



# Friends of Sierra Leone Newsletter

September 2014

Dear Friends of Sierra Leone,

We are all deeply concerned about the growing Ebola crisis in Salone. Daily reports indicate that the threat is severe, growing, and long lasting. As you may know, the Peace Corps Volunteers were taken out of the country recently, and the U.S. Embassy is evacuating staff family members as well. Over 1,000 cases of Ebola have been reported throughout the region. The majority of Sierra Leone cases are in the eastern area of the country, but the virus continues to spread.

Friends of Sierra Leone will be making a contribution to one of the international organizations dealing with Ebola. We want to contribute in the most impactful and responsible way during this time of crisis. In the meantime we will continue to update you with information as it is received. The effects of Ebola are far reaching in West Africa. Coming on top of the ten-year rebel war, the Ebola outbreak is having a devastating impact on every facet of Sierra Leonean society. Early reports indicate that starvation is already occurring in some parts of the country. While lending assistance in the current Ebola health crisis, Friends of Sierra Leone remains committed to

the long-term development of Sierra Leone.

The Friends of Sierra Leone community is uniquely positioned. We are all trusted members in our Salone communities and can use our voices to lend support and help. Morale in Salone is at rock bottom. If you have family and/or friends now living in Sierra Leone, please reach out to them. Telephone them with words of love and concern about what's happening in their country. Everyone is worried about catching this dreaded disease and false rumors are swirling. Use your voice to reinforce the health precautions and to dispel untruths about the causes of Ebola. Our personal relationships are our strength. Let us use them to the fullest advantage.

We encourage you to contact our Board Members with any comments, concerns, or suggestions. Updates about possible funding opportunities and other efforts will be forthcoming. Look to our website, listserv, or Facebook page for more information.

Respectfully,

Peggy Murrah  
President  
Friends of Sierra Leone

# Ebola

As most of our readers already know, Peace Corps has temporarily removed all Volunteers and Trainees from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Below is a copy of the letter that was sent to Volunteers on July 30, 2014.

*Dear Volunteers and Staff of Peace Corps Sierra Leone:*

*As you all know, the health, safety and security of our Volunteers and staff are our top priorities. Over the past several months, we have been closely monitoring the current outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, in collaboration with leading experts from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Department of State. We have been providing guidance on precautions recommended by CDC and other health experts to minimize risks of exposure to the Ebola virus.*

*Unfortunately, in one of our countries, two Volunteers have had contact with a community member who later died of the Ebola virus.. At this point, they are in good health and not presenting any symptoms of Ebola.*

*However, in light of this and the documented continued spread of the virus, Peace Corps has decided to temporarily remove all of our Volunteers and Trainees from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Peace Corps will continue to work with CDC and State Department to monitor the Ebola outbreak to determine when it is safe for Volunteers and Trainees to return to post.*

*We will be arranging flights for you to return to your Home of Record as quickly as we can get reservations. We will be purchasing a round trip ticket for you. You will be on "Administrative Hold" until we can return you to country, during which time you will receive \$32/day allowance to help defray costs. We would ask each of you to quickly pack a travel bag, with any valuable possessions, and secure your house and belongings to be left until your return. Post staff will be contacting you directly about the logistical arrangements.*

*This decision is being made out of an abundance of caution; and we do want to move quickly to reduce any risk. Finally, we would ask you to continue to avoid any contact with people who are sick, including those complaining of malaria. Your PCMO will provide instructions on your personal care once back in the States.*

*We recognize the anxiety this situation may have caused you and your loved ones back home, and we want to personally thank each one of you for your commitment to service and the high values of the Peace Corps. We look forward to welcoming you back to Sierra Leone as soon as possible. We will keep you apprised of our ongoing monitoring with CDC.*

*Sincerely,*

*Dick Day and Karen Swails*

*Regional Director and Country Director*

## Annual Meeting - July 28-30, 2014

By Patty Bruzek

Twenty-five of us gathered at the Meridian, Georgia, dock on July 28th to take the ferry to Sapelo Island for the Friends of Sierra Leone's 2014 Annual Meeting. We enjoyed three nights at the Reynolds Mansion, had great meals and time to enjoy the beach.

