



December 2008

Friends of Sierra Leone

Call for Nominations for the Friends of Sierra Leone Board of Directors

The current term of elected Friends of Sierra Leone board members will expire in August 2009. Therefore, new elections are required. The first step in this process is to solicit nominations for these positions from the membership. Please refer to our Friends of Sierra Leone website at www.fosalone.org, select "about FoSL," and then "FoSL by-laws" (both in the blue frames on the right side) to review the responsibilities of the various positions. Elections will take place in spring 2009.

Please consider becoming a member of the board. Our meetings are generally held once a month (usually about ten per year), and we try to limit the length of each meeting to about an hour. We make use of telephone conferencing technology that enables us to include our Board members from across the country – currently in Alaska, Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. We have become comfortable holding this type of meeting. Your participation would be welcome. Please nominate yourself and others that you feel are interested in participating in Friends of Sierra Leone. Please provide contact information if you have it, so that we can confirm their interest before placing their name on the ballot.

Please send all nominations to the following email address: mike@fosalone.org. We prefer email nominations, but you can send snail mail to: Friends of Sierra Leone, P. O. Box 15875, Washington, DC 20003-0875. We will send out receipt confirmations.

Deadline for receipt of nominations is January 31st 2009.

Positions open to nominations: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, two Public Affairs Officers, and at least four at-large Board members.

Nominee

Position

Friends of Sierra Leone

Board Officers

President	Peggy Murrah, Social Circle, GA
Vice President	Aiah Fanday, Silver Spring, MD
Treasurer	Mark Hager, Phoenix, AZ
Secretary	Bob Heavner, Berkeley, CA
Public Affairs	Sarian Bouma, Annapolis, MD
Public Affairs	Jim Sheahan, Atlanta, GA
At Large	Tim Curley, Silver Spring, MD
At Large	Judy Figi, Janesville, WI
At Large	Gary Schulze, New York, NY
At Large	Cindy Nofziger, Seattle, WA
At Large	Anthony McMillon, Ft. Washington, MD
At Large	John Amman, Brooklyn, NY
At Large	Scott Leaman, Grass Valley, CA
At Large	Jim Temple, Minneapolis, MN

Committee Chairs

Web Site	Jamie Brown, Juneau, AK
Advocacy	Judy Figi, Janesville, WI
Membership	Tim Curley, Silver Spring, MD
Bunce Island	Mike Diliberti, Falls Church, VA
Fundraising	Patty Bruzek, Lombard, IL
Education	Sarah Armstrong, Falls Church, VA
Projects	Jim Hanson, Social Circle, GA
Newsletter Editor	Carl Onken, Central Valley, NY

Help Friends of Sierra Leone by Searching the Internet

Goodsearch is a search engine that directs some of the money raised from advertisers to a cause you designate. The contributions vary, but the estimate is about one cent for each search conducted through Goodsearch.

- (1) Go to <http://www.goodsearch.com>, choose your cause (Friends of Sierra Leone) and click on "verify" (if you allow cookies on your computer you can skip this step in future searches).
- (2) Search the net as you normally would.

The site utilizes Yahoo!, so you'll get high quality results.

A Message from President Peggy Murrah

This issue of the Friends of Sierra Leone newsletter focuses on projects being carried out by our members, but not necessarily as Friends of Sierra Leone (FoSL) projects. I am amazed at the number of projects, many small and some larger, being successfully administered by FoSL members with help from their friends and families in Sierra Leone. Additionally, quite a few FoSL members continue to fund education at levels from primary school to college. This newsletter highlights only a few of the projects either in the planning stages or currently taking place. To all of you who have contributed in some way, thank you!

I teach at Social Circle Middle School, which is part of a very small, rural school system in Georgia. We also happen to be poor by US standards and have a high number of public aid recipients in our student body. However, we are also generous as evidenced over the past five years by the thousands of dollars in scholarships and other financial aid the students, faculty and staff have donated so that 14 girls and 1 boy can attend school in Taiama, Moyamba District, where I lived when I was in the Peace Corps. Besides the people in my community, we have also had donations from other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. The students are in grades ranging from Class 1 to JSS III. We pay for the required pamphlets that the junior secondary students must have, after school tutoring for those in need, room and board for a few who live too far away to walk to school, and for the care of one student's parents who are blind and can't take care of themselves.

