



June 2009

# Friends of Sierra Leone

## New Board Members Elected

By Peggy Murrah

Thank you to everyone who took the time to vote for the new Board of Directors. Several people asked about voting online and we are looking into that for the next election. Remaining on the board and in the same position as last term are Aiah Fanday (vice-president), Mark Hager (treasurer), Peggy Murrah (president) and Jim Sheahan (public affairs). Members-at-large are Anthony McMillon and Gary Schulze. Patty Bruzek moves from appointed chair of fundraising to elected secretary. Bob Heavner moves from secretary to member-at-Large. Additionally, all by-law changes were approved.

Leaving the board are John Amman, Sarian Bouma, Tim Curley, Scott Leaman and Cindy Nofziger. We greatly appreciate everything the outgoing board members brought to the group and all contributions from them. Tim Curley was one of the founding members of Friends of Sierra Leone and we expect him to continue his involvement at some level. Cindy Nofziger has been active on the board since joining after the first trip

back to Salone in 2004. She served as Projects Chair for several years and has been a positive influence in everything she has contributed. We will miss everyone but know that they are still among our ranks.

While we are sorry to see the outgoing members leave, we are equally excited about the new members joining us. I have to say that the new board is quite a powerhouse!

Edward L. Monaghan served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Makeni, Sierra Leone, from 1979-1982. During that time, Ed taught primary math education courses, served as acting math department head, and supervised student teachers at Makeni Teachers College. Since that time, he has worked as an educator at the school, district, and national level. Ed is currently a program manager/analyst within the US Department of Education in Washington, DC. He currently serves as a secretary of Sierra Leone Village Partnerships (SLVP),

[*Election* continued on page 8]

# Friends of Sierra Leone 2009 Annual Meeting

When: July 2 – 5 (Thursday – Sunday)

Where: Airport Hilton, Minneapolis, MN

Events: Business Meeting, Panel Discussion, Country Update, Workshops, Wrap-up session, Dinner/Banquet, Dancing, Happy Hour, City Tours, Picnic, and Fireworks.

Registration for the conference and lodging reservations at the Hilton may be completed from the Friends of Sierra Leone web page:

<http://www.fosalone.org/annMtg09.php>

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## Advocacy News

Judy Lamm Figi  
(PCV, Moyamba 1964-66)

At press time we are still waiting for President Obama to name a new Peace Corps Director.

President Obama's detailed version of his fiscal year 2010 budget includes a 10% increase above the current \$340 million funding for Peace Corps. While this is a step in the right direction, it is not enough to reach the President's goal of doubling the number of Peace Corps Volunteers.

Please write to President Obama at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20500 and ask him to increase the Peace Corps budget so that Peace Corps can return to Sierra Leone. Remind him that in 2006 he wrote as a Senator to Peace Corps asking them to return to Sierra Leone and that has not yet happened.

There is a bill in the House, HR1066, the Peace Corps Expansion Act, that needs

more co-sponsors. Please contact your Representative and urge him or her to co-sponsor this bill. To find the name of your Representative go to: <http://www.house.gov/> and type in your zip code. You will be taken right to your Representative's home page where you can send an e-mail or get information for sending snail mail or making a phone call. To see if your Representative is already a co-sponsor go to: <http://www.morepeacecorps.org/>.

Our Senators also need to hear from us. You can contact them by going to: <http://www.senate.gov> and by choosing your state and you will be taken directly to their home pages.

Peace Corps has completed a positive assessment in Sierra Leone and has told us they can only return to Sierra Leone if they have a budget increase. Our representatives in Congress need to hear from us.

If you have any questions please contact me at [salonesix@aol.com](mailto:salonesix@aol.com).

## United Methodist Church Fundraiser By Patty Bruzek

This year marks 10 years since a Sierra Leonean minister came to the Galilee United Methodist Church (UMC) in Galilee, Virginia, to share with the parishioners some of what was taking place in his country. Through his words, he inspired the congregation to make a difference in Sierra Leone by getting involved. The parishioners began raising money, along with other local UMC churches. Those funds that were raised started the Child Rescue Centre and Mercy Hospital in Bo. What started as a street feeding program during the war officially became the Child Rescue Centre when the doors opened in July, 2002.

