



**2022**

## **Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting**

We were so happy that we could once again gather together in person and on Zoom, for our Board and Annual Meetings! We met at the Sierra Leone Embassy in Washington, DC on Thursday, 9/29 for a Board Meeting and then, on Friday, 9/30 for the Annual Meeting. Saturday, 10/1 included a trip to the Smithsonian African Art Museum.

The main focus of the Board meeting was to finalize the agenda for the Annual Meeting, clean up the FoSL webpage and then to rework the Projects Online Application.

We opened the Annual Meeting with Introductions. Awards for recognition for service to FoSL were given to **Mark Hager** and **Patty Bruzek**.



We had a number of speakers for our Annual Meeting, including **Ambassador Hull** who had a message from **Ambassador Reimer**, the current US Ambassador to Sierra Leone. He had just recently sworn in the 16 new PCV's. This is great news that Peace Corps is back in the country. He also said, "The top priorities of the Embassy continue to be to promote health security, strengthen democracy, and accelerate the transition to a market-based economy." He encouraged all to follow the US Embassy in Sierra Leone on Facebook and Twitter.



**FoSL Loses a Dear Friend and Advocate**

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Our next speaker was **Sierra Leone Deputy Ambassador Sheku Mesali**, who welcomed us to the Embassy and reported that the President is passionate about Education and is encouraging people to go back to rural areas for farming. He also mentioned that there will most likely be a Presidential Election in the Fall of 2023.

**Natalie Gill-Mensah**, the current Sierra Leone Peace Corps Director, joined us by Zoom from Freetown. She was a PCV in Zambia 20 years ago. Natalie said there are 11 education and 5 health PCV's currently. She also mentioned that they are working on collecting stories from RPCV's, talking about the impact of Peace Corps on their lives. She is hoping to get more potential PCV's interested in Sierra Leone.

**Dylan Martins** works for Peace Corps and works on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Goal. There is a Global Connections program that matches RPCV's both virtually and in person with classrooms. He let us know that they have Storytelling tool guide to help RPCV's mold their stories to recruit future volunteers. If you think you may be interested in being a part of this program, go to

We had a break for a delicious lunch of cassava leaf!!!

Member of Sierra Leone Parliament, **Honorable Emerson Lamina**, came to speak and again mentioned the emphasis on the school programs. He also mentioned that Sierra Leone is in a good position with the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

**Jonathan Pearson**, NPCA Advocacy, told us that **Carol Spahn** was approved as official Peace



Corps Director. He shared that in 2022, NPCA's top priority is to see Congress pass the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act. It has passed in the House and still needs to pass in the Senate. Contact your Senator about this.

We next heard about **Peter Andersen's** role during and after the Civil War in Sierra Leone. We had an active discussion about the causes of the war and his time with the Special Court.

A Business meeting was held. We are going to work on our presence on social media, especially Instagram. Michael Lee also would like RPCV's to send him a single photo from their experience with an explanation of the circumstances. He can be contacted at [mjameslee26@gmail.com](mailto:mjameslee26@gmail.com).

We had a discussion of location for the Annual Meeting for 2023. Possibilities are in DC (with NPCA meeting) or Sapelo Island, GA. BUT, if someone would like to volunteer to help coordinate the meeting in their location, we would be happy to consider that. Please contact President, Peggy Murrah, if you are interested.

A group from the meeting went to the Smithsonian African Art Museum on Saturday, 10/1. While there, they met a delightful man who worked there and was from Sierra Leone! He spoke highly of the Peace Corps Volunteers he had known when he was younger. It was more like running into an old friend. A fitting end to a good meeting.



## Judy Figi

I braced for the worst this morning when Friends of Sierra Leone President Peggy Murrah called and said "I have bad news." I couldn't believe how bad it was. My long-time friend, and friend of Sierra Leone Judy Figi, passed away in hospital yesterday morning of a heart attack. I didn't want to believe it. I still don't want to believe it. Judy was a Peace Corps Volunteer, a musician and music teacher (she played five different clarinets), a long-serving board member and Advocacy Chair of Friends of Sierra Leone, and one of those who worked tirelessly, and successfully, to return Peace Corps to Sierra Leone after the war.

Judy Lamm served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the mid-1960s, teaching music at the Harford School for Girls in Moyamba.

At Harford, Judy met two of the most important people in her life. One was her fellow teacher and lifelong friend Doris (Lenga) Koroma. Doris went on to become principal at Harford, and is now Paramount Chief Doris Lenga-Caulker Gbabiyyor II of Kagboro Chieftdom in Moyamba District. The other important person was Dave Figi, also a Peace Corps Volunteer in Moyamba who taught at Moyamba Boys Secondary School before transferring to Harford in his second year. Judy told me they didn't date in Sierra Leone, but this changed when they returned to the US. They were married for 53 years.