This project started when I returned to Sierra Leone for the FoSL Annual Meeting in 2004 and took some donated money with me to use as I saw fit while there. A Sierra Leonean friend living in the States encouraged me to use the money for scholarships for girls and that is what I did. The one boy is a special case. The following year my school system's student body and staff donated enough to increase the program and continue for another year. Now we have expanded to become a school club whose sole purpose is to raise money to use for educational work in Sierra Leone.

I have been fortunate enough to have two adult volunteers donate their time and efforts to make the whole thing work. One is at school every morning at 7:15 selling pencils, paper and other school supplies. She and the other parents

have also set up booths at the town fair, a community festival, and school events to sell African clothing, jewelry, and crafts that we have managed to get from Sierra Leone over the past few years. They are assisted by some of our students in their work.

In the words of Alyson Wright, one of the most involved high school students, "Why do we do this? If you stop to think about how much we actually have here and how much we take for granted, you would see how much the students in Sierra Leone do not have. We provide funds to send these children to school because by giving one child an education, she in turn, can teach a nation. It is a domino effect. I love helping people, and I love to learn. To be able to help somebody I have never met is really amazing! We send girls who are my own age to school. This is so cool! I have sent mail to them as well! It was really amazing to read their replies!" Stephanie Champagne-Mason says, "I am having a wonderful time with this club. I hear all the time from Mrs. Murrah that the people of Sierra Leone are very friendly and generous."

The students in my school are finally communicating with the students in Sierra Leone. It took some time to get people interested in the work, but once I had just a couple of determined volunteers and their energetic children, the work took off. We have increased our fundraising activities and are expanding out into the community. Besides the scholarship program for children, we are also raising the money to build a school in Kenema-Blango which currently has no dedicated building for the 300+ primary students attending classes in the court barrie. My school superintendent, another RPCV, and I just finished sending a young man to teacher's training college for the past three years and he has taken the job as headmaster in the current school. We continue to put aside money to one day build a school for these children.

You too can participate in a project in Sierra Leone. If you don't have the time or resources to start one yourself, the projects fund for FoSL is a great alternative. By donating to the FoSL fund, you can join with others and together fund one of the many worthwhile projects that applies to FoSL for assistance. There is no shortage of projects – just a shortage of funds. I encourage everyone to consider helping in some way no matter how small.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

These narratives were all written by individuals who participated in the projects described and continue to do so. The many voices bring a variety of perspectives to efforts in Sierra Leone that speak for themselves.

Salone Enabling and Empowering Development (SEED)

Stacy Elmer

I am working with SEED, Salone Enabling and Empowering Development, to establish a permanent HIV-testing site at NarSarah Health Clinic, one of SEED's numerous projects that assists victims of Sierra Leone's recent war. The health clinic is located in Kabala and directly addresses the health needs of the surrounding area. I administered HIV-testing at NarSarah Clinic for four weeks of the past summer. Other than the health clinic, SEED projects include micro-financing for Women Against Poverty, the Amputee/War Wounded Camps, an education program, and an agriculture and animal husbandry program.

John Jackson

I am working with a group called CITA International (now known as SEED) that established and runs the NarSarah Clinic in Kabala. I solicited a donation of medical supplies from Kaiser here in northern California and then raised funds to ship. We shipped a container last month and it was scheduled to arrive in Freetown in early December. From there the container will be trucked up to Kabala. The shipment is a wide variety of basic medical supplies, including bandages, surgical gloves, lab supplies, new mom kits, sutures, gowns, medical tubing, an audiometer, five Dell PCs and numerous other items.

<http://www.seed-narsarah.org/mission.html>

Sierra Leone Village Partnership

Jeff Hall, Ag '87-89

I was fortunate enough to return to my village (Jokibu, Kailahun District) for the first time in 2004, and found my three best friends were still alive. The entire village had been destroyed during the war, and many people were killed or injured. Most who survived had lived in refugee camps for seven to eight years. By 2004, most people had returned and built a new mud home. The UN had given tarps to use as roofs, but unfortunately they were already leaking, so that many homes had walls falling down during the rainy season. With significant effort required just to maintain adequate shelter, farms were very small and food was extremely limited. People were very depressed from the destruction and suffering during the war.

