



Advocacy

by Marco Cavallaro

As we move forward through 2026, Friends of Sierra Leone continues to strengthen connections between our members, Sierra Leonean partners, advocacy organizations, and communities both in Sierra Leone and abroad. The first part of 2026 featured several engaging Zoom conversations, important advocacy discussions, and continued collaboration with partners working to improve lives across Sierra Leone.

January 18 Zoom Conversation with Ambassador Amara Sowa



FoSL was honored to welcome Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Amara Sowa, for a special Zoom discussion with members on January 18th.

Ambassador Sowa shared updates on the growing relationship between Sierra Leone and the United States, highlighting ongoing diplomatic efforts, investment opportunities, and areas of national development. He spoke about Sierra Leone's priorities in education,

Gary Schulze

1938 - 2026

FoSL is sad to report the passing of long time FoSL member Gary Schulze. See page 9.



Projects Report

by Jim Hanson

The projects committee has had a steady pace of applications in the first half of this year, seven of which were selected for funding, totaling over \$29,000. Two of these are the work of current Peace Corps Volunteers. In addition to these, two RPCV-led organizations that FoSL partners with have contributed \$62,000 to their projects from their own earmarked donations.



continued on page 4

infrastructure, healthcare, and economic growth, while also emphasizing the importance of engagement from the Sierra Leonean diaspora and international partners such as FoSL.

The Ambassador also discussed the importance of strengthening partnerships that can help support tourism, entrepreneurship, youth development, and cultural exchange. Members appreciated the opportunity to engage directly with Ambassador Sowa and ask thoughtful questions regarding Sierra Leone's future and the role organizations like FoSL can play in supporting long-term development efforts.

We thank Ambassador Sowa for his time, openness, and continued partnership with Friends of Sierra Leone.

February 22 Zoom Talk with Dr. Fouad Sheriff



On February 22nd, FoSL welcomed Dr. Fouad Sheriff for a fascinating presentation centered on his recent visit to Tiwai Island in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Sheriff shared reflections from his travels through the region and highlighted the ecological and cultural importance of Tiwai Island, one of Sierra Leone's most unique wildlife sanctuaries and conservation areas. His presentation touched on the island's biodiversity, environmental significance, and potential for eco-tourism development.

In addition to discussing the natural beauty of Tiwai Island, Dr. Sheriff also shared observations from healthcare outreach efforts and conversations with local communities. Members appreciated hearing firsthand perspectives on both the

opportunities and challenges facing rural communities in Sierra Leone, particularly around healthcare access, infrastructure, and sustainable development.

FoSL thanks Dr. Sheriff for an engaging and informative presentation that reminded us of Sierra Leone's incredible natural resources and the importance of supporting community-centered development.

March 11 Meeting with Ambassador Sowa and Embassy Staff

On March 11th, some members of the FoSL Board met with Ambassador Sowa and staff from the Sierra Leone Embassy for a productive and forward-looking discussion.

The central topic discussed was the growing concern surrounding U.S. visa restrictions and immigration-related challenges impacting Sierra Leoneans. Embassy officials outlined several efforts currently underway by Sierra Leone to address visa overstay concerns and improve cooperation with U.S. authorities.

The conversation also explored ways that Friends of Sierra Leone and its membership community may be able to support constructive dialogue, cultural exchange, and advocacy efforts that strengthen understanding and engagement.

The meeting reflected FoSL's ongoing commitment not only to development work and cultural connection, but also to advocacy and relationship-building that benefits both Sierra Leone and the United States.

Most FoSL lectures have been recorded and are available to all FoSL members. On our website, after logging in, navigate to FoSL Members / Special Content.

April 19 Zoom Presentation with Dr. Dennis Akpona



FoSL was pleased to host Dr. Dennis Akpona of the Carter Center's Global Mental Health Program on April 19th for an important discussion focused on mental health initiatives in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Akpona highlighted the urgent need to expand mental health services and awareness throughout the country, while also discussing efforts currently underway to strengthen mental health systems, improve training opportunities, and reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

The presentation emphasized the importance of community-based care, partnerships with healthcare providers, and increasing access to services for underserved populations. Members learned about ongoing collaborations designed to build sustainable mental health infrastructure and improve outcomes for individuals and families throughout Sierra Leone.

