



Friends of Sierra Leone

August 2025 Newsletter

Presidents' Address

By Aiah Fanday & Anthony McMillon



Both of us would like to thank the entire FoSL Membership for placing your confidence in us by electing us as Co-Presidents of this noble Organization. We are humbled by the confidence that you have placed in us by entrusting us as FoSL's next servant-leaders. With your blessings, we therefore rededicate ourselves to work diligently to earn your trust in us to carry on FoSL's mission.

We will continue the increased presence on social media platforms, promote an increase in participation of our virtual lectures/talks by a variety of journalists, authors, experts and other presenters relating to issues pertinent to Sierra Leone, organize annual meetings, the next we are planning for 2026 in Sierra Leone, increase funding for projects throughout Sierra Leone and strengthen advocacy through lobbying for issues in the US and Sierra Leone. None of these objectives will be accomplished without your continued support, and we

Peace Corps Connect 2025

By Susan Eastwood
PCV SL 78-80

Peace Corps Connect is a gathering of RPCVs, run by the NPCA, which allows former volunteers to reconnect with their friends, recommit to our Peace Corps mission, and learn about current developments in the Peace Corps (PC). This year, PC Connect met, after a break of six years, with an inspiring program and an increased sense of urgency due to threats to the very existence of the Peace Corps. Advocacy efforts were a focus as well as updates on the Peace Corps, the good work that continues, and news on ways the agency is adapting to budget cuts and decreasing enrollments.

On July 17, I took the Acela high-speed train from New Haven, Connecticut to Washington, DC. I met an old friend, an RPCV from Niger, and we moved into the dorm at American University, where the conference was held. We soon got to know

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What is Connect+?
An alumni social media platform created by RPCVs, for RPCVs. Designed for our Peace Corps Community of over 240,000 RPCVs. Whether you're seeking inspiration, networking, or simply looking to reconnect with people who "get it" - this is your space.

thank you in advance for your support!!!

Thanks to our dedicated and committed Board Members, who volunteer their time and resources selflessly without compensation. Thanks to all our donors over the years, Volunteers, and to all of you, for your ongoing support as dedicated members.

As a Non-Profit Organization, we pride ourselves on ensuring that 100% of all donations go directly to projects and ongoing support, to designated institutions in Sierra Leone.

Both of us are committed to serving you as servant-leaders of this great organization for the next two years, but most importantly, we are counting on your continued support to execute and achieve our stated common goals. Again, may we express our gratitude to each of you for your dedication to FoSL and your support as we have “big shoes to fill” left by our predecessors, Peggy Murrah and Michael Lee.

Thank you for your continued dedication and support of FoSL and its mission.



RPCVs from around the country, who served all over the globe, and also chose to house in the campus dorms. Once we figured out the Metro and campus shuttles, it was easy to get around, and a good thing, since the temperature was

hitting 100 degrees!

The 18th was a Day of Service, and we were in the group putting together information packets to be used at the Capitol Hill Advocacy Day on the 21st. There was also a career fair that many attended. That evening we relaxed with an opening night social on-campus.

The Connect conference itself took place on Saturday, July 19th and Sunday, the 20th. And what a full and fun time it was! Saturday started with full group sessions, with a lively MC setting the mood. A highlight was the talk by Acting Peace Corps CEO Dr. Allison Greene, who was positive about the future of the Peace Corps, assuring us that the two countries that recently closed or “paused” their programs (Ethiopia and Tanzania) did so due to a planned phase out, not to funding cuts. But she acknowledged that recruitment is down and addressed three ways the PC is responding to try to appeal to those who are hesitant to commit to two years of service.

1. An option to sign up for regular PC placement for one year, instead of two, with the option to extend for a second year

2. Shorter time commitments for PC Response placements

3. A new pilot initiative, online volunteers! For example, after the war in Ukraine began, some volunteers served online using Zoom meetings.

The RPCVs in the audience were also asked to consider signing up to do local recruitment with a new program that will support these efforts.