It was so wonderful to see my friends again, yet so distressing to see their suffering. So I recommitted to working with them in partnership to measurably improve their quality of life each year. With generous family and friends, I was able to raise funds for 200 new zinc roofs (about \$500/roof) in 2006, so that people could then focus on expanding their farms back to pre-war size. In 2007 we built water wells and a primary school addition, and this year we've focused on basic health with latrines and mosquito nets. To date, the effort has been very informal, and we've raised about \$100,000/year for a total of 5,000 people in three villages. Each year I return for two weeks, and take along 15 - 25 people (students and adults; three to four college students spend the summer as interns) to work in partnership monitoring progress and strategically planning next steps. Micro loans are becoming our major emphasis, which should enable farmers to double or triple their income. Our next trip will be in May 2009.

It has been a real joy to remain involved in the life of my village, and to keep in touch frequently with my village friends. We now have cell and internet access in the village. I strongly encourage you to get involved with your village, because they really do need your help. You can do some very simple, inexpensive work that will make a tremendous difference. More info on our project at <http://www.SLPP.org>.

Tom Hull
RPCV (Sierra Leone 68-70)
U. S. Ambassador (04-07)
Member of the MorePeaceCorps National Advisory Council

The main obstacle to the Peace Corps returning to Sierra Leone has been funding. A new organization, MorePeaceCorps, launched by the National Peace Corps Association earlier this year, is a grassroots campaign that seeks to double the size of the Peace Corps by 2011, including its return to more than 20 countries. Although President-elect Obama has promised to double the Peace Corps, it will not happen unless Congress appropriates the money. MorePeaceCorps is sending letters and petitions to Congress as well as undertaking other activities to generate public support. Go to www.morepeacecorps.org for information on how you can help.

Midwives on Missions of Service

Patricia Ross

I work with Midwives on Missions of Service. We cross-train the traditional birth attendants as community health workers and change agents, along with providing greater skill and knowledge about effective maternity care. Our focus is currently in the Kailahun district, around Daru, Pellie, Jokibu, Foindu, and Pujehun. We're registered with the Government of Sierra Leone as an International Non-Governmental Organization and work closely with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation. We train two or three cohorts of between 25 and 60 women per year. Then we follow up regularly as the women work in small groups to make changes needed to support pregnant women in their communities. Our web site is www.globalmidwives.org, and we'll have a new site up at that address by the end of the year (I hope!).

Bob Heavner, Friends of Sierra Leone Board Secretary

I have returned annually to Sierra Leone since 2004 and have raised funds to help refurbish my former Peace Corps School, Scarcies in Mambolo

Kambia District. I oversaw the shipment of a container with textbooks, computers, medical supplies and more and am currently working to rebuild the community clinic destroyed in the war. I have also worked with Cindy Nofziger, Board President for Schools for Salone (www.schoolsforsalone.org) which has built several schools in country. I am a practicing psychologist and provide mental health consultation to a non-profit in Sierra Leone that treats torture and trauma survivors of the war. I plan to return again in the coming year.

Bill Krist

With the Rotary in Freetown, I am working with Rotary in West Springfield, Virginia to support Redemption Primary School in Freetown. Redemption Primary has about 250 students K to 6, and is a neighborhood school founded about eight years ago.

Watch for the next newsletter. It will announce the location and dates for the annual meeting. It will also include several proposed changes in the by-laws and a list of nominated candidates for the spring election.

A Brighter Tomorrow for Africa

Sarah Armstrong

A Brighter Tomorrow for Africa (BTA) is a U.S. nonprofit organization created three years ago to support programs for women and children in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Its founder, Sarah Armstrong, chose to work with five community-based organizations that respond to education and nutrition needs. Sarah is a board member and education chair for Friends of Sierra Leone and is making her sixth trip to the country this December.

Children of the Nations

BTA began by launching a program that inoculated nearly five thousand children and women of child-bearing age in the Upper Banta Region. Then BTA started a program that now feeds over 400 kids every school day, kids who have never known what a nutritious meal tastes like. The children in the program gained an average of 25 percent of their original weight in just six months. They come to school every day and on time. They are more alert, energetic, and doing much better academically.