The group included a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer from 1962 and two from the first group to go back in 2010, and many in between. The first evening we discussed the current involvement of Friends of Sierra Leone:

- Current projects and how people can apply for future projects.
- Current advocacy issue: Contacting our senators to encourage them to confirm the appointment of an ambassador to Sierra Leone.
- Current membership and how to get more people involved in our group, especially those who have let their membership lapse.
- Peggy and Patty shared information about their meeting with Peace Corps in Sierra Leone in February.
- The the Ebola virus and how we can be involved and best help.

Tuesday morning we took the ferry back to Meridian so we could meet with Wil-

son Moran and watch the movie "The Language You Cry In" featuring Mary Moran (Wilson Moran's mother) and her connection to Sierra Leone. We had a presentation by the McIntosh SEED (Sustainable Environment and Economic Development) group, which is a grassroots, community-based organization working in McIntosh County, Georgia. Their work is guided by the social, economic, environmental, and cultural interests of the community.

After lunch we were treated to a presentation by the Gullah Geechee Ring Shouters, who are now one of the world's top performing artists of the Gullah Geechee culture. Joe Beatty of University of Florida gave a presentation on his research about a Muslim slave (Bilali Muhammad) and his connection with Sapelo Island. We then returned to Sapelo and had a wonderful evening.

We had free time Wednesday morning to explore the island and then we met Wednesday afternoon to have presentations by Susan Eastwood and Arlene Golembiewski. Both had reconnected with people from their Peace Corps years when we had the annual meeting in Freetown in 2011.

Susan spoke about the work they are doing to promote the school and scholarships to get the students to school. She was looking for ideas on how to proceed with this. There was a recommendation to look into the qualifications of the teachers and how to get them certified.

Arlene spoke about the Sherbro Foundation and all that she and the Paramount Chief and a local teacher have been able to accomplish in the past three years. See <http://sherbrofoundation.org>. This website shows how much they have been able to do with lots of community cooperation.

While at the meeting we received the very bad news that Peace Corps was sending all of the current Peace Corps Volunteers home with a round trip ticket. They hope to be able to return when the Ebola crisis has abated.

There was mention of having the 2015 Annual Friends of Sierra Leone Meeting in Freetown next summer. More discussion on that later. We left to go home on Thursday afternoon.



Annual meeting attendees on the ferry between Meridian and Sapelo Island.



Live oaks from  
the mansion  
front veranda

The Reynolds  
mansion.



The dining room



Pictured above are Sierra Leoneans on the Peace Corps staff and Director of Training Daryn Warner (back row on the right), in the second row, center, Gary Schultze, (at large delegate to the Friends of Sierra Leone board and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Peace Corps Association), and Country Director Karen Swails (front row, second from the left).

Country Director Swails was a Community Economic Development Peace Corps Volunteer in Bulgaria 1998 to 2001. After completing her Peace Corps assignment she has worked internationally in Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Serbia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uzbekistan. She has earned a B.S. in Mining Engineering Technology and an MBA..

# Projects

By Jim Hanson

## Chair of the Friends of Sierra Leone projects committee

Friends of Sierra Leone had another great year funding small projects that are improving the health, education, and productivity of the citizens of Sierra Leone. Since our annual meeting in Boston last July, we have paid out over \$20,000 in support of these projects. Contributions from our members make all of this possible. Thanks for your faithfulness.

Our first order of business after the Boston meeting in July 2013 was to send \$250 to the Paul School for the Blind in Bo. This fund, now in its fifth year, supplies scholarships to needy students at that school. This fund was established in memory of former Friends of Sierra Leone board member Daphne Sawyerr-Dunn. We hope to continue this scholarship fund indefinitely.