What started 10 years ago continues today. The church regularly raises money and regularly sends volunteers to Bo. One of their annual fundraisers is a 5K-run/1 mile walk. This year's walk took place on Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. Seven members of FoSL traveled to Galilee to volunteer along the walk/run route.

The weather on the morning of the walk could not have been more agreeable for the participants and volunteers. At the end of the walk the runners/walkers and volunteers had the opportunity to talk with each other and to meet Ibrahim, a 17-year-old who lives at the Child Rescue Centre and is a student at Christ the King College in Bo Town. He was in the US for a follow-up medical appointment; he had previously been in Virginia for 18 months while he was treated for Hodgkin's lymphoma. He spoke to the crowd after the walk to express his appreciation for all that has been done to support him and the Child Rescue Centre.

Many of the walkers and runners at the fundraiser have been to the Child Rescue Centre to volunteer their time. They said that their lives have been touched by the kindness of the Sierra Leoneans that they have met. The next group of volunteers from the congregation went to Bo in mid-May.

It was an enjoyable experience for all of us who volunteered that beautiful spring morning. We should all meet there next year for the Galilee UMC Church 5K/run/1 mile walk!

CRC website: [www.childrescuecentre.org](http://www.childrescuecentre.org)]

## Solar Electric Initiative: Project Update By Leslie McKeon, [mckeon119@mac.com](mailto:mckeon119@mac.com)

The Solar Electric Initiative has had an exciting and productive year since coming under the umbrella of the Friends of Sierra Leone last June. In spite of the economic implosion, which forced the cancellation of fundraising events, we have raised more than \$5,000 privately and anticipate tripling that amount by 2010 when we hope to begin our initial project at the Kamakwie Wesleyan Secondary School. The community chose the computer lab at the secondary school, now functioning with generators and a few rebuilt computers, as the starting point. We will bring a solar array to provide lighting to several classrooms, low-energy computers to replace the few rebuilt models that currently depend on generators, and a battery charger for lanterns that will hopefully begin to replace candles and kerosene throughout the region. This phase will also expand interest, understanding, confidence, and demand for future solar electrification projects, such as pumping water for irrigation and micro-enterprise centers.

Rural solar electrification in Sierra Leone can probably deliver more bang-for-the-buck than any other form of assistance. Development is not possible without electricity. This will be a green century. The lack of electricity and the abundance of sunshine make Sierra Leone an ideal laboratory for development relying exclusively on renewable, sustainable energy, primarily solar. Unlike the Bumbuna hydroelectric project and any other source of electricity, solar power, by its very technology, can be developed locally, rapidly, incrementally and for minimal cost. Eventually, there is no reason that solar arrays can't be designed, built and installed in country.

We need your help, especially in these trying economic times. All donations are fully tax-deductible. Make checks out to Friends of Sierra Leone with a notation in the lower left for the Solar Electric Initiative and send to me:

Leslie McKeon  
130 Copley Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666

You can also make donations through the Friends of Sierra Leone website, but be sure to put Solar Electric Initiative in the notes field.



Honoree Joe Opala holds the Lifetime Distinguished Member Award while Peggy Murrah, president of Friends of Sierra Leone, and former PCV Dan Paracka congratulate him.

The Friends of Sierra Leone  
Lifetime Distinguished Membership

In recognition of his dedication and significant contribution  
to the culture and development of Sierra Leone and its people,  
and to acknowledge his demonstrated commitment  
to the same goals held by this organization,  
the Friends of Sierra Leone confers upon

Joseph Opala

the status of  
Lifetime Distinguished Member

January 2009



**Former Sierra Leone PCV Jeff Hall presents the Lifetime Distinguished Member Award to Peter Andersen, while the honoree's son Eric and wife Mariatu proudly look on.**

## The Friends of Sierra Leone Lifetime Distinguished Membership

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**Peter Andersen**

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January 2009

## Bunce Island Exhibit

**By Dan Paracka (RPCV SL), Director of International Services and Programs at Kennesaw State University in Georgia**

"Bunce Island may be the most significant historic site in Africa for the United States."--Joseph Opala

A traveling exhibit narrating coastal Georgia's connection to the Atlantic slave trade shows hundreds of young students how engaging learning history can be.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century Bunce Island, Sierra Leone was an embarkation point for tens of thousands of African captives bound for the Americas. One of the primary destinations was the coast of Georgia and South Carolina, where American colonists established huge rice plantations that shaped the coastal economy of the young republic as it gained independence.

