

Friends of Liberia

2017 Annual Report



Supporting A Peaceful Transition of Power



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Greetings from the FOL President and Board

We are pleased to issue this report on the activities and impact of the FOL programs you have supported by your donations and participation in 2017. For Liberia, the year culminated in a democratic and peaceful election of a new president. For FOL, it was a year of program growth, outreach, and strategizing. The Family Literacy Initiative (FLI) worked with 120 families, teaching parents how to work with their pre-school children on fun exercises that prepare them for success in school, and the parents for continuing involvement in their children's education. In this document you will want to read about FLI's evidence-based success and the challenges of insuring that gains continue as the children enter kindergarten and later grades. It is a joy to work through our Liberian partner WE-CARE, along with the Home Instruction for Parents and Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPI) organization. FOL robustly developed proposals and is thankful for grants awarded by the Open Society Foundation and Rolander Family Foundation. Sustainable funding is needed for FLI to continue and grow, and although the Ministry of Education endorses the program, they cannot be the source. Your Development Committee is exploring other possibilities, but if you know of a foundation or individuals who help support educational programs abroad, please let us know!

You are encouraged to read about Liberian groups that are providing essential humanitarian, health-related, and vocation-related services with assistance from FOL's signature Small Grants Program. You will also read about progress to assess and help meet unmet educational goals of nurses and midwives. Every dollar you have given has helped, is appreciated, and is carefully accounted for.

And in regard to Peace Corps' third goal, "*To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans,*" we will share some of the activities that FOL as a group and as individual members took during this critical year in Liberia's history -- from bi-weekly election bulletins to a live and net-streamed distinguished panel addressing Liberian presidential election concerns at NYU/DC in November. Please check the membership section for details!

While many of our members sponsor or participate in non-FOL projects back in Liberia, others work with affiliate groups in the U.S. that promote a better understanding of other peoples, including helping new refugees, legal advocacy for immigrants, speaking about Liberia to schools and civil society groups, tutoring and mentoring immigrants, and others. We proudly salute all the efforts of FOL members in the United States and worldwide to advance peace, health, education, and economic security.

We sincerely welcome your feedback at liberia@fol.org and invite your participation on any of our committees. As a completely volunteer organization, we apologize if a response is delayed or if (heaven forbid) your question or comment is unintentionally filtered out. Please feel welcome to contact me through that address with any concern about FOL operations. We hold Board meetings quarterly, whether in person or by tele- or videoconferencing. Members are always welcome to attend. If interested, please write us and we can send information on when and how to connect.

Respectfully and gratefully yours,

Sarah Morrison

Sarah C. Morrison, President and Board Chairperson, Friends of Liberia

Friends of Liberia

Friends of Liberia began in 1985, started by a group of former Peace Corps Volunteers who had served in Liberia and wanted to maintain relationships with those who had similar experiences. FOL now proudly includes over 2000 persons interested in Liberia, including educators, health professionals, diplomats, missionaries, development workers, and Liberians, as well as RPCVs (Returned Peace Corps Volunteers).

We share our experiences during social and learning events, advocate for shared values, and sponsor programs that advance Liberian aspirations. All who support our vision, mission, and values are invited to become members. Though membership fees are not assessed, active members are those who contribute at least annually to FOL, either monetarily or by serving on a FOL committee. Our members live throughout the United States and in several foreign countries.

Vision

Our vision is for Friends of Liberia to be an effective organization 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 501(c)(3) organization registered in Washington, DC that seeks to positively affect Liberia and Liberians through education, health, economic, and humanitarian programs, and through advocacy efforts in support of shared values between the people of Liberia and the United States.

Core Values

Service:

We are committed to timely and reliable service based on mutual respect. We engage in programs and activities that respond to needs identified by Liberians and that help them shape solutions to their needs.

Partnerships:

We value collaboration and seek partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals. We build strong working relationships and coalitions to help ensure self-reliance and sustainability as ultimate goals of our work.

Accountability and Transparency:

We follow the highest ethical standards, and demonstrate honesty and fairness in every action that we take. Measurable outcomes and sound financial management are important elements of our accountability. We expect the same from our partners and those we serve.

Integrity:

We are responsible to our members, board, donors, and the communities and country we serve for ensuring that our programs and activities meet the highest standards of professional and personal integrity.

Stewardship:

We are able to accomplish our mission through the generosity of our members and others. We respect donors' intentions on the use of their gifts, and are responsible stewards of the resources they entrust to us.

SECTION I: *FOL Program Committee Reports*

Education Committee

Liberia Family Literacy Initiative

Overview

Our flagship Family Literacy Initiative (FLI) was launched in November 2015 after a nationwide survey of education programs indicated that the greatest unmet educational need in Liberia was for preschool preparation. Several pre-school preparation programs were researched for suitability to Liberia, and the HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters) model was selected, which recognizes that parents are a child's first teacher and learning begins at home. A three-year pilot project was developed through effective partnerships with [WE-CARE Foundation](#) and [HIPPY International](#) and implemented in November, 2015. Propelled by positive Year 1 evaluations in 2016 and fueled with a generous Open Society Foundations grant, FLI completed its second successful year in 2017. Details on FLI and reports themselves may be read at <http://fol.org/programs/literacy-initiative/>.