In the afternoon, we broke out into workshops, or perused the many tables in the lobby. Many “Friends of (fill in your country)” groups had interesting tables with local crafts, calendars, or



Wreath honoring PCVs who died during their service
fired scientists at the EPA.

information to share. I helped with the RPCVs for Environmental Action table, with promoting their Sunday workshop "Earth at the Crossroads" on Sunday, and a petition in support of the

One of the fun features of the conference was having the audience vote electronically to determine the winners for the Loret Miller Ruppe Award ("Vote for your favorite affiliate group") and Thesis in Three. The contestants made short presentations, or showed videos, highlighting their work, we clicked in our votes on an app, and the winners were announced at the closing session on Sunday.

The Women of Achievement Award was given to Juliet Sorenson, daughter of Ted Sorenson, an international human rights attorney, who gave a wonderful speech to end the conference.

The NPCA has already announced that they will be hosting another Connect next year to celebrate the 65th anniversary of

the Peace Corps, along with the 250th Anniversary of our country. They will have it at American University again, so be sure to sign up early. They will be seeking a larger meeting space there, since they had to turn away a number of people who wanted to attend this year. I hope FoSL will choose to attend and host a table, or even enter the video contest to show the great work we do in our own favorite country of service!

Many RPCVs participated in the Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill on Monday the 21st. I am lucky to have a PC friendly Congressional delegation in CT, so I opted for a day of exploring DC museums. But I am going to set up an in-district meeting with my Congressman - contacting our federal Representatives is something all of us can do to support more funding and recognition for the Peace Corps. The news is changing rapidly, but as of August 12th further cuts are being proposed in Congress and the Kenya program is closing.

The Peace Corps needs our help! I urge you to speak up and let your Congressperson know what your experience of service abroad meant to your life and how important it is to continue the Peace Corps!

Learn more and join our advocacy efforts for the Peace Corps at:
<https://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/>

Ambassador Amara Sowa from Sierra Leone



Friends of Sierra Leone - Newsletter - August 2025

Peggy Murrah, former President of Friends of Sierra Leone (FoSL), co-Presidents Aiah Fanday and Anthony McMillon, met with **Ambassador Amara Sowa** and embassy staff on July 17 to discuss continuing the long-standing friendship between Friends of Sierra Leone, the embassy, and its long-running efforts on behalf of Sierra Leone. Former President Murrah and co-Presidents Fanday and McMillon informed the ambassador and staff of FoSL's advocacy

not only for Peace Corps' return to Sierra Leone, but also of its direct assistance to communities and organizations through its Small Projects Fund.



Aiah Fanday informed the Ambassador and his staff that "We (FoSL) have a long history of working together with the Embassy of Sierra Leone in Washington, DC. We are here to introduce our leadership, and to tell the new Embassy administration that Friends of Sierra Leone (Returned Peace Corps Volunteers) are determined to continue working in the interests of the country."

Peggy Murrah informed Ambassador Sowa and staff at the meeting that Friends of Sierra Leone is recognized by the Peace Corps as the most active returned volunteer association. She reminded the Ambassador and his staff that "We are non-partisan and non-political. We just want to continue helping Sierra Leone", she said

Anthony McMillon reiterated that the organization will increase their support to students, schools, and universities in Sierra Leone. He informed the Ambassador not only of FoSL's ongoing efforts in Sierra Leone, but also of individual efforts of FoSL members to assist the education of deserving students at all levels. He informed the Ambassador and staff attendees, "We are working on the details of our planned visit to Sierra Leone. We want to hold our annual meeting in Sierra Leone next year."

In his response, Ambassador Amara Sowa hailed the organization for their service to Sierra Leone. His Excellency reflected on a long encounter with a

Peace Corps volunteer in a remote village who endured all the rigors of rural life to serve the community. "We are very grateful for the support the United States Peace Corps has rendered to Sierra Leone", Ambassador Sowa said, further thanking the organization for availing itself in charting the best way forward in the interests of Sierra Leone.

Ambassador Sowa expressed gratitude and appealed to the Friends of Sierra Leone to utilize its resources available in the United States to inform Americans that Sierra Leone is now offering many opportunities.