During the war, Doris went to stay with the Figis in Janesville, Wisconsin, and returned to Sierra Leone a strong Green Bay Packers Fan thanks to the influence of Judy and Dave. I used to call Doris each time the Minnesota Vikings beat her Packers.

Judy mentioned a couple things about her time at Moyamba. Peace Corps issued



the volunteers with robins-egg blue cars, something they NEVER do now. I can't remember what model she said it was, but I gather it didn't survive the complete two years of her Peace Corps service.

Every Harford student knows the story of the three Harford ghosts, one of them particularly tall. I learned the true story of this legend from Judy and, if so minded, I could name names.

On the 50th anniversary of her decision to join Peace Corps, on November 22, 2013, Judy wrote the following and posted it to her Facebook page. She re-shared it this past November 22nd.

"Fifty years ago today I was a senior at University of Wisconsin. That morning I had stopped by the Peace Corps recruiters' table in the Union and, mildly interested, picked up some material. In the early afternoon I was going out the door to my conducting class when I heard, on our little black and white TV, Walter Cronkite telling us the President had been shot. Like most people I stayed glued to

the TV all afternoon. That evening I was having coffee with an old friend. We had worked on Kennedy's campaign together. She said 'If we really cared we'd join the Peace Corps.' I said 'OK, let's do it' and I sent in my application the next day."

Harford was just the beginning of Judy's engagement with Sierra Leone. She returned to Sierra Leone to do teacher trainings and to visit Harford and her old friends. In 2013 she was present in Shenge when fellow RPCV Gary Schulze was installed as an honorary paramount chief. Just five days ago, Judy created a fundraiser on her Facebook page to benefit The Magic Penny to raise funds for schoolchildren in Kagboro.

Judy first contacted me when I was reporting the news on Sierra Leone during the war, and she was a frequent email correspondent during that period. I was working upstairs writing news stories when Judy emailed me that a plane had crashed into one tower of the World Trade Center. I rushed downstairs in time to see a second plane hit the other tower.

As I write this I can't help wondering what I have forgotten, or left out. She was a wonderful person, always positive, always with a smile, and always a good friend.

Good bye Judy. I will miss you. May you rest in perfect peace.

Peter Anderson, FoSL Board Member



**Friends of Sierra Leone Social Media**

- **Follow us! Friends of Sierra Leone is on the following platforms:**
  - Instagram - 101 Followers (@FoSalone) 
  - Facebook - 1,343 Followers (@FoSalone) 
  - Twitter - 1,322 Followers (@FoSalone) 
  - Website ([www.FoSalone.org](http://www.FoSalone.org)) 

Follow us! Help us spread the love of Salone!

## Projects

### Jim Hanson, Committee Chair

Our small projects program continues to be very popular with small communities throughout Sierra Leone. Most have nowhere else to turn for funding of their local projects, and the need is great. Our selection team is currently reviewing 14 applications for funding. With a budget of over \$14,000, we look to fund several new projects in December.

The scholarship fund for the **Paul School for the Blind** (picture below) in memory of long-time Board member Daphne Sawyer-Dunn continues, but this year the Board of Directors decided to make a special gift of \$1000 to mark the 15<sup>th</sup> year since Daphne's passing. This donation provided school uniforms and toiletries for the school's 47 students, plus a fuel supply for their school bus. The students held a special candlelight memorial service in honor of Daphne at the start of the school year.



Three other projects have received funding earlier this year. The **Wesleyan Primary School** in Makorombo, Bombali District, was granted \$2665 for a latrine and the addition of two classrooms. In Kathombo, Tonkolilli District, the **St. George Primary School** received \$2727 to construct a well that will serve the teachers, students, and the surrounding community.

## Announcements

FoSL is requesting **suggestions for next year's annual meeting**. We have met on the eastern side of the country for the last several years or virtually. In addition to a location, there needs to be a member that can coordinate and work with the board to put the meeting on. Thus far, the only suggestion is to go back to Sapelo Island, GA where we have had two previous meetings and it's in Georgia. If you know a place that may be more convenient for our West Coast members and you are able to participate in the preparation and planning, please let us know at [info@fosalone.org](mailto:info@fosalone.org).

FoSL will have **elections** for several board positions this April. If you would like to run for one of the available positions, contact Peggy at [president@fosalone.org](mailto:president@fosalone.org). A list of the positions being voted on is on our webpage at [www.fosalone.org](http://www.fosalone.org).

Please submit **announcements for newsletters** to [info@fosalone.org](mailto:info@fosalone.org). You may share news that would be of interest to the membership including, but not limited to, births, deaths, moves, looking for, or any suitable notice. Your announcement needs to be emailed and ready for inclusion.