Since the three year pilot concludes in 2018, plans are being developed for the future of the program. To this end, Maniza Ntekin, Open Society Foundations, Yvonne Capehart Weah, WE-CARE Foundation, and Sia Barbara Ferguson Kamara, FOL Education Working Group, attended a conference at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government on scaling early childhood education programs in Africa. David Rosen, FOL, and Don Drach, FOL, joined them at the conclusion of the conference to talk about FLI progress, including evaluation and a proposed adult literacy component.



Pictured above: Manzina Ntekin, Don Drach, David Rosen, Yvonne Capehart Weah, and Sia Barbara Ferguson Kamara at the Cambridge conference on scaling (growing) early childhood programs

2017 Program

In 2017, FLI doubled the number of families in the three participating communities: Westpoint and Caldwell in Montserrado County, and Duazon in Margibi County. The program reached 123 children and 120 parents or caregivers who worked with 12 home visitors under the supervision of coordinator Gbima Bahtokpah and assistant coordinator David Sonjor, and the overall management of our implementing partners Mike Weah and Yvonne Capehart, directors of the Liberian non-profit organization WE-CARE. HIPPY International director Miriam Westheimer and HIPPY national trainer Michelle Mackin Brown continued to provide mentoring and curriculum support. Sia Barbara Kamara, FOL's principal FLI liaison, visited the program twice in 2017, and other members of FOL's education working group (Mary Gemignani, Pat Reilly, Jinny Hesel, David Adams, Stephanie Vickers, Lyn Gray, Simon James, Ron Mertz, and Don Drach) continued to provide advice, technical support, and recommendations to the FOL Board regarding the program.

Results

The result of testing the children before and after the program year has concluded that a majority of the 120 children demonstrated significant progress in reading, counting, and identifying colors, shapes, and objects -- the five pillars of the curriculum. The children who were in FLI Year 2 had similar and slightly higher gains in testing. Year Three (2018) will bring in 60 new families with 3-year-olds in a new community, while FLI Year 2 move to the Year 3 curriculum and 2017 Year 1 to Year 2.

As a result of FLI's achievements, which are regularly reported to the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Family Literacy Initiative/HIPPY was incorporated into the short- and long-term plan of the Liberian MOE's Bureau of Early Childhood Education. The Bureau recognizes FLI as the home-based component of the national early childhood system for Liberia. FLI/HIPPY was also incorporated into the Ministry's five-year Education Sector Plan to reach its "Education for All" goals. The Home Visitor Trainee and Home Visitor/Teacher Positions have been incorporated into Level III of the Early Childhood Development National Professional Development Framework as well as the Certification and Recertification Criteria.



FOL's Dr. David Rosen visited the Family Literacy Initiative in August to observe the program in action, assist with evaluation, and explore potential for an adult literacy component.

Feedback from parents shows a high degree of support for FLI and appreciation for the services provided by the Home

Visitors. In a survey of parents, 95% of respondents said their child had learned ‘very much’ from being in the program, and 100% said they would recommend the program to a friend or relative.

Among Dr. Rosen's observations: "One father I observed, a man close to my own advanced age, was helping his child to learn to read. Except for the home visitor training and the HIPPY materials, he had had no training to teach. Yet, I saw in him a caring parent with a gentle way of teaching his child and encouraging his child's curiosity to learn, that made me wish he had been a teacher so that many more children could benefit from his natural teaching gifts. His son appeared to be near school entry age, but not yet in school. I saw the child recognize his name in print and then write it. Then I saw him answer questions about the activities and reading for the week. I believed that it wouldn't be long before he would be able to read, but I was wrong; he could already read the books in his plastic home library box. His father proudly pulled out one of the books, and his son read it to me. Clearly he would enter school as a top student, if not the best in his class..." Note: It is hard to convey the conditions these children live in, children who confront challenges just to live and would never have this kind of attention, opportunity, or encouragement without FLI. The same parent told Dr. Rosen: "... that sometimes it was difficult to focus on teaching his child, that the previous week for example a fierce storm had taken the roof off his house, and that the flying roof had also injured his son."

"Before I left her, (a) parent said she wanted to thank me – FOL really – for bringing this program to her community, that it has helped her and her family. I asked how it has helped, expecting to hear, as other parents had said to me, that it prepares their children for school; but she said, ‘This program has helped me to become closer to my son. He likes doing these HIPPY activities with me. He looks forward to doing them. I think he likes them better than playing.’"



The picture at left is a typical session where the parent is leading her child through the lesson for the week, while other children watch and learn through observation. It takes place beside her market stand.

Capacity Building

Central to all activities is the recognition that capacity building is essential to the success and long-term sustainability of FLI. All three partners work closely and collaboratively to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge to our implementing partner, WE-CARE. As an example, the Year 2 one-week training program for Home Visitors was planned and delivered entirely by WE-CARE based on their experiences in Year 1 when Miriam Westheimer conducted the training; likewise, the Bracken School Readiness Assessment pre-test for new students was conducted entirely by WE-CARE.