The compelling story linking Great Britain, West Africa, and the United States is now reaching hundreds of middle and high school students in north Georgia, thanks to a new traveling exhibit. The exhibition is comprised of 20 interlocking six-foot panels and features an eight-minute video, period drawings of the castle, announcements and images of slave auctions, photos of the castle's ruins, and shots of recent pilgrimages to Bunce Island by Gullah families from South Carolina and Georgia. The exhibit was designed by Joe Opala, adjunct professor of history at James Madison University in Virginia.

On February 5-6, 2009, Kennesaw State University held a two-day workshop for middle and high school teachers, attracting participants from 19 schools in six Georgia counties. Funded in part by a grant from the Georgia Humanities Council, the workshop was designed to help educators and media specialists incorporate it into their curriculum to enhance students' understanding of the rich cultural and historical ties between Coastal Georgia and South Carolina with Sierra Leone. Workshop participants heard folktales, traditional songs, watched documentary film footage, told personal stories, and began brainstorming methods for making use of the exhibit at their schools.

The workshop facilitator, Joseph Opala, also received his plaque bestowing honorary Lifetime Distinguished Membership (see page 4) in Friends of Sierra Leone. Joe was originally awarded the honorary membership ten years ago but had never received the plaque. He is one of just two people to have received this distinction for his dedicated service to Sierra Leone.

The exhibit is currently traveling to each of the 19 schools for the remainder of the academic year. The exhibit will then reside permanently at Kennesaw State and will be available for loan to other schools or school districts. Kennesaw State's involvement with Bunce Island resulted from a connection that began more than 20 years ago in Sierra Leone. Dan Paracka, the university's director of International Services and Programs, and exhibit curator Joseph Opala, met while Paracka was a Peace Corps volunteer and Opala was teaching at Fourah Bay College. Paracka later wrote his doctoral dissertation on Fourah Bay College.

## Ashley Landing

By Peggy Murrah

On the morning of February 28<sup>th</sup>, a group of 40 to 50 people gathered at the Ashley Ferry Landing in Charleston, South Carolina, to participate in "A Ceremony of Remembrance." They were there to pay tribute to 250 slaves who had been brought directly from Bunce Island to be sold to the planters who owned plantations along the Ashley River. The sale took place on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1760.

The event was organized by the "Gullah Homecoming Groups." These are the groups who have participated in the three homecomings in which Gullah people from South Carolina and Georgia have traveled to Sierra Leone to celebrate the historical and cultural bonds that link them.

On this day at Ashley Landing, the ceremony began with opening remarks by Professor Joe Opala. Mr. Charles Black, who has established his Sierra Leonean ancestry through DNA testing and who participated in Priscilla's Homecoming in 2005, summarized his personal experience on Bunce Island. He shared his feeling of being connected to the suffering endured by those who were captured and stolen from their homeland. Mrs. Thomalind Polite shared her own story of returning to Sierra Leone as the living embodiment of a long, lost slave girl named Priscilla. Mr. Isaiah Washington, television and film actor, gave a touching speech concerning his experiences in Sierra Leone and particularly Bunce Island. He reminded Professor Opala that they had first met on Bunce Island and now they met again at the spot that marked the end of a journey for some 250 captives from

Sierra Leone. He told the group that DNA has memory and he described a similar experience to Mr. Black's on Bunce Island.