Additionally, a program for malnourished preschoolers was started two years ago -- each month bringing twenty children into the program. They are provided with therapeutic feeding (up to four times a day) and teach their mothers how to properly feed them. These young children added an average of two pounds to their weight in just the first month of the program. The mothers have now learned how to make the highly-nutritious cereal for their children and have supplied them with the seeds to grow the groundnuts, cassava, and other foods so that they are now tending to their own small farms to feed their children.

Children's Learning Services

BTA has launched "Peace Clubs" in the secondary schools of the Northern Provinces as part of a conflict-management program. The centerpiece is an education module that teaches the children how to resolve conflict in nonviolent ways. These

are very necessary skills after so many years of a brutal rebel war in Sierra Leone. The objective is to install this program in all 86 secondary schools, serving a total of 41,000 students.

FreeTong Players

The *Freetong Players of Sierra Leone* are a group of performing artists. They seek to educate children about their culture and national history through song, dance, and plays. The objective is to give the kids a sense of identity and to build their self-esteem after years of living in a destructive environment. The dream of The Players is to have a school where children can come for three months at a time to live, work, and learn. Some time ago, the organization was given land for this purpose but it has never had the funds to build the school itself.

National Accountability Group

We are establishing *Anti-Corruption Clubs* in the schools. These clubs are to reinforce the objectives of curbing corruption, increasing government accountability, and improving transparency in business transactions. The program encourages children, at a young age, to recognize and respond to corruption wherever it is found.

Sierra Leone Market Women's Association

A staggering 85 percent of women in Sierra Leone are illiterate. As a consequence, women lack involvement in the decision-making processes in the country. BTA works with women to raise their reading and comprehension skills. BTA provides workshops, leadership training, and civic education to help empower women in a male-dominated society. They also provide support to widows who receive nothing when their husbands die. BTA has worked to create the materials for the training and preparation of 50 teachers who have just completed an education course in Freetown.

Africa Surgery, Inc. **Tom Johnson, Jr., President**

The lack of adequate surgical theaters and equipment in Sierra Leone make it impossible to do complex spinal surgery, so the patients with congenital spine deformities have to be flown to Accra, Ghana where there is an adequately equipped hospital. Two of the seven Sierra Leonian patients will have to return at a later date because they developed coughs, but the other five had surgery and less than two weeks later were discharged from the hospital and were continuing their recovery in the Foundation of Orthopedics and Complex Spine (FOCOS) clinic.

A team of German surgeons corrected club feet on all three patients they treated during their week in Sierra Leone. In Makeni more than forty hernias have been repaired by the two surgeons there. The remainder of the fifty-six patients screened for hernia surgeries will possibly be treated before Christmas. Not a day goes by without one or more people telling me they or a relative suffer from a hernia. It is heart-breaking to have to tell them that our program is closed pending more funding.

Water borne diseases are a problem. We had a nine-year-old boy with typhoid fever who had to be sent to Freetown for an emergency resectioning of his intestine. It was a difficult decision because he was not expected to survive and the money might be better spent on others who were more likely to live. He is now doing well. Our water purification program helps a lot of people in and around the hospital where it is set up, supplying them free of charge, but it is limited. The vast majority of people in Sierra Leone go without safe drinking water.

Two specialist surgeons in reconstructive plastic surgery, one from Scotland and one from Ghana, came to inspect the new hospital wing, which is equipped with a special microscope needed to do delicate work on burnt or traumatized hands and feet. They liked what they saw and plans are being made for them to return with a team early in 2009 to start repairing hands and feet, as well as training local Sierra Leonean surgeons and medics in surgical and theater techniques. They also want to treat children born with cleft lips and palates. We are now starting to locate and

register such cases in the hope that Smile Train, the large, world-wide cleft charity, will also send a surgeon and even some funds to help with this, our newest program

A team of four medical professionals, including two obstetrician/gynecologist surgeons, will be coming here from the U.S. on January ninth to spend a week surgically treating about 20 or more women with various problems. Foday, my newest local counterpart, has already been bringing women on the back of his motorcycle to the hospital for screening by the doctor. Also in January, two representatives from the Foundation of Orthopedics and Complex Spine will be visiting us for eight days. The nurse practitioner and the research coordinator will be examining 30 of our/their post-op spinal surgery cases, as well as many new cases and cases who have been waiting and hoping for our help with their spinal deformities.