Although the majority of parents in the program are barely literate, a few had some education and exceptional enthusiasm for the program. The WE-CARE coordinators developed these parents into home visitors, expanding employment opportunities and impacting the family economy. They are proving to be dedicated and relate excellently to new program participants, parents like themselves. Some of the home visitors who began with decent high school educations are making plans to become accredited teachers. FLI has provided illiterate parents with tools that are teaching them to also learn letters and sounds and how numbers work, which resulted in the demand for adult literacy that FOL built into Year 3 plans (dependent on funding availability).

WE-CARE managers are members of FLI committees (budget, monitoring and evaluation, curriculum, etc.) and are thus part of the policy and decision-making process. HIPPO and Open Society Foundations enabled the WE-CARE co-director and FLI Coordinator to build capacity through presentations and networking at conferences in Massachusetts and New Zealand, respectively.

Looking Ahead

As the Ministry of Education (MOE) changes hands with a new administration in late January 2018, FOL liaison Sia Barbara Kamara will visit the Ministry to explain FLI and its benefits for all Liberian children to new MOE leaders. She will also participate in meetings of major donors in Liberia, including the Global Partnership for Education which has announced an \$11.9 million grant to Liberia, including funds for early childhood programs. FOL President Sarah Morrison will follow up with a visit to Liberia in March 2018 to monitor FOL projects but also reinforce to the MOE, FLI partners, other organizations, and potential donors how the FLI model could meet Liberia's critical need for pre-school preparation programs if sustainable funding were secured.

Small Grants Committee

The Small Grants Committee received approximately 19 grant applications from January 2017 to November 2017. Of this number, only two grants were recommended for funding by the end of the year. The funded grant proposals included \$3,000 to Restore Hope-Liberia, enabling them to expand their traditional country cloth weaving business for women in Lofa County. The project helps generate income for the women and their families. The other approved proposal, also for \$3000, was from Liberia Returnee Network, Inc. The goal of their proposal is to help improve the classroom facilities at Euphemia Abdullai Public Primary School outside Monrovia. Funding approved in 2016 for the FOL Health Committee Needs Assessment was carried over to 2017, and \$1000 was reimbursed to the Liberian team for expenses incurred in 2017.

Observations

The Committee conjectured that the large number of applications during 2017 is indicative of the fact that more and more organizations are aware of the grants program administered by FOL. However, the quality of most proposals did not meet the basic guidelines of the small grants program. As a result, the Committee made a number of recommendations, including the development of workshops in Liberia that would provide help organizations applying for grants to improve grant writing competency and assist these organizations with the ability to apply for other grants. Four possible ways to develop workshops in Liberia were discussed.

The Committee also suggested that a list be developed of organizations that have successfully completed a FOL Small Grants project and provided a final report. These organizations would be encouraged to apply for another small grant from FOL. This list would provide the Small Grants Committee with names of organizations that have demonstrated their quality of work, ability to follow through with the grant objectives, and reporting back to the Committee.

Additional recommendations of the Committee included potential revisions to the Small Grant procedures, including additional information for previous grantees, on the FOL website. These will be presented to the FOL Board for approval. Also, it was suggested that FOL create contacts with the universities in Liberia and ask them to disseminate the information about the FOL Small Grants program. Information for the universities to disseminate would be provided. This information could also be used to engage Peace Corps Volunteers to help identify organizations that share FOL grant objectives, and work with them to develop proposals. This partnership would also assist in monitoring project progress.

Small Grants Final Reports

One of the requirements of the small grants program is that funded projects will submit a final report of the project upon completion including pictures and other artifacts. However, this aspect of the committee's work has been challenging since some of the organizations do not submit a final report. The committee is currently discussing how we can enforce this aspect of the grant requirement and will be presented to the Board during the next meeting.

Completed in 2017:

Organization: Initiative for Female Development (INFED)

Project Focus: To purchase 10 sewing machines for female graduates of the INFED women empowerment program at Red Light and Thinker's Village, Paynesville.

Date Funded: Dec 2016

Amount: \$2,000.00



Organization: My Heart's Appeal Project

Project Focus: Refurbishing a Well to provide clean drinking water for students

Date Funded: January 2017 **Amount:** \$2,000.00



2018

Organization: Education First, Inc.

Project Focus: Construction of four modern toilets for school children in Harper

Date Funded: January, 2017 **Amount:** \$3,000.00



Health Committee

Friends of Liberia is assessing the need for an education-focused health project designed to help improve the knowledge base and competency of faculty at the Liberian schools of nursing and midwifery. Since nurses and midwives provide the bulk of the health care in Liberia, it is extremely important that these health care workers in Liberia receive the best quality of instruction, both while obtaining their initial training and ongoing throughout their careers.

The goal of the current project, funded through the Small Grants program in 2016, is to identify specific areas where faculty members from the schools of nursing and midwifery feel they need or want to improve their teaching competencies. This will help them do a better job of preparing nurses and midwives to work in Liberia, and in turn improve the level of health care in Liberia.

The first step for the project was to develop a needs assessment to identify specific areas of knowledge needed by the nursing and midwifery faculty to improve their teaching abilities. In 2017 a needs assessment was conducted with faculty members from eleven (11) Liberian nursing and midwifery schools. Focus groups also served to clarify and expand upon answers to the needs assessment instrument. The data is now being tabulated and analyzed. Specific areas of additional education will be identified from the data analysis and will be utilized to determine a potential continuing education project for the faculty.

