

Dear Friend of Liberia,

We hope that you have had a happy and warm (at least inside!) Thanksgiving. In this time of hustle and bustle getting ready for the celebrations that overtake the end of the year, we wish for you also some time for reflection. We want you to know we are thankful for your past support of development in Liberia -- as a Peace Corps Volunteer, a medical worker, an academic, a missionary, a relative of someone who worked in Liberia, a Liberian-born advocate, an INGO or NGO staff person, a Friend of Liberia (FOL) contributor -- all those who share our love and commitment to the people of Liberia.

As you enjoy your holidays and consider your plans and intentions for 2019, we wanted to share with you some of the FOL successes you have helped achieve this year through your past support.

* Four-year-old Deborah Jones was wandering, the way a child still can in a Caldwell neighborhood where everybody knows everyone else. She saw other children tailing a stranger, a small woman with a lively step. The woman was asking who wanted to learn to read -- she was looking for children too young yet for school. Hoping she fit the bill, Deborah took Gbima Bahtokpah's hand and led her home to her grandmother, Esther, who signed Deborah up for the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI). Two years later, Esther shared her story at a group meeting with Caldwell neighbors who are also in the Family Literacy Initiative. Esther had not gone to school, but with the help of FLI Home Visitors, she was able to coach her granddaughter through the activities. Now, as a grandmother, Esther can sign her name and read a book! This year, she will be able to go to her own FLI literacy classes in Caldwell. As little Deborah starts FLI Year 3, Esther will be one of the first students in FOL's new Adult Literacy Program. At a recent country-wide Ministry of Education planning meeting, the need most frequently voiced by participants was for adult literacy programs. FOL already had identified this and secured funding to develop a curriculum for use with FLI caretakers, as a new pilot.

* When another grandmother, in Neezou, was young, the children in her family were many and the money was small. When it came time for school, her twin sister was chosen to go and she was relegated to home chores. Today, she reports proudly, she can finally write her name and read a book with her granddaughter. If adult literacy classes come to her town in the years ahead, she will get that education she was denied as a girl. Her granddaughter is already on that path.



Esther (right) getting her weekly lesson from FLI Home Visitor Jeff, which she will teach to her granddaughter. Visiting FOL Education Committee early ed expert, RPCV Sia Barbara Kamara, monitors.

In one of those unintended consequences of making a difference, grandmothers have turned out to be among the biggest champions of the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI). They can make the time to sit with a FLI Home Visitor and learn the activities for the week ahead and then teach them day by day. As their grandchildren acquire new skills, so do they. Grandparents were in the forefront of asking for adult classes to teach them more. The pilot classes in Caldwell and Duazon for parents and caregivers will follow a specially designed curriculum that uses the books and activities they have known from FLI.



FOL recently hosted a dinner (thank you, RPCV George Koch and wife Beverly, for use of your lovely home) for a delegation of Liberian educators to an international early education conference in Washington, D.C. We heard several stories from FLI that confirmed our faith in the benefits of the family approach to literacy. Yvonne Capehart-Weah, who administers FLI and the WE-CARE Foundation, Monrovia, told us, “Never doubt that you are making a difference in people’s lives.” She added, “We will be nation of readers.”

In this picture, WE-CARE Administrator Yvonne Capehart is at left. FLI Coordinator Gbima Bahtokpa followed Yvonne's remarks with slides and stories highlighting FLI activities and evaluation results - a lively, informational presentation never to be forgotten!

Our partner WE-CARE helped our other partner, Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters International, put a curriculum year of children’s books into a Liberian context. Now, 3- and 4-year-olds will hear a story about a rainy day instead of a snowy one, and learn about animals and plants they may see in their country. In the next few years, the older levels will have “Liberianized” books as well.

The Family Literacy Initiative (FLI) completed its three-year pilot program and graduated its first classes from the original three FLI communities, West Point, Caldwell and Duazon. Like Veronica Dormu, pictured right, they will go on to kindergartens or primary schools, where we are developing ways to track their progress. The adults who have participated in Caldwell and Duazon will be offered adult literacy classes. The 180 families in four current FLI communities now have books in the home permanently that entice all their children, and even neighbors, to read. The families are all admired examples for their communities, and loud advocates of quality education.



Veronica proudly showing her graduation certificate.