The discussion was both educational and inspiring, and FoSL greatly appreciates Dr. Akpona's dedication to advancing mental health support and advocacy in Sierra Leone.

May 24 with Anna Bowden of Street Child US



And most recently Anna Bowden, CEO of Street Child US, presented to our FoSL Zoom conversation on Sunday, May 24th at 7:00 PM ET.

Street Child has been a key partner in supporting vulnerable children and

improving access to education in Sierra Leone and beyond. Anna will discuss Street Child's ongoing work in teacher training, school support, educational access, and community development initiatives.

We look forward to another meaningful conversation and encourage all members to attend.

Thank You to Our Members

FoSL's continued success is made possible through the dedication, generosity, and engagement of our members, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Whether through advocacy, project support, educational programming, or community outreach, your involvement continues to make a difference.

Thank you for being part of the FoSL community and for helping strengthen the bonds between Sierra Leone and the United States!

New U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone Nominated

The White House announced the nomination of Daniel Travis to be the next Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Sierra Leone. Dan Travis is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with tours in Poland, Ghana, Hungary, Uganda, Kenya and most recently as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires in the Republic of Congo. In Washington, Dan served as a Watch Officer in the Secretary of State's Executive Secretariat, as Staff Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Consular Affairs, and as Director of Economic and Regional Affairs in the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs. Dan was born and raised in California. He received a B.A. from Humboldt State University and an M.A. from the U.S. Naval War College.

Health care continues to improve in Sierra Leone, which was the focus of four of our funded projects. The **Rural Health Care Initiative** in Tikonko received \$3935 for repairs and improvements to their birth waiting homes and clinics. We also contributed to the health training conference held at the **Bo Midwifery School**. **Tenki for Born** conducted instruction in post-partem mother and baby care, and in maternal mental health. They received \$4000, the fourth time we have supported their midwife training. The **Sickle Cell Carers Network in Kono District** also received \$4000 for the purchase of three motorbikes. These



vehicles will allow them to service every chiefdom in the district, some in very rural areas. The **Malone Health Clinic**, in Tonkolilli District, was granted \$4000 to construct a perimeter fence around their newly refurbished compound. The volunteer stationed there received Peace Corps Partnership funds for that work. The new perimeter fence is needed to stop clinic break-ins, keep out loose animals, and prevent flooding during the rainy season.

The **Bagbo Prosperity Center**, in the Southern Province, also received a Partnership grant to support the work of the volunteer stationed there. FoSL provided \$1444 at that time, to complete the rehabilitation of a donated building, designed to provide adult education and IT instruction to area residence. They applied for a further \$4000 from FoSL to purchase laptop computers and a solar array, providing internet to the community via StarLink. The center was officially

opened in April.



Two education projects each received \$4000 for their work. The **Titimbaya Primary School**, in Kono District, will rehabilitate two storm-damaged classrooms to serve their fast-growing student population. A **Head-Start** program in Freetown, for the children of the market women of the Kroo Town Market, will use their funds to construct a classroom in a near-by building. This project was the initiative of the mayor of Freetown, working with the **Sister Cities Program** in New Haven Connecticut.



Our partner organizations are also making great progress. The **Passion for Learning Initiative**, in Mondema, Tonkolilli District, is converting a donated church building to provide a home for their phonics-based literary programs, supporting two teachers who will travel to area schools to administer this program and work with local teachers. The



Mamaka Agricultural Program continues to expand, working with 162 farmers in the Mile 91 area in a wide variety of products, including beekeeping, tree crops fisheries, and rice and cassava processing. New programs to mitigate climate change include drip irrigation for vegetable crops and a greenhouse.



International donors have taken notice and are also providing funding for their work.

New applications are pending, so our work continues. There is great progress, but still great need in Sierra Leone. Thanks to all of our generous donors, we have over \$30,000 in our treasury for upcoming projects. Your generosity allows us to say yes to great community-supported projects all over the country. The projects committee would like to thank all who donate to our work.

65th Independence Anniversary

by **Anthony McMillon and Aiah Fanday**

Friends of Sierra Leone's Co-Presidents, Aiah Fanday, Anthony McMillon, and past President, Peggy Murrah, attended, as guests of