The Health Committee will determine if the results will support the development of a health education project. If a project is recommended, the Health Committee will seek the FOL Board's guidance about the nature of the project, feasibility, development strategy, potential partners, funding, and sustainability for the project. FOL would, of course, involve and consult with the appropriate Liberian Boards and Councils, and the Ministry of Health, during the development of a project concept.

The Health Committee is composed of a team in Liberia and a team in the US. The four members of the team in Liberia are graduates of the first class of the Masters of Nursing Education program at Mother Patern College of Health Sciences in Monrovia. The members are: Edwin Beyan, Harriette Mondaye, G. Clinton Zeantoe and Humphrey Loweal. The ten member team in the U.S. are: Dr. Karen Hein, Roger Kropf, Sarah Morrison, Richard Nisbett, Beth Fischer, Bob Fischer, Joe Franta, Chris Piccione, Pat McGeorge (chairperson) and Jim McGeorge.

If you would like to help with the Health Committee, send an email to: liberia@fol.org and put in the subject line "Health Committee".

Entrepreneurship Committee

During 2017, FOL's entrepreneurship activities have included a small grant award that supports the training of women in tailoring and setting up graduates with a sewing machine that they must pay for within the following 12 months (which has been extended to 18 months). The funds are intended to provide for new machines and sustain the program for new trainees.

The Entrepreneurship Committee has begun a study of what seems most feasible for FOL to do in this focus area. Training in practical skills, training in development of business plans, competitions for

innovative business models, start-up loans (similar to KIVA), and cooperation with groups on the ground in Liberia whose goals are similar to FOL's are among the possibilities being explored. In order to assure accountability, we feel that new projects should be monitored on site by FOL members, Peace Corps Volunteers, or other partners or organizations known to our members.

FOL members with an interest in this area are encouraged to become active committee participants or even just send us your ideas: Liberia@fol.org, with subject line "Entrepreneurship".

SECTION II:

FOL Governance, Outreach, and Operations

Friends of Liberia complies fully with the District of Columbia Code for Incorporation as a Nonprofit, and has been recognized since 1988 by the Internal Revenue Service as a Section 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable, and tax-exempt organization.

The governing board trustees include the FOL officers, committee chairs, program heads, and at-large members. After considerable analysis, FOL revised its Bylaws in 2016 and implemented this structure in 2017 to reduce duplicative meetings and facilitate decision-making. The revised Bylaws describe the organizational structure (shown in the following diagram) with a flexibility that allows FOL to make several structural changes as needed to address changing needs and member participation.

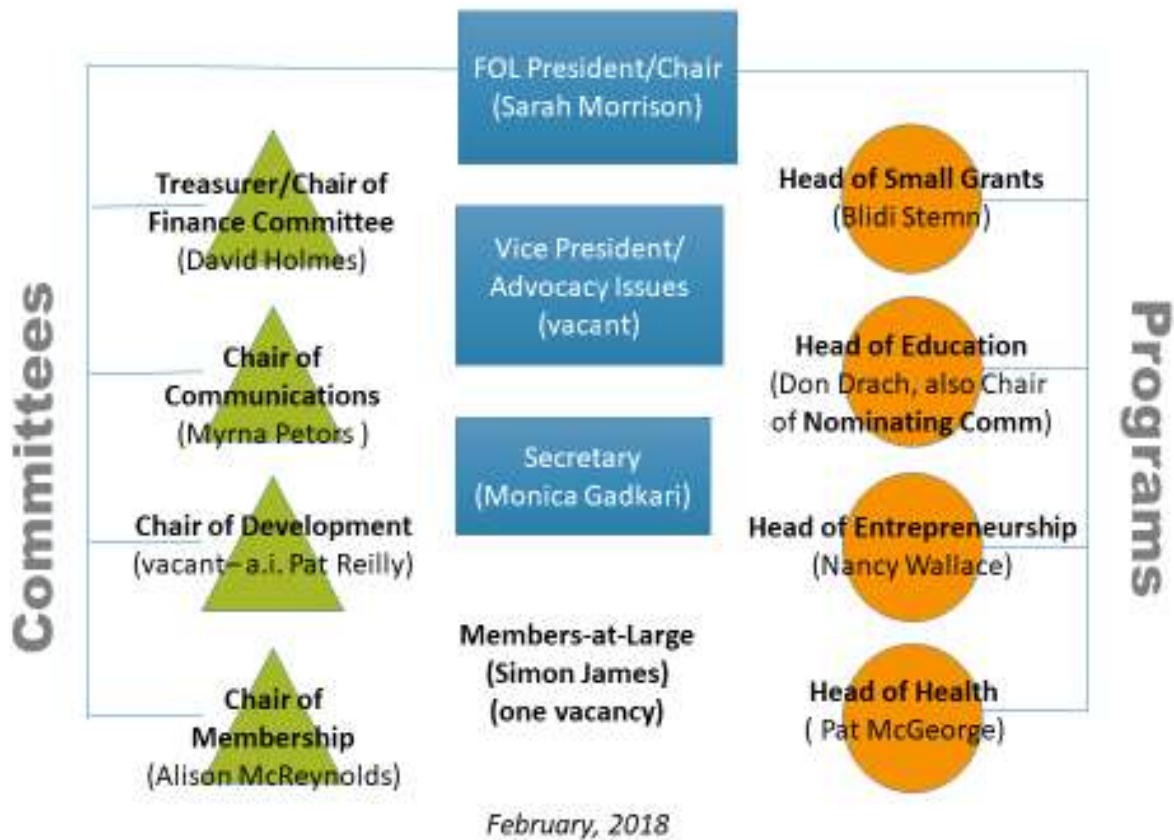
The Board meets quarterly, at least once a year in person and at other times either in person or via electronic participation. Board meetings may be called at other times. A quorum must be present for official decisions to be taken, such as budget allocations, changes in structure or Board membership, and project additions or major changes. Program and management committees confer often, and communication among committee members is frequent between official board meetings.