Mr. Amadu Massally, a native Sierra Leonean and new Friends of Sierra Leone board member, explained the ancestor sacrifice or "sara" to the group. Mr. Massally spoke in Krio and Professor Opala, and at one point a woman from Nigeria, translated his words. A stone from Bunce Island was passed around the assembled group so that everyone could touch it. Then a handful of soil, also from Bunce Island, and the stone were cast into the water while Mr. Massally thanked the ancestors for their suffering and assured them they were not forgotten. By throwing the stones and soil into the river, he was symbolically returning Sierra Leone to them since he could not return them to Sierra Leone. Next the group lined the dock and passed a wreath between them while The Bennett Singers, descendents of slaves, sang "I Feel Like Going On." The wreath was handed to Mr. Washington who placed it in the river. Miss Rebecca Campbell, also a descendent of slaves, provided the benediction.

United States. Friends of Sierra Leone would like to thank the organizers for the effort and work in bringing the group. The ceremony was a beautiful tribute to the ancestors who endured the terrible crossing. It recognized the direct link between Bunce Island, Sierra Leone and the rice growing region of the southern together and especially for allowing us to witness the day.

[*Election* – continued from page 1]  
 an organization that implements grassroots development projects with individual communities in Sierra Leone.

Lisa Bashir is originally from Chicago and represents a new kind of member for Friends of Sierra Leone. As most readers know, the majority of Friends of Sierra Leone members are Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Sierra Leone, their families and friends. The next largest group is composed of Sierra Leoneans living and working in the US. While we have a few members who don't fit either of those categories, there aren't many. Lisa had her DNA traced and found she was of temne descent on her mother's side. She remembered an article about Priscilla's Homecoming that she had read and she found reference to Friends of Sierra Leone there. Lisa was concerned that so little about Sierra Leone was easily available to African-Americans who find they have Sierra Leone ancestry. She hopes to work to make it easier for this group to find Friends of Sierra Leone and also to advise us on how to serve this group.

Ambassador Thomas Hull brings his extensive experience with him and we couldn't be happier! Tom and his wife were both Peace Corps Volunteers in Sierra Leone from 1968 to 1970. He was in Port Loko. He went on to a career in the Foreign Service and held various positions in many African countries including Ethiopia, South Africa, Nigeria, Somalia, Burkina Faso, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was also Director of African Affairs at the United States Information Agency in Washington. Tom was the previous US Ambassador in Freetown before the current ambassador, Am. Perry. He is currently the Warburg Chair of

International Relations at Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts.

Amadu Massally is our fourth new member. If you haven't had the pleasure of meeting Amadu, never, never pass up the opportunity! If there is a Sierra Leonean event happening, chances are he will be there – especially if it involves a connection to the Gullah/Geechee community. Amadu was born in Magburaka, Sierra Leone. He went to primary school at the International School, secondary school at St. Edward's, college at Morehouse in Atlanta, Georgia and the University of Massachusetts. He left Sierra Leone in 1983. Amadu is married and has 5 sons. He and his wife live in Dallas, Texas where he works as a Certified Public Accountant. His work for his country continues as he serves on the Presidential Task Force for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Global Coordinator, DENI-SL, National Remittances Task Force, and Joshua Project. Amadu may be best known for the Sierra Leone Network and is Chairperson of the Sierra Leone-Gullah Heritage Association. But he is also a board member of the Young Leaders – Sierra Leone and Schools for Salone. Amadu brings his energy, dedication and sheer love of Sierra Leone and its impact on the world to the board.

Please join me in saying goodbye to the outgoing members and hello to the incoming. I expect great work from this board and am anxious to get started with them. The official ceremony for the new board will take place at the annual meeting this July in Minneapolis. I encourage everyone to join us and personally welcome the new Board of Directors for Friends of Sierra Leone.

## The African-American Odyssey of John Kizell

By Kevin Lowther (PCV, Group IV, 1963-1965)

When I arrived in Freetown in September 1963 to teach history at the Sierra Leone Grammar School, our Peace Corps group spent its first two days at Fourah Bay College. At the college bookstore I bought Christopher Fyfe's *A History of Sierra Leone*, which had been published the previous year. Its thickly annotated pages document my first efforts to learn some of the history I was supposed to teach.

