

Friends of Liberia
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ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2013

A summary for our members of the year's achievements and our future plans.

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TO OUR MEMBERS

Dear Friends of Liberia

We are proud to present to you this copy of the Friends of Liberia Annual Report for 2013.

The report summarizes the highlights from Fiscal Year 2013, a pivotal year for us in which we focused our efforts on our mission to positively affect Liberia by supporting education, social, economic and humanitarian programs and by advocating for assistance to Liberia.

We also strengthened the organization and expanded our capacity by adopting a strategic plan that will ensure that Friends of Liberia remains a sustainable organization, welcomed new board members and officers, streamlined our internal operations, focused on sustainability, and adopted a by-law amendment change.

Furthermore, in our ongoing effort to accomplish our mission, FOL awarded 8 Liberian organizations funds to support their projects and several volunteers traveled to Liberia in May to assist in a capacity building workshop for 20 ECE LEAP - trained educators. As a result of the ECE Project an early childhood model school is being built and sponsored by an FOL member and former PCV in Gbarnga. The FOL board is also exploring additional projects in health, education and entrepreneurship.

FOL continues to look for ways to involve its members. In May, 23 FOL members traveled to Liberia to return to their towns of service and to support education and health service projects. Some of the group worked in conjunction with the capacity building workshop for the ECE Project while staying at the Peace Corps Training Facility in Kakata. We hope to plan another such trip for 2015.

Most importantly, in this report we wish to give you the clearest picture of FOL's framework, where we are and where we are heading. Financial information is also included. We hope this information will be helpful to you in assessing the effectiveness and responsibilities of our organization.

As always, we need more volunteers and active board members. As you read the report, think of areas where you might want to become involved. We have many areas that need more attention and time.

On behalf of the entire Friends of Liberia Board of Trustees and Officers, we would like to thank you for your support. Your support and positive comments are the fuel that keeps us moving forward to make Friends of Liberia a sustainable and viable organization.

Sincerely yours,

Stephanie Vickers, President

Robert Sharer, Board Chair



TO OUR MEMBERS

FOL's Strategic Plan

FOL's *Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018* was adopted by the Board of Trustees in March 2013, culminating a year-long effort that engaged stakeholders in clarifying FOL's vision, mission, core values and strategic issues. The Strategic Plan is helping to shape the future of FOL and its priorities to meet the changing needs of the Liberian people. The plan focuses on the key programs we support, the necessary funding for these program, FOL's organizational structure, and its membership base. We have begun implementing a number of initiatives from the plan, including:



- Soliciting members' views and ideas for improvements on FOL programs and services
- Launching the initial phases of new programs in health, entrepreneurship, and education/literacy
- Identifying and successfully recruiting new officers and board members who bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to our work
- Streamlining our data bases and upgrading the website and other communication strategies
- Establishing a mentoring program for the increasing number of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) from Liberia
- Creating a comprehensive development strategy that includes innovative approaches such as crowdfunding
- Identifying and building partnerships with organizations that share our goals

As we complete our first year under the new plan, we can already see that it is helping us integrate FOL's various programs into a comprehensive and smart strategy for achieving and evaluating our goals. Over the next four years, the plan will continue to provide a practical road map for FOL. It will help communicate our goals to members and external partners/donors, and engage them in our programs. It will also help ensure effective use of FOL resources (people, money, time) by focusing on key priorities.

TO OUR MEMBERS

Friends of Liberia Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018			
Vision			
Our vision is that Friends of Liberia be an effective organization for helping Liberia in its quest to be a peaceful and just country in which every Liberian has opportunities for quality education and employment, and access to adequate health care.			
Mission			
FOL is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that seeks to positively affect Liberia and Liberians through educational, social, economic and humanitarian programs and through advocacy efforts.			
Core Values			
Service Partnerships Accountability & Transparency Integrity Stewardship			
Strategic Issue 1: Programs What programs can FOL develop with a large impact that draw on the expertise of FOL membership, capitalize on FOL’s comparative advantage, and support Liberia’s long-term development strategy? <u>Program focus:</u> Education, Health, Entrepreneurship and Small Grants	Strategic Issue 2: Funding How can FOL diversify, increase and sustain its financial resources to support programming for greater impact on Liberia and more engagement of members?	Strategic Issue 3: Governance and Operations How can FOL organize itself for more efficient and effective management of its work in the U.S. and in Liberia?	Strategic Issue 4: Membership Engagement How can FOL recruit new members and engage more members in its work by offering opportunities to carry out FOL’s mission?