FOL members are welcome to attend Board meetings and share opinions at any time. Members interested in serving on the Board or on a committee should contact the Nominating Committee Chair, Don Drach. He can answer questions about position qualifications or forward your expression of interest to the proper person.



November 2017 Board Meeting that included a PowerPoint presentation on FOL social media usage, led remotely by the developers. Some Board members who are not able to come in from other states or countries join us by telephone conference call or a widely available video app for meetings.

FRIENDS of LIBERIA Organizational Chart



Membership

FOL membership grew by four percent in 2017 and the FOL mailing list now totals over 2000. We invite anyone who shares our Mission to join us and receive our newsletter. Approximately 10% of our members made donations in 2017, which averaged \$168 per donation, with a median of \$100. FOL members are very generous during a crisis, such as Ebola, but less so to sustain long-term projects. Member support, through participation as well as funding, is critical to the success of FOL programs and initiatives. Monetary donations can also provide matching funds required by some grants.

We will continue to explore creative ways to engage our membership, including building a more robust social media presence. We shared the hope of all who love Liberia that 2017 would culminate in the peaceful and democratic election of a new President. Through e-newsletters sent every other week from the end of July 2017 through the inauguration of President George Weah in January of 2018, both FOL members and a larger population were informed on the progress of the campaigning and elections. We are very grateful for the hundreds of hours contributed by a member (who wishes to remain anonymous) to research information and compose these.



FOL moderates Panel of Experts at NYU/DC Campus discussion on Liberia's Presidential Elections

In November 2017, between the primary and final presidential elections, FOL sponsored the discussion "Electing a President: Examining Liberia's 2017 Experience." Pictured above, left to right: FOL President Morrison moderated distinguished panelists VOA Daybreak Africa Manager and Host James Butty; U.S. Institute for Peace Senior Program Officer Jonas Claes; former U.S. Ambassador to Liberia and Assistant Secretary of State (retired), Georgetown University Distinguished Resident Fellow Linda Thomas-Greenfield; Welma Redd, Assistant Professor of Communication Studies, Morgan State University; and Emma Arcodia, West Africa Program Development Coordinator, Search for Common Ground. Refreshments and networking among the panel and audience, many of whom were Liberians, followed. We greatly appreciate NYU's DC campus for hosting, with the outstanding assistance from Thomas McIntyre (Director, External Relations), Lauren Hunt and Michael Jaeger. FOL and NYU volunteers who helped the day of the program played essential roles in the program's success. Liberian papers even reported on the event. The video may be watched at: <http://www.nyu.edu/washington-dc/nyu-washington--dc-events/liberia-s-presidential-election.html>

We hope to continue to host more programs that are accessible to our diverse membership throughout the world. We encourage and could help support regional FOL member events to educate the general public about Liberia, or where there are RPCVs and others who served in Liberia who might become FOL members. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming more involved with FOL or has an idea for an event, we welcome your input. Come join us!

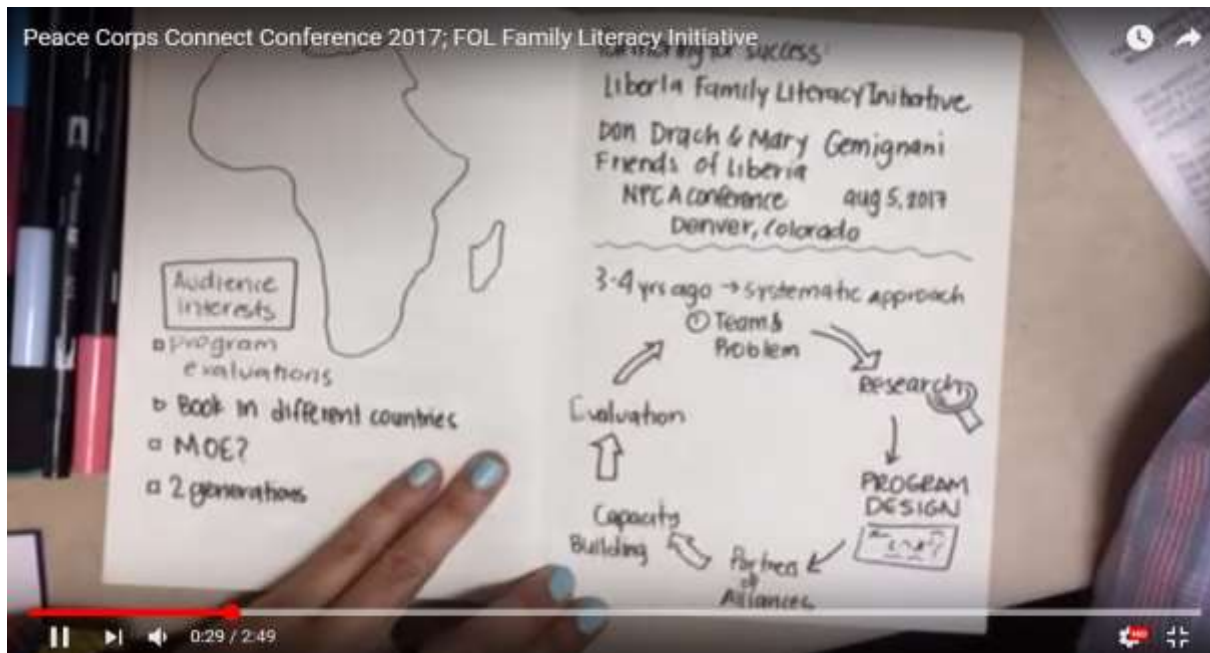
PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