Foday and I have taken three men for cataract surgery at a hospital here in Sierra Leone. One man had his sight restored in November. The other two are scheduled for treatment in January and February. This Wednesday Foday and I will be bringing another five blind people to have their eyes examined in the hope that they too might benefit from cataract surgery.

The Loreto Health Clinic in Makeni is treating about ninety epilepsy patients each month. The incidence of epilepsy is high due to high fevers from malaria, meningitis, and other maladies that cause the brain to swell and suffer pressure damage. The Loreto Clinic is one of only two facilities offering medical help for these people in this part of West Africa.

Thanks for your past support of funding, prayers, and the various other efforts many of you have been making for our work. Thank you also to all who have sponsored students for this school year. I have been visiting with many of these students, collecting your thank you notes, and "snapping" them with my digital camera. Our website is still: **africasurgery.org**, (no www. in front), our postal address: **ASI, 189 Franklin St., Morristown, NJ 07960.**

The **2009 International Calendar** produced by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin is available through Friends of Sierra Leone. In addition to volunteers' photographs from host countries around the world, the calendar includes historic days, holiday, and holy days from many cultures. The proceeds will go toward Friends of Sierra Leone activities.

Use this order form or go to the FoSL website and order via PayPal.

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Price/Calendar</u>	<u>Shipping</u>
1-5	\$12.00	included
6-24	\$ 7.00	\$ 8.00
25-49	\$ 6.00	\$10.00
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75-99	\$ 5.50	\$20.00

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No. of calendars ____ x \$ ____ /calendar = \$ ____

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e-mail: carlonken@aol.com

**We still have a few calendars left.
Order yours before they are all gone.**

Time to renew your membership? Check the expiration date on the mailing label and use the membership form on page 9.

Check the date on the address label. Is it time to renew? If there's no date, or if the date is some time in the past, it's time to renew!

FRIENDS OF SIERRA LEONE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name (include maiden) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP+4 code _____

Home Phone (____) _____ E-mail address _____

Day Phone (____) _____ Occupation _____

Relationship to SL (e.g., Sierra Leonean, PC, etc.) _____

Sierra Leone Home _____ Years _____ to _____

Membership: Individual	\$25	Contributions: FoSL Circle	\$1000 and up	
		Supporter	\$500 to \$999	
		Sponsor	\$100 to \$499	
		Friend	\$50 to \$99	

Membership (\$25 per member)	\$ _____
Contribution	\$ _____
Overseas Mail (add \$10)	\$ _____
Membership in <i>National Peace Corps Association</i> (\$35)	\$ _____
Total Remitted	\$ _____

- Membership dues support operations for Friends of Sierra Leone, including meetings, newsletter, and the website. All other contributions support projects in Sierra Leone.
- Dues and other contributions to Friends of Sierra Leone are fully tax-deductible. The \$35 membership fees for National Peace Corps Association are **not** tax-deductible.

Thank you for your support! Please return this form with a check payable to Friends of Sierra Leone to the address at the right. →

FoSL needs your participation. Circle your areas of interest:

Advocacy

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Newsletter/
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Would you be willing to be part of a network to receive information and contact your members of Congress at important times? (Please include e-mail address, if available.)

Yes



P. O. Box 15875
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You may also renew your membership on-line at www.fosalone.org

Friends of Sierra Leone
P. O. Box 15875
Washington, DC 20003-0875

Web: www.fosalone.org

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The following quote from Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter is part of an extensive interview he did with Peace Corps Online recently:

"....But the number one country to return to is Sierra Leone, and we have already done an assessment there. I have to tell you that the 'Friends of Sierra Leone' are the most active 'Friends of' group in America and my hat's off to them. I respect them fully for their desire to have us go back there, and so as soon as budget provides, we are going to pull that trigger, and it will take us several months to put that together - first of all to put the country team in place, do the recruiting, and then develop the programs, but they very much want us to return there."

The entire interview may be found at:

<http://peacecorpsonline.org/messages/messages/2629/3212158.html>