A **new agricultural project**, headed up by RPCV and FoSL members Chris and Jeannie Siegler, will support 30 women and 15 young men in Mamaka Village, just outside Mile 91. This 3-year project, using a micro-finance model, will fund swamp rice cultivation, animal husbandry, and cassava and vegetable farming during the dry season. **Easy Solar** has been contracted to provide a water pumping system for the dry season crops. Classes in organic agriculture, animal husbandry, and farm finance and cash-flow management, and a mentoring program are also an integral part of the project. The rice harvest is now in progress, with dry season crops to soon follow. So far, \$4600 has been donated to this project. You can support this project by donating on the FoSL website (see below), or by sending a check made out to the Friends of Sierra Leone and noting Mamaka Ag. Project on the memo line to Chris Siegler, 19475 Conifer Drive, Huson, MT 59846. You may also contact Chris for more information at [csiegler@montana.com](mailto:csiegler@montana.com).



Thank you to all of our faithful donors for your support of the small projects program. Your donations provide us with the funds to support community-based

programs that foster leadership and cooperation, and most importantly, hope for a better life in Sierra Leone.

## YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS HAVE FUNDNEED NUMEROUS FoSL SMALL GRANT PROJECTS

Past Projects Funded:  
[fosalone.org/projFunded.php](http://fosalone.org/projFunded.php)

Donate:  
[fosalone.org/donate.php](http://fosalone.org/donate.php)

# friends of sierra leone

CONTACT: Amanda Wilcoxon, 7922 Towerbell Ct., Annandale, VA 22003

April 3, 1987

Dear fellow RPCVs:

We are happy to announce that a real, tentatively named, "Friends of Sierra Leone" is in the planning stages. A Washington-based committee of RPCVs and assorted other people interested in Sierra Leone has been formed. We will hold another meeting on Sunday, April 5 to tackle more of the gritty detail involved in forming a larger group.

So far possible ideas, for those who would like to join us but may see no benefit in doing so if you don't live near Washington, include a quarterly newsletter reporting on current events in Sierra Leone and an accounting of development projects we may become involved in.

Our first meeting was attended by Habib Khan, the current Peace Corps director in Sierra Leone, who expressed interest in our taking over the foreign currency account that funds the Volunteers' incountry scholarship project, and making it the centerpiece of future fundraising. Included here is a clipping from a recent Di News De, explaining what we may take as our first development project in the country.

If you are interested in joining us, we are interested in your comments, your suggestions and your money. We've determined that an initial commitment of \$20 from you will go a long way towards covering start-up costs of putting together such an organization, and will give us a decent amount to contribute to the scholarship fund (or other project as decided by the committee). You will receive a full accounting of every penny, via further mailings and the proposed newsletter. Unfortunately, we cannot offer tax-deductible status yet, but it is in the planning stages. Until that time, checks can be made out to me and will be deposited in a special account formed by the committee. If you wish to contact us, you can call me at (703)876-0964 in the evenings and on weekends.

This mailing has been sponsored by the Peace Corps Office of Private Sector Development. Peace Corps is picking up the costs for our first letter to you, but we'll have to pick up the costs of any subsequent mailings.

Sincerely,



Amanda L. Wilcoxon  
Coordinator

committee members:

Matthew Cossolotto  
Larry Fioretta

Marion Fitch Connell  
Gary Walker

Cathy MacFarlane  
Rene Shackelford

**Check the date on your mailing label or subject line. Is it time to renew? If there is no date, or if the date is some time in the past, it's time to renew! Fill out and mail the form below with your check.**  
**Or renew through our website:**  
<https://fosalone.org/mbrs.php>

FRIENDS OF SIERRA LEONE MEMBERSHIP FORM	
Name (include maiden) _____	FoSL needs your participation. Circle your areas of interest:  <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy  <input type="checkbox"/> Education  <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising  <input type="checkbox"/> Membership  <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter/ Communications  <input type="checkbox"/> Projects  <input type="checkbox"/> 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 your email address.)  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Address _____	
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	
Home Phone _____ Email _____	
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Relationship to SL (e.g., Sierra Leonean, PC, etc.) _____	
Sierra Leone Home _____ Years _____ to _____	
Membership: \$25 per Individual \$ _____	
Donation to Projects: \$ _____	
FoSL Circle \$1000 and up Supporter \$500 to \$999 Sponsor \$100 to \$499 Friend \$50 - \$99	
Overseas Mail (add \$10) \$ _____	
Total Remitted	\$ _____
Membership dues support operations for Friends of Sierra Leone, including meetings, newsletters, and the website. All other donations support FoSL projects in Sierra Leone.	
Dues and other contributions to Friends of Sierra Leone are fully tax-deductible.	
<b>Thank you for your support! Please return this form with your check made payable to Friends of Sierra Leone to the address at the right. →</b>	
<b>PO Box 15875            Washington, DC            20003-0875</b>	

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

**FOSaLone.org**



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