FOL presents at 2017 NPCA annual conference

FOL's Family Literacy Initiative (FLI) was on the program at the National Peace Corps Association's annual conference in Denver in August. Education Working Group co-chairs Mary Gemignani and Don Drach led a workshop that highlighted the blueprint used to plan and implement this successful country program, including how FOL identified, researched and documented the problem (literacy); established partnerships and alliances; designed, implemented and evaluated the project; and helped build capacity with our

Liberian partner the WE-CARE Foundation. The power point slides from the presentation are available at www.fol.org/literacy-initiative.

A unique aspect of the workshop was that it was captured by Panama RPCV and friend of FOL Valeria Rodriguez, who used an innovative technique called 'sketch notes' to document the presentation. Watch Valeria's work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrZ1PeTBI0k>



Liberian Studies Association (LSA)

Several FOL members are also members of LSA and participate in the annual Liberian Studies Association conferences. The 2017 LSA Conference was held at Ramapo College in New Jersey. Dr. Amos Sawyer, at the time Chairman of the Governance Commission in Liberia, was the plenary speaker at the final dinner. FOL former Board member Dr. Verlon Stone continues his essential role with LSA. In May 2017, FOL honored a past FOL Board chair, Dr. Svend Holsoe (pictured), at his passing. The Holsoe Collection (originally the materials from his Institute for Liberian Studies) formed the core of the Indiana University Liberian Collections, and his financial donations helped fund the Liberian Collections Project processing in its early days. He was a co-founder of the Liberian Studies Association and the founding editor of the *Liberian Studies Journal*.



<http://www.udel.edu/udaily/2017/may/in-memorial-svend-holsoe/>

Further Outreach

Members had opportunities to bring up FOL at events such as the release of [The Land Beneath Our Feet](#), a one-hour feature-length documentary on history, memory, and land rights challenges in Liberia, through [Passion River Films](#) in partnership with the DC Environmental Film Festival. This event was held at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. Land rights is a critical issue among Liberians, including whole villages and corporations as well as individuals displaced by the war. Peaceful and just solutions that also respect traditional rights must be found.



FOL also participated in a program with 4-H Liberia, which is establishing 4-H chapters in high schools to promote sustainable gardens and farming.

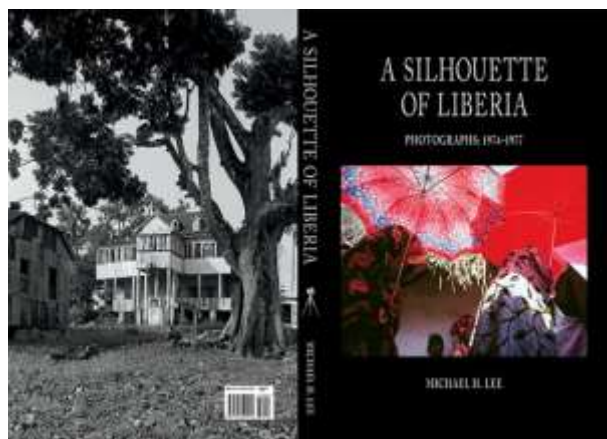
We encourage FOL members to send us news and pictures of events they attend where they are able to promote the Third Goal of Peace Corps and let people know about Friends of Liberia.

Development Committee

The active members of the Development Committee are Stephanie Vickers, Sarah Morrison, Don Drach, and Barbara Kamara. Barbara and Don are defacto members who help with communications to our largest donor. Pat Reilly is acting chair until a new person is elected to this position on the Board, or a current Board member is willing to be appointed to the role.

Successful work of the totally volunteer committee resulted in a grant in 2017 from the Open Society Foundations of about \$125,000, which supported [in part] the continuance and expansion of our Family Literacy Initiative (FLI). We are very grateful for the continuing annual support of the Rolander Family Foundation at the \$5,000 level. Stephanie Vickers manages that donation through her relationship with their board. These funds can be used for supplementary projects.