Projects Report

by Jim Hanson



Our projects work has slowed a bit this year, after a record pace in 2024. We have continued to aid communities where Peace Corps Volunteers are stationed, with two more projects funded this year. The **Tawuya Village Health Clinic** in rural Kambia received \$1050 to convert a 3-wheeled motorcycle into an ambulance to

transport patients with emergency health needs. This project was delayed in 2024, but was concluded in March of this year. Another PCV placement, the **Lokomasama Secondary School** in Port Loko District, has received \$3200 to improve and equip their science classrooms and laboratories.



Other projects funded include the **Comforti Mother's and Children's Clinic** in Calaba Town, Freetown. They are constructing a new building, and FoSL provided \$2000 to them to supply the doors and windows. Another health clinic in Freetown, this one in Murray Town, is being rehabilitated by **SUDU Salone**. They received \$4000 to purchase modern maternity and hospital beds. SUDU Salone has been working in Sierra Leone for many years, striving to improve the lives of orphaned and displaced children. A small village in Kambia District, **Bapuya Village**, started construction on a court barrie in 2024, but lacked the funds to complete the project. A grant of \$3750 from FoSL will allow them to complete this long-awaited facility. They were overjoyed to hear that their project would soon move forward.



FoSL's signature agriculture work, the **Mamaka Agricultural Project**, located just outside Mile 91, is pushing to complete a new cassava and rice processing facility by harvest time. The new facility, set up to serve Mamaka's 145 farmers, will be completely powered by solar energy.

RPCV Chris Siegler has secured over \$78,000 in private, earmarked donations to fund this project, which will improve the bottom line for its farmers, and the project as a whole.

With the beginning of the new school year, FoSL will again provide \$250 to the **Paul School for the Blind**, in Bo, to aid students in need. The scholarship is in memory of Daphne Sawyer-Dunn, a former member of the FoSL Board of Directors.

Finally, I want to give a huge shout-out to a group of education RPCV's who served in the early 1980's. Their reunion, held at the home of **Susie and Tony Paparella**, in Ohio, ended with their decision to, once again, contribute to our projects fund. Their pooled resources came to a whopping \$5200! Our sincere thanks to these volunteers who continue to remember and give back to Sierra Leone. Their donation boosted our projects budget to over \$30,000, which will provide funds for many more communities in the coming months. Thank you to all our donors, both large and small, for your support of our work. With the exception of banking fees, all of your donated dollars go to work in Sierra Leone. With your help, we continue to improve the lives of people in overlooked areas throughout the country.



Advocacy

by Marco Cavallaro

Stateside:

As we transition from summer into fall, there are a few key dates to keep in mind:

Sunday, September 21st: International Day of Peace Join us in recognizing and promoting peace worldwide. This year's theme focuses on unity and collaboration across borders.

Monday, September 22nd: 64th Anniversary of the Peace Corps Act Signed into law in 1961, the Peace Corps has helped thousands build meaningful global connections. Let's take a moment to honor and celebrate that legacy.

Peace Corps Congressional Gold Medal Alert: Be on the lookout for updates from the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) about the Peace Corps Congressional Gold Medal webpage coming soon! We'll share the link and more details as soon as the webpage is live. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor given by Congress, and draft legislation honoring Peace Corps volunteers is in the works.

Salone Advocacy Zooms:

Chris Siegler and The Mamaka Project : June 22, 2025



Changing the Mindset
of the Traditional
Subsistence Farmer

In June, we had the privilege of hearing

from Chris Siegler of The Mamaka Project, a grassroots initiative that focuses on sustainable agriculture and community development in Sierra Leone. Chris shared inspiring stories and thoughtful insights about empowering local farmers and building long-term solutions through collaboration and education. It was an engaging discussion that left us all reflecting on the impact of community-driven work.

**Zoom Discussion with Uman Tok :
August 3, 2025**



We were thrilled to host a Zoom conversation with the team from Uman Tok, an organization dedicated to amplifying the voices of women and girls in Sierra Leone through storytelling, advocacy, and community empowerment.

About Uman Tok: Uman Tok means "Women's Talk" in Krio, and the organization lives up to its name by providing safe spaces where women can share their experiences, find support, and advocate for gender equality and justice. Their work spans education, reproductive health, gender-based violence prevention, and leadership development.