FOL has applied to the Rotary Club of Washington for a small grant on the Adult Literacy Component of FLI. If we are successful, we can then apply to other clubs around the country to match it. If you are a Rotarian willing to help us work with your Rotary Club, please contact Pat Reilly at reillypat@aol.com. Any club application needs a local sponsor. We would love to work with you on that!

Other FOL areas include our Small Grants program, which continues to award partial funding for projects carried out by carefully screened local non-governmental organizations across the country. Criteria to qualify, how proposals will be rated, and expectations for evaluation have been modified this year to further ensure accountability and encourage sustainability plans from the onset. Criteria are listed [here](#).

The FOL Health Team produced an assessment that confirms the need for continuing education workshops for faculty members in the schools of nursing and nurse midwifery in Liberia. The team, which includes Americans and Liberian health professionals, is developing a project proposal to fill that need and be sustainable. It will be shared with Liberian authorities and the FOL Board for endorsement.

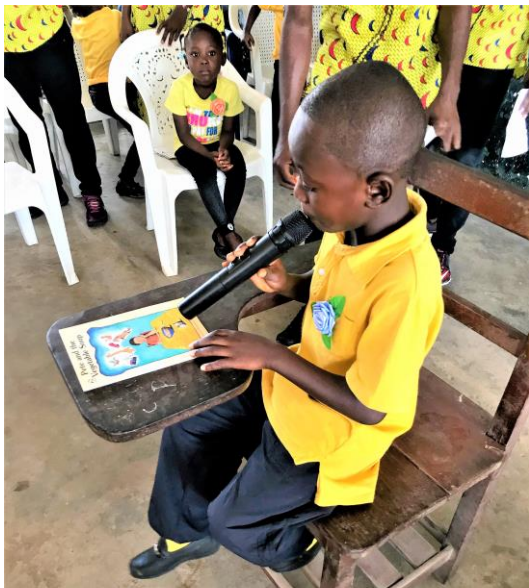
One outstanding example of how an earlier FOL project -- in this case, the impactful Liberian Education Assistance Project (LEAP) -- has unexpected multiplier effects, The Garden School opened its doors to twenty 3-year-old children from Gbarnga. Former FOL president and LEAP administrator Stephanie Vickers was on hand to help two LEAP-trained teachers inaugurate a state-of-the-art early childhood school funded by Gbarnga Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Steve Griffith and his wife, Chris. They will add a class each year for a total of 60 students ages 3, 4 and 5 years old.

* Finally, one more story of good things that happen while you are trying to do good. One of our early FLI trainers, Gail Vavasseur Jones, while observing FLI home visits, suspected that a child with learning difficulties may have impaired hearing. A long observer of children, she conducted a simple assessment and figured out that Prince was a bright child who had a hearing deficit. Prince Zayzay's family was advised how to help him overcome his



Nowai Kapu, Principal at The Garden School; Stephanie Vickers; and Yatta Nrotoe, Teacher Trainer.

challenges. To see evaluation reports, graduation photos and videos, please go [here](#).



At FLI graduation this fall, Prince was one of the children chosen to read from his book for the whole audience.

As a reader, you know the gifts that reading brings. If you want to help FLI expand to other families, or see nursing instruction improved, or if you want more communities to receive Small Grants, please remember FOL in your end-of-year giving. Info on how is on the back of this page. We know you are besieged by many serious appeals, and may be facing your own challenges, but we pledge ourselves to running FOL programs with transparency and accountability, and responding to any of your concerns. We always welcome your input about what you think FOL could be doing, your ideas about fundraising to sustain FOL programs, and your participation directly on one of the FOL committees. I have a new address just for FOL business, so that none of your messages will be lost. It is: FOLPres2018@gmail.com.

Our Legacy Circle is growing with Friends of Liberia who have included us in their wills and estate plans. This can be one way you can easily make sure your commitment to Liberia lives on, and even make decisions easier for your family. Please let us know now, or anytime later, of your intentions and you will be included in a list we will be posting on our Legacy Circle web page. If you don't want to be named, that's okay, too. There is no minimum to join the Circle.

Know that we appreciate all of you for making great things happen in Liberia.

Gratefully,
Sarah

Sarah C. Morrison, President

P.S. Remember that no donation is too small! Also, if you forgot to fill out the Membership Renewal Form earlier this year, please [click here](#) to complete it. Thank you!