing:

* The Chairman encouraged the group to work hard to realize the initial vision of this organization, and for members to reach out to other Batooro and Friends of Tooro in America especially, those currently feeling excluded from the activities of TAA.
* The meeting closed with a grand dinner.
* Attendance: The meeting was well attended; also, a meeting/conference call-in line, and a live Facebook chat were open for the entire duration of the meeting.

Thank you.

TAA Events/Publicity Secretariat