Nearly 44 years later, to the day, I took a train out to the London suburb of Blackheath to meet Fyfe, then 86, in the house where he had grown up and where he had written his history. We had been corresponding for a year, during which he had shared with me his files on John Kizell, one of the Nova Scotians.

Kizell had been taken into slavery in 1773, somewhere in the Gallinas watershed, and brought to Charleston. He joined the British during the Revolution and eventually returned to Salone. He became a trader, mainly in the Sherbro, but also a thorn in the side of the African and European slave traders. He also played an important role in the first settlement of free blacks from America, who came to Bonthe in 1820.

I had retired two months before meeting Fyfe. I intended to write a long-deferred historical novel, based on research I had started in the 1970s. Because Kizell was literate and had documented his efforts to stop his people from trading in slaves, I planned to give him a prominent place in the novel's later stages. He would speak in his own words.

All this I had explained to Fyfe, when I first wrote to him out of the blue. Joe Opala had given me his address, along with several

other useful contacts. I was fortunate that I had contacted Fyfe when I did, for he was jettisoning the massive amount of research material he had accumulated in writing his now out-of-print book. He still had all of his notes on Kizell, which he had sent with explanatory notes written in long-hand. He eschewed the computer and e-mail.

Small and frail, but still animated by anything to do with Sierra Leone, Fyfe urged me to drop the novel and to write a biography of John Kizell. "So little has been written about the *African* figures of the early colonial years," he said. I agreed to think about it and we parted after a delightful two hours' conversation.

I did think about it. Kizell had lived during a fascinating period of history. He had survived slavery in Africa *and* in America; he had lived through the Revolution; and he had helped to establish Sierra Leone. He had returned to his people and challenged the chiefs and European slave traders on their own turf. He had become the friend and correspondent of Thomas Clarkson and other leading abolitionists. He believed that all blacks in America should return to Africa.

Thanks to Fyfe's encouragement, I am in the final stages of writing *The African-American Odyssey of John Kizell*, to be published in 2010 by the University of South Carolina Press. I plan to raise funds to distribute the book personally to schools and libraries in Sierra Leone. Sadly, Fyfe will never read the book; he passed away in August, a few weeks after we met again in Blackheath. But I hope many Sierra Leoneans will. It's their history, and now that I know a bit more about it, I want to give it back to them.

The **2010 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
50-74	\$ 5.50	\$15.00
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**Total Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

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Central Valley, NY 10917

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FAX: (845) 928-3057  
e-mail: carlonken@aol.com

**The 2010 Calendars are in!**  
**Be the first on your block to have one.**

**Time to renew your membership? Check the expiration date on the mailing label and use the membership form on page 11 or renew online.**

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Membership:</b> Individual	\$25	<b>Contributions:</b> 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 *National Peace Corps Association* (\$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:**

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Education

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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  
Washington, DC  
20003-0875

You may also renew your membership online at [www.fosalone.org](http://www.fosalone.org)

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

**Web: [www.fosalone.org](http://www.fosalone.org)**

## **Address Service Requested**



### **Friends of Sierra Leone**

#### **Incoming Board Officers**

President	Peggy Murrah, Social Circle, GA
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Treasurer	Mark Hager, Phoenix, AZ
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At Large	Edward Monaghan, Gaithersburg, MD
At Large	Gary Schulze, New York, NY
At Large	Judy Figi, Janesville, WI
At Large	Lisa Bashir, Loganville, GA
At Large	Tom Hull, Grantham, NH

#### **Committee Chairs**

Advocacy	Judy Figi, Janesville, WI
Annual Meeting	Jeff Hall, Minneapolis, MN
Bunce Island	Mike Diliberti, Falls Church, VA
Education	Sarah Armstrong, Falls Church, VA
Fundraising	vacant
Membership	Jim Temple, Minneapolis, MN
Newsletter Editor	Carl Onken, Central Valley, NY
Projects	Jim Hanson, Social Circle, GA
Web Site	Jamie Brown, Juneau, AK