At the December 2013 Board of Directors meeting three projects were approved for funding. The Sentinel English Language Institute, operating in Freetown and Kabala, was awarded \$3,000 to pay for facilitators and materials used in their creative writing program. Director Jackie Leigh has spent many years teach-

ing in Sierra Leone and we were happy to support her program. Another teacher, Peace Corps Volunteer Suzy Khachatryan, and the administrators at the Holy Rosary Secondary School in Pujehun, received \$1,887 to complete construction of the offices at the school. We also granted \$2,000 to Martin Kealie, whose Green Africa project is enabling women in the Bo South District to grow and market fruits and vegetables.

Our Peace Corps-designated project fund offers up to \$2,000 each year for secondary projects by current Volunteers. This year the Peace Corps selected the STOMP program for this fund. Friends of Sierra Leone provided \$1,648 for this health initiative. Acting Country Director Daryn Warner explained that volunteers would be doing health education in selected villages, emphasizing bed netting to protect against malaria, basic hygiene, and avoidance of other endemic diseases.

In March I was contacted by Richard Toms from the Seattle area about his Limbs for U program. Upon reviewing his application and gathering further infor-

mation, the Board granted his request for \$3,000 at its May meeting. Limbs for U takes used prosthetic limbs, refurbishes them, and will make them available free of charge to those in need in Sierra Leone.

Last month, the Board approved two projects for funding at \$3,000 each. The first was for the Bureh Beach Surf Club, a community and youth development project assisted by Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Hannah Siebold. The second was for the Maryland Sustainability Engineers who will be building a potable water system and building a secondary school in Cabala, Western Freetown. Two projects were also approved for \$1,500 each. Education for Hope will build a primary school in Port Loko District, and Alternative Approach to Community Development-Salone is starting a poultry project in Kailahun. The bad news is that

all of these projects are being postponed due to travel restrictions and health concerns due to the Ebola outbreak. The Maryland group was able to complete the water system in early July before pulling out of Freetown.

In August the Board decided to suspend the projects program until the Ebola threat has passed and regular economic activity resumes. However, your contributions are still in great need to help Sierra Leone recover from this crisis, and we will resume funding projects as soon as possible.

Contributions earmarked for Ebola are being collected and will be sent to a reputable program identified by the Projects Committee.

Thank you for your support.

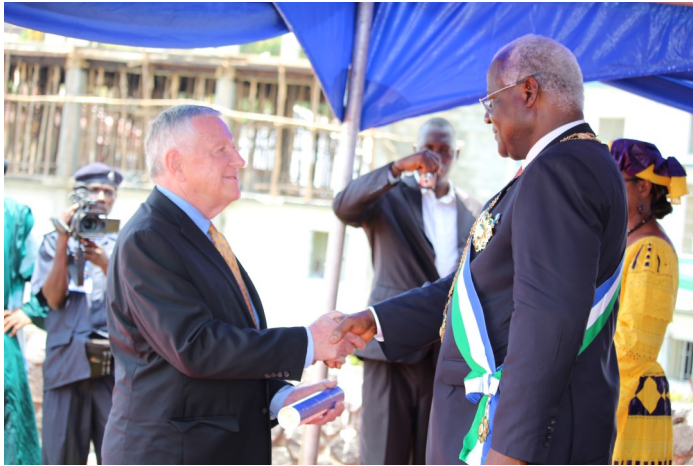
## Call for Updates

Starting in the next edition of this newsletter, we will begin a "Member Updates" section. What have you been up to? Please e-mail [Meghan@fosalone.org](mailto:Meghan@fosalone.org) with news about your new job, move, child, school program, project, or any other news you'd like to share. Include your name, years spent in Sierra Leone, and affiliation to Sierra Leone. We look forward to hearing from you!



# The Order of the Rokel Induction Ceremony

By Peter Andersen



President Koroma  
and OOR  
Gary Schulze



OOR Gary Schulze  
and  
MOR Peter Andersen



President Koroma  
and MOR  
Peter Andersen

## Order of the Rokel

When Chief Peh Gbabiya Caulker I, aka returned Peace Corps Volunteer Gary Schulze, backed by Friends of Sierra Leone President Peggy Murrah, asked me to write about our receiving the Order of the Rokel this past Independence Day, I was reticent. However, one thing I have learned in Sierra Leone is that you may not say 'no' to paramount chiefs (even honorary ones) or presidents (even Friends of Sierra Leone presidents).