Responses from smaller donors to semi-annual appeal letters total between \$15,000 and \$19,000. Some of that is designated to FLI and the rest goes to the general budget for administrative needs and to fund the Small Grants Program. In 2017, we tried a new incentive approach in one appeal letter, offering a pre-release copy of the beautiful and haunting *A Silhouette of Liberia: Photos 1974-1978* by FOL member



Michael Lee for a donation over \$100. We also offered the perennial best-seller *Liberian Cookhouse Cooking* for a donation between \$50 and \$100. We do not have enough historical data to determine how successful this was, but our average donation did increase over the last year. (The latter is still available for purchase on the FOL.org website, and the former through Amazon. FOL can be your designated charity with "Amazon Smile," smile.amazon.com, which does not add to your cost for purchases, but Amazon makes a small contribution which can mean a lot to FOL.)

The actual number of donors, however, appeared to decrease. This may be at least partly due to the delayed arrival of the winter appeal letter to most of our members. In the coming year, we will focus

more on increasing the number of individual donors. We will ask donors if we may list their names on our site or in our next annual report, and establish several levels of contribution. Setting up automatic monthly donations using the PayPal link on our website is one easy way that members can support the mission of FOL and ensure we have continued funding throughout the year.

Our dedicated Thank You letter writers, Pat McGeorge and Stephanie Vickers, communicate with our donors. We are truly grateful for every single donation, big or small.

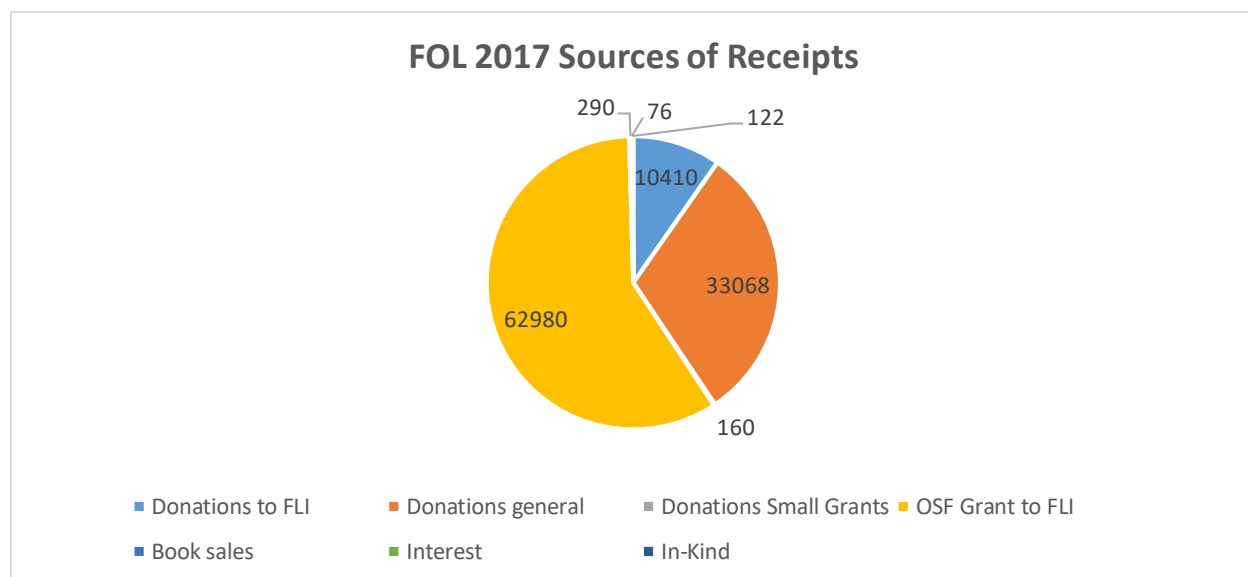
As FLI plans to scale up each year to bring in new families and communities, we are seeking other large donor organizations to partner with us on this project. Your ideas are welcomed! We hope to expand the Development Committee to help develop proposals and manage grants.

FOL is also preparing information on Legacy Giving, encouraging members to remember our work in their wills and bequests. One's legacy has the ability to create lasting change and ensure that the things we value and hold dear are passed on for future generations to continue. Through legacies we can help shape the course of history in a country we love even after we are gone.