TO OUR MEMBERS

Our Achievements

Service to Liberia

During a Friends of Liberia Service trip in May 2013, in which 23 members traveled to Liberia, several of these members helped to conduct a capacity-building workshop for the Liberian for Educators for Action and Peace (LEAP) Early Childhood Education Project, that FOL has supported for more than a decade. Led by Stephanie Vickers (President) and Pat Reilly (Board Member) and, the two week-long workshop focused on providing the Liberian educators with tools to strengthen their organization and to make LEAP an effective voice for early childhood education. Other FOL members including, Peter Levitov, Ron Mertz, Steve Griffith and Harmon Lisnow, participated in the workshop modules that included organizational structure, budgeting, future planning, evaluation, advocacy and communication, among others. The capacity-building workshop was conducted at the Peace Corps training center in Kakata. In addition, Vickers and Reilly met with officials at the Ministry of Education, enhancing our social capital with the government and reinforcing our positive relationship with those who oversee educational programs in Liberia.



Based on the early childhood methodology embraced by the LEAP Project, a model school is being developed in Gbarnga, staffed by three early childhood educators trained by FOL and utilizing the curriculum and teaching materials that were generated by this project.

FOL has had a Small Grants program since 2007, awarding up to \$2000 to nonprofit organizations in Liberia on a competitive basis. The policy and application process are posted on the FOL website: www.fol.org. In 2013 eight grants were awarded. To read more about each of the projects go to our website.

Hope Mission and Elementary School	\$1,500
Green Coast Agriculture Programs, Inc.	\$1,805
Education First, Inc.	\$1,988.25

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Keenan Institute	\$1,805
Association of Disabled Females International	\$1,300
Fuel Youth	\$1,800
Women’s United Fund to Fight Sexual Violence in Liberia	\$2,000
Bosh Bosh, Inc.	\$2,000

Opportunities for Members

In May, as noted above, FOL sponsored a Service Trip, including some members of the Pepperbirds, a group of expatriate Americans who grew up in Liberia while their parents worked for Firestone, Pan American Airways and other U.S. entities. The group had meetings in Monrovia with both Liberian and U.S. officials and then traveled up-country to Kakata. The participants were housed in the Peace Corps Training Facility, which had been built as one of President Samuel Doe’s palaces during his regime. The ECE LEAP capacity-building workshop, as well as a health assessment, was conducted there. Upon the conclusion of these activities, participants either stayed in Kakata or traveled to places in Liberia where they had lived and worked many years before. Most reacquainted themselves with people and facilities they had known, some met with Small Grant recipients, and others became so enamored with present-day Liberia that they planned to build new schools in the country.

The Board of Trustees developed plans for a mentoring program whereby FOL members who are former Peace Corps Volunteers would make themselves available to newly returned Volunteers to help with cultural readjustment, networking, etc.

The Board also has been investigating places that might receive gifts of Liberian art and artifacts that members brought back from their Liberian sojourn. While the National Museum in Monrovia would be an excellent recipient, it does not yet have climate-controlled facilities, so FOL is recommending institutions where the items can be preserved until the National Museum can maintain many items that are of Liberian origin.

Furthermore, the Board is looking into a Planned Giving Program through which FOL members can make bequests to FOL and its programs in their wills.

TO OUR MEMBERS

More and more members of FOL are serving on committees, which previously had been staffed only by board members and Officers. This is an opportunity for more members to involve themselves in the work of the organization and retain their connection to Liberia.

Strengthening FOL and Building Our Capacity to Serve

In 2013 the Board of Trustees adopted a strategic plan to guide the organization for the next five years. The plan is posted on the FOL website.

With a system of term limits for Trustees, the Board has been welcoming new board members whose three year terms are staggered. In addition, several new Officers have been elected, taking the place of Officers who have served with distinction for many years.

The Board has streamlined FOL's internal operations and made quantum leaps with regard to electronic communication and the use of social media. It also has focused on fiscal sustainability.

FOL is poised to move forward with accomplishing its mission and involving more of its members in this effort.

TO OUR MEMBERS

Membership and Future Plans

FOL's membership has grown as we continue to add recently returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), and other people that are interested in the welfare of Liberia, as members of our organization. We have begun a mentoring program for RPCVs, connecting interested Volunteers with FOL members who live in their area of the U.S. and can serve as mentors. Through this program, we hope to maintain a close connection with the RPCVs leaving Liberia and gain perspective from

their recent work in country. FOL is also improving communication with its membership through a more streamlined and consistent blast email protocol. Last year, we asked members to update their email address for our records as we strive to "go green" and allocate more money for projects in Liberia by eliminating some of our paper mailings.

Member support of FOL is critical to our success as an organization. We rely on donations to fund our projects, such as the Small Grant program, and as a thank you to our members, we strive to provide the membership with opportunities to be involved with Liberia. This year we were able to give members first choice in a sale of Liberian artifacts as well as connect them with opportunities to consult in and reconnect with Liberia. In the future, we hope to make this type of information more readily available to our membership. We want all our members to be able to take advantage of these kinds of opportunities to volunteer or do short-term consulting in and for Liberia. Additionally, we have many different committees and encourage all of our members to reach out to us if they are interested in participating in any way. Whether a member is able to donate to FOL, be a mentor for a Volunteer, or attend one of our regional gatherings, we value his/her contribution. Together we will continue to positively affect Liberia by supporting education, social, economic and humanitarian programs.



TO OUR MEMBERS

Finance

At the end of 2013 Friends of Liberia maintained its strong financial position with a surplus equaling \$102,067.59. During the year we received \$31,931.50 in income and allocated \$40,108.57 to various projects. Administrative expenses totaled \$10,423.31, almost half of which was spent on our biannual newsletters.

Donations came from a variety of sources. Over 200 members made almost 250 separate contributions totaling \$24,915. FOL also received a very generous donation of \$5,000 from the Rolander Family Foundation for our Early Childhood Education Project and was awarded a grant from the International Foundation for the ECE Project. The National Peace Corps Association sent us \$945 in membership rebates for 63 individuals. Finally, sales of Liberian cookbooks and other Liberian-related items brought in \$1,071.50. Such donations demonstrate the continued generosity of our supporters, who since 1995 have provided FOL with over \$1,500,000 to fund our various projects.

Project expenditures were in three areas: our Early Childhood Education Program (\$23,307.32) consisting mainly of two workshops held in Liberia in April and May, eight projects under our Small Grants Program (\$14,401.25), and the FOL News Dispatch through Indiana University (\$2,400). Since 1995 FOL has disbursed over \$1,150,000 on projects related to Liberia.

For 2014 we have the following goals: 1) to increase our current level of donations by expanding our donor base, 2) to identify more worthwhile projects on which we can spend our surplus, 3) to reduce administrative expenses by having our members receive our newsletter by email, and 4) to maintain our financial records electronically rather than on paper.

TO OUR MEMBERS

Board of Trustees

Joseph Crayton

Don Drach

Rich Fahey

Virginia Hesel

Jefferson King

Hilary Kouhana

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Harmon Lisnow

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Robert Sharer, Chair

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Stephanie Vickers, President

Peter Levitov, Vice President

Laura Battos, Secretary

Peter Murdza, Jr., Treasurer

Alison McReynolds, Membership

Friends of Liberia

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/FriendsOfLiberia

Twitter: twitter.com/FoLiberia

Linkedin: [Friends of Liberia on LinkedIn](#)

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Liberian Ambassador to the US, his Excellency Jeremiah C. Sulunteh and his wife meet with FOL Board Chair Robert Sharer, Board Member Don Drach, former Vice President Pat Reilly, and Board Member Terry Anderson