### NOMINATIONS

In the third week of February, Tourism & Culture Minister Hon. Peter Bayuku Konteh called to ask that I stop by his office early the next morning. I said I'd be there (you don't say 'no' to ministers, either). I first met the minister the previous June when he braved the road to Shenge to see Gary crowned an honorary paramount chief. Since that time, Gary and I always called him (though not in his presence) "The Minister." He had asked me to give feedback on the ministry's new website, and I had contributed some photos. I assumed that was the reason for the meeting.

The next morning, the Minister told me

he planned to nominate Gary for the Order of the Rokel, which together with the Order of the Republic is Sierra Leone's highest civilian honor. He asked me if I would help prepare Gary's biography, and I said I would be happy to do so. He then added that he planned to nominate me as well, and that I should supply him with my own biography. This all might not have been a complete surprise to Gary, but it was to me. The process of how someone gets nominated and who does it wasn't entirely clear to us, but through the process we discovered that the decisions are made by a committee headed by the Secretary to the President, although the President can also add names. Ever prepared for disappointment, I told my wife that even if I didn't receive the OR, it was an honor to even be considered. She felt that once the minister nominated us it was a done deal, but — as we soon found out — it was not.

The Minister submitted the nominations to the Secretary to the President, who told him "not this year." The Minister called to express his regrets, and I assumed that was the end of the matter.

Wrong again. A member of Sierra Leone's UN delegation told Gary he had taken it up with the visiting Foreign Minister, and he took it up with President Koroma.

On April 11, Daryn Warner called from the Peace Corps office to say they had just received urgent letters addressed to Gary and me (as Peace Corps Volunteers!) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. I had a sudden feeling what it must be about, but it was only when the Peace Corps driver delivered my letter I read that "It has pleased His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, to confer upon you the Honour of Member of the Order of the Rokel (MOR) in recognition of your distinguished service to the State, particularly in the field of Communication and the establishment of the Sierra Leone website."

The letter gave us until Friday April 11 — that very afternoon — to respond and to tell them "whether this is acceptable to you." To make it even more interesting, there was no contact information in the letter. With a friend's help, I got a telephone number for the Secretary to the President, and he gave me his two email addresses. I sent an urgent note to Gary, who is usually not far from his

email. No reply. Gary often works late into the night and there is in any case a four hour time difference. After pacing the floor and watching my clock for awhile, I called RPCV Jim Sheahan on Skype and asked him to call Gary and tell him to get out of bed and answer his email or they were going to take his OR away from him. Gary was mildly surprised. That's a literary device called understatement. Actually, I think he was mildly flabbergasted.

Since we didn't have Gary's letter, I advised him to be vague in his acceptance email since it was just possible that his level of award would be different from mine. This turned out to be the case, and Gary was to be made Officer of the Order of the Rokel (OOR).

On April 22 I got an SMS "gentle reminder" that there was a rehearsal for the ceremony that afternoon. That I even received it was amazing in itself, because the text messaging function on my phone hadn't worked in months. When I got to the police checkpoint at State House the police seemed inclined to detain me while they searched through their appointment book, but then I said "rehearsal" and they let me through with no further questions. There were three rehearsals in all, but only the last one, the walk-through, was

mandatory. Anyone who missed would not be allowed to take part in the ceremony.

At the first rehearsal an assistant read out the list of awardees and said people should inform him if he had mispronounced their names, because that's the way they would be pronounced at the ceremony. He then pronounced Schulze as "Shoolzie." I wrote to Gary and threatened to say "that's right!"

I kept worrying that something would delay Gary's plane and that he wouldn't arrive in time for the final rehearsal, but all went well. In fact, they moved it back one day because of a scheduling conflict. He made it in good time and since they had not yet set up the canopies, we sat in the direct sun for several hours to do the walk-through. Since no one in my household is susceptible to sunburn, it didn't occur to me until it was too late that I should have brought a baseball cap, and I suffered as a result. Gary, either through luck or foresight, was not similarly afflicted.