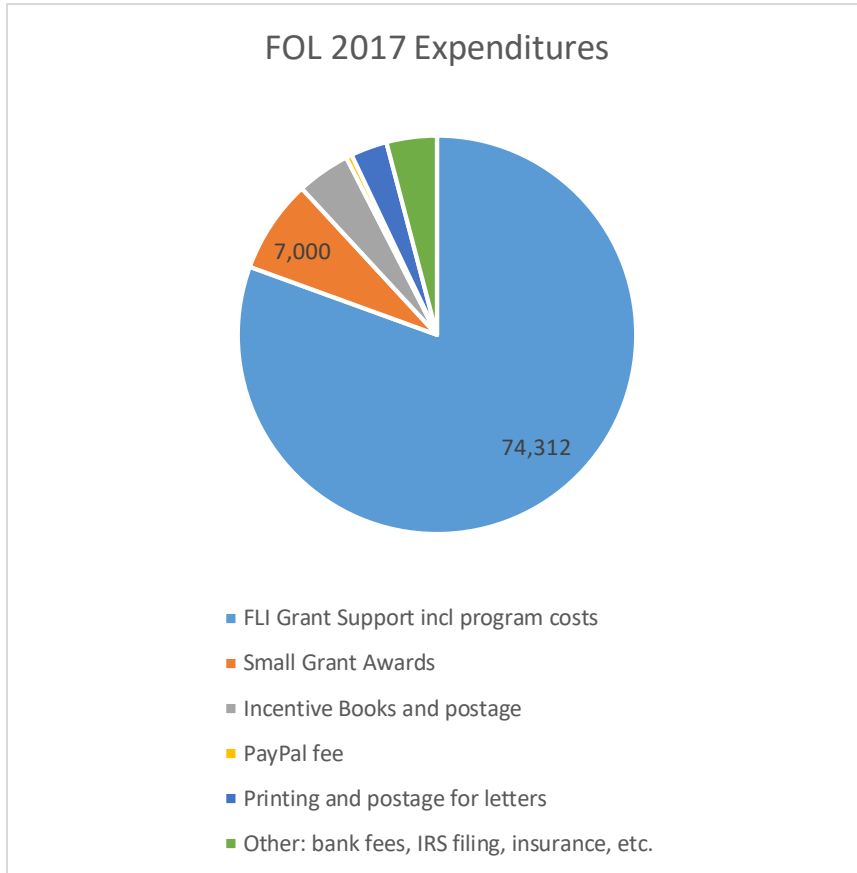
Finance Committee

Friends of Liberia (FOL) started 2017 with \$149,000 (rounded to nearest thousand) on hand, of which \$99,000 was unrestricted, \$14,000 was carried-over member contributions to our Family Literacy Initiative (FLI) program, \$20,000 was carried-over grant support for our Family Literacy Initiative (FLI), and \$4,000 was grant support for the Administrative and Overhead costs attributable to our largest program, FLI.

During 2017 FOL received \$107,000, of which \$63,000 was a grant payment from the Open Society Foundations for FLI. 41% of receipts were member donations, \$43,638, plus some cookbook sales, interest, and in-kind donations (only counting those with receipts). The associated fundraising costs of printing appeal letters, postage, and the books offered for the first time as incentives reduced the gain by 16%, however. FOL has never used a professional fund raiser, but is considering a change since sustenance of larger projects requires identification of potential grants, writing more proposals, and reaching out more effectively to our members.



The FLI grant period ended in December 2017, so carry-over to 2018 was important to prevent disruption of the FLI program during the 2017-18 school year. (Likewise, remaining FLI funds from 2016 were carried over to 2017 and used until grant funds were received.) The total grant funds received from 2016 through 2017 were \$126,000. All FLI expenses are carefully monitored, and local resources are used to keep costs of materials as low as possible.



FOL appropriated \$81,000 in program funds in 2017 -
 - \$74,000 (81%) from grant support for FLI program operations and \$7,000 (8%) for the Small Grant awards.

2017 Administrative and Overhead costs were \$10,951, about 11% of the total, which includes the fundraising portion of \$7177, 7.8% of the total expenditures. As noted, about \$4000 of this amount was related to the incentive book offer that resulted in larger donations, but not a greater overall number.

FOL operations in 2017 resulted in a \$15,000 increase to funds on hand and FOL ended the year with a balance of \$164,000, including \$131,000 which is unrestricted and \$24,000 is

member contributions to the FLI program. Member contributions to the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI) program are critical to help assure a continuation of program funding between grant award periods and for matching funds often required by foundations, as well as payments for program activities not explicitly covered by grant awards.

Nominating Committee

During 2017, FOL's Nominating Committee and Board focused on finding a Communications Committee coordinator, and a nomination was in process of approval at the beginning of 2018. Announcements regarding the need for a Vice President (preferably who would move to President at some point) and Development Committee chair were made in periodic communications to members, but remain sorely needed. One of the At-Large Board members moved into a vacant committee chairperson position, so there is also a vacant At-Large Board member position for someone willing to make the needed

commitment. Details regarding responsibilities and expectations for any of these vacancies can be made by writing to the chairman of the Nominating Committee, Don Drach, at liberia@fol.org.

Communications Committee

Our Membership chair, Alison McReynolds, has in addition shouldered most of the tasks necessary to edit submissions and post on the FOL.org website, send out email blasts and event invitations, monitor the FOL Facebook page and other social media, and take care of the tasks of having the biannual newsletter printed and mailed out. We are infinitely grateful for her work and know that mentoring a new Communications Chair will also largely fall to her, but at least that will be with the promise of reducing some of the hours she has given to these and other tasks. We are also very appreciative for the website help from FOL member Fred Lange and postings faithfully shared by FOL Board member Don Drach.

Important to the process of identifying what we need in a Communications Chair was the analysis of FOL's Social Media Footprint by Mary Drach and Katie Aloisi, which was presented at the November 2017 Board meeting. This professional (and gratis) presentation was enlightening and began a critical discussion on social media goals and target audiences. A HUGE thank you to Mary and Katie, who also offered to do some social media training for the Board.

Contact Information

The best way to contact Friend of Liberia is by email at Liberia@fol.org. Because we are a totally volunteer organization saving your donations for program activities as much as possible, we do not staff an office. Your emails will be forwarded to the appropriate person(s) for reply.

We also refer you to our website www.FOL.org for additional information on FOL, its history and accomplishments, and all our programs. It includes links to be added to our mailing list and to make donations. Please like us on Facebook and watch for more social media interaction as a Communications Committee becomes active!