Learn more and get involved: www.umantok.org

Dr. Fouad Sheriff's Discussion on MPox
: August 10, 2025



We were honored to hear from Dr. Fouad Sheriff, who spoke about Mpox (formerly monkeypox)—a disease that has affected many communities across West Africa and the world. Dr. Sheriff shared critical information about the virus, including prevention, treatment, and public health efforts in Sierra Leone and beyond.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the back half of 2025, we remain deeply committed to our advocacy work. Whether it's through thoughtful conversations on Zoom, spreading awareness stateside, or supporting community-led efforts on the ground, we are continually inspired by the power of shared purpose and vision.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Your engagement and support are what drive this work forward.


Please engage and stay connected, and we hope to see you at an upcoming event!

Contact Us: advocacy@fosalone.org

**Sunday, September 7th
at 7pm ET via Zoom**

***Pain into Purpose: My
Journey with Sickle Cell
With Sia Evelyn Nyandemo***


From heartbreaking loss to life-saving advocacy—join Evelyn Nyandemo, founder of SCCAN, as she shares her powerful story and mission to fight sickle cell disease in Sierra Leone.

This is a free event sponsored by 

Why should you join this special talk?

- Learn why knowing your sickle cell status matters
- Get tips for caring for yourself or a loved one
- Be inspired to make change in your community

You must pre-register for this upcoming talk



My Peace Corps Service

by Nat Kofi

RPCV 23-25



When I arrived in Sierra Leone, as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I brought with me not just a commitment to teach but also a deep belief in the power of community partnerships to transform lives. With a background in international development and humanitarian service, I immersed myself within my community and quickly became more than a classroom teacher. I emerged as a bridge-builder between local needs and global networks of support.

At **Taiama Secondary School**, where I taught English and Business English, I revitalized the school's long-neglected computer lab, introducing students to digital literacy and ensuring that technology could serve as a tool for opportunity. Beyond the classroom, I did little things like creating a Facebook page and email account for the school, giving it a digital presence and greater visibility with partners and donors. I organized teacher training workshops to build capacity in resume writing, digital skills, and professional development.

Recognizing that learning cannot flourish without the right environment, I worked with my supervisor, counterpart, community leaders and teachers to develop project proposals aimed at strengthening school infrastructure. One notable achievement was my leadership in drafting a proposal for a **U.S. Embassy-funded perimeter fence project**, which gained wide local support. I also spearheaded tree planting initiatives in commemoration of Peace Corps Week, led extracurricular activities, and facilitated youth mentoring sessions that encouraged students to think creatively about their future.

My efforts led to collaborations with **Friends of Sierra Leone (FoSL)**. Through FoSL, we successfully secured funding to produce **new classroom furniture**, directly improving learning conditions for hundreds of students. The project not only provided much-needed desks and chairs but also inspired local ownership by involving community members in the process.

We were able to secure another funding from FoSL to fund the construction of a **hand pump water well for New Way Academy for Girls**, a school dedicated to expanding educational opportunities for young women in Kori Chiefdom. Access to clean water will not only improve daily school operations but

also empower female students to thrive in a safer and more supportive environment.

Beyond infrastructure and resources, I was deeply engaged in opening doors for students through the **Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program**. One of the most memorable experiences was mentoring and supporting **Joseph "Blessing" Sama**, a bright and determined student from Taiama Secondary School who was selected for the YES program. Despite facing communication challenges in the placement process, Joseph's resilience and my guidance ensured that he remained engaged and prepared throughout the journey. For me, this experience underscored the importance of advocating for equal access and ensuring that talented students in Sierra Leone are given the same opportunities as their peers worldwide.

My Peace Corps service has never been just about volunteering abroad, it has been about weaving together education, community empowerment, and international solidarity. I believe that Partnerships like the one with Friends of Sierra Leone remind us that sustainable change happens when local voices lead and global allies listen and support.

I believe I have left behind not only stronger school system but also a legacy of collaboration, equity, and hope for the next generation of Sierra Leonean leaders.



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P. O. Box 15875
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