The Awards and Insignia ceremony was held on Monday, April 28th since Independence Day fell on a Sunday. The diplomatic community was present, with the US Embassy being represented by the Political Officer. The police band marched, and the ceremony — six hours

officially plus arrivals — was broadcast live on SLBC. Tickets were limited, but fortunately my nine-year old son Eric was able to watch on television.

An SLBC announcer, who served as Master of Ceremonies, read our citations over a loudspeaker while the President, the First Lady, the Vice-President, and members of the Cabinet looked on from a red carpeted platform above us.

For protocol aficionados (and Gary sometimes suggests that I am one), here is the how the ceremony goes. The first time your name is called you leave your seat and line up on the red carpet with other members of your group. The OR has four levels: Grand Commander, Commander, Officer, and Member, corresponding to the British awards they replaced when Sierra Leone became a republic in 1971. The second time your name is called you do nothing — you just stand there. The third time they call your name you step forward between the two flagpoles while the announcer reads your biography. The fourth time your name is called you walk forward, climb the steps, walk about three steps toward the President, and bow. Each time you bow, a soldier dressed in a red uniform with white gloves who is standing next to the President salutes you. You then walk to the President (but not too close, we were cautioned, to avoid

bumping heads with him as he is quite tall); and he fixes the medal on a safety pin which you have on your coat so he won't stick you. You then step three steps backward and bow, the soldier salutes, and only then may you turn around and walk down the steps and return to the position between the two flagpoles, where you turn and bow for a last time. The soldier salutes again, and you may go back to your seat.

I didn't notice, except maybe subconsciously, that there were a lot of photographers standing at one side. They were for the most part self-employed and, if they could find you afterwards, they would offer to sell you your photo at the ceremony. My favorite was the man who printed two large photos, one of them framed, and a bunch of others in, roughly, 5x7. He then showed up with a

fairly outrageous bill. Gary paid him what he asked, but then, he's a paramount chief. Just catch my wife paying a bill like that! We also secured the digital files, since the climate in Freetown may not be conducive to a long unwrinkled life for a framed photograph. In my case, I had no other way to send them to my family in the United States.

Gary and I both feel honored by the recognition, and we are grateful to President Koroma and to those who nominated us. We are also aware that this was not just about us. Our thoughts were never far from the realization that many of our Friends of Sierra Leone colleagues have made great contributions and sacrifices for the people of Sierra Leone, and that they stood by this country in the dark days of its civil war and beyond.

## CITATIONS

PETER CHRISTIAN ANDERSON  
(MOR)

*In recognition of his distinguished service to the State, particularly in the field of Communication and the establishment of the Sierra Leone Web website.*

GARY SCHULZE  
(OOR)

*In recognition of his tremendous contribution to the development of Education and the History and Culture of Sierra Leone.*

# 2015 Calendars!

The **2015 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, holidays, and holy days from many cultures, astronomical data, and references to recommended books, music, films, and local fare from the featured countries. The proceeds will go toward Friends of Sierra Leone activities. Make your check to Friends of Sierra Leone.

Use this form or go to the Friends of Sierra Leone website ([www.fosalone.org](http://www.fosalone.org)) and order via PayPal.

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Price/Calendar</u>	<u>Shipping</u>
1-5	\$ 13.95	free!
6-30	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00 per order
31-50	\$ 7.00	\$ 20.00 per order
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Number of calendars \_\_\_\_\_ x \$ \_\_\_\_\_ /calendar = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping charge from price list \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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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> \$25 per Individual	<b>Donations:</b> FoSL Circle	\$1000 and up
	Supporter	\$500 to \$999
	Sponsor	\$100 to \$499
	Friend	\$50 to \$99

Membership (\$25 per member) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to Projects \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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 donations 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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Newsletter/  
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Events

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

\*\*\*\*\*

How would you prefer to receive your newsletter? (circle one)

via the Postal Service

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\*\*\*\*\*

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## **Address Service Requested**

### **Friends of Sierra Leone**

#### **Board Officers**

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