

Dear Friend of Liberia,

I must share with you the joy I had in March to return to Liberia after almost 15 years! Because of work abroad, I was not able to return earlier -- but retirement is a great opportunity to get more directly involved. I visited many of the programs FOL supports as well as precious, lifetime friends. The regular reports from our FOL grantees are nothing compared to seeing the project results in action. (How many of you would like to go back, on a FOL-organized service trip? That's something we are considering for the not-tooooo-distant future.)

I visited with parents and children in the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI), among them beautiful little Grace in the West Point community. Grace, now 5, did not speak when she and her mother first enrolled in FLI. Now she says the letters of the alphabet, knows numbers and shapes, and in the picture was telling me the story that her mother had read to her from her very own book. Her mother leaves the alphabet poster on the outside house wall so that neighbor children can observe the learning and later play school. The little girl who didn't speak now conducts alphabet tutorials on her porch. That "multiplier effect" was obvious as I walked through the narrow passages of West Point, with neighbors leaning in to make supportive comments. FLI "home visitors" report that parents in the program are often amazed at what they are learning themselves, and as this literacy world opens to them, they want more.



One third-year FLI mother who saved pennies from her market work so that her child can now also go to kindergarten (which in public school may have over 100 children under a "teacher" who may be reading at third grade level) has become a very vocal gadfly for better teaching in schools, while also begging for literacy classes for herself. This was the most common plea I heard -- "I

need to learn to read for myself, and be somebody, too!"

Although it takes a strong commitment for a parent or guardian to devote at least an hour every week to learn the lesson taught by the home visitor, and then spend at least another hour teaching the lesson to the child, these parents have been bitten by the learning bug. They want it for themselves despite the additional time it would take from basic survival activities. FOL recognizes the opportunity to truly make an impact on these parents who are so faithful to the program, and we are developing an adult literacy program for them. To implement the program, however, we will need a new cadre of donating partners. Every one of you is invited to be part of this! If you have suggestions of foundations or grants that might support our FLI adult literacy, please let us know.

FLI now includes 180 families in four communities and our Small Grants Program enables small community-based projects throughout the country. Please do see details of our -- your! -- projects [here](#), and also read the Friends of Liberia 2017 Annual Report [here](#).

The most amazing thing about us is that we are an all-volunteer organization that makes real impacts. Our officers are all Board members. They bring a variety of expertise to the work of running FOL -- accounting, technology, communications, administration, evaluation. We meet in person near D.C. at least once a year, but also meet “virtually” on the ever-expanding universe of online meeting technologies -- Skype, Zoom, Blue Jeans.

Our Education Working Group, which designed and manages FLI, is made up of education experts from around the U.S. who meet in conference calls and online with our curriculum partner, Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters, and our implementing partner in Liberia, WE-CARE Foundation. Our Health Group brings together experts on nursing and midwifery education from all over the U.S. and Liberia. The Liberian team has conducted a needs assessment that identified the need for a future project on in-service learning for nursing and midwifery educators. The next step is to develop content of the project. I met with most of the team members when I was in Liberia and their commitment is outstanding. *[Pictured right is a FLI home visitor teaching a mother in West Point the weekly lesson; below is one of the small grant projects I visited, a well for the nursing school at Ganta Hospital.]*



Our Development Committee is constantly in search of new funding partners so that our programs will be sustainable and, as appropriate, grow. We encourage you to join us as a contributing supporter, Board Member, researcher, writer, or fundraiser -- just email me at FOLpres2018@gmail.com for more information.



You are the foundation of this work with your donations. An increasing number of you are making monthly donations through PayPal (thank you!), a couple have designated major gifts to expand a favorite program (you are lifesavers!), and some far-sighted friends are joining our new Legacy Circle by remembering FOL in their wills (as we say in Liberia -- thanking you in advance!). For more information on “Planned Giving”, please see the [Legacy Circle page](#).

We are in the process of updating our membership records and making changes to ensure compliance with the EU's new data privacy law, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You will have the opportunity to complete the membership renewal form in the coming weeks so keep an eye out in your inbox! Your completion of the form will indicate that you want to continue to receive news from FOL and let us know if and how you might like to become more involved. Please do include any comments or suggestions as well.

With sincere gratitude for your support and best wishes for a wonderful summer,

Sarah

Sarah C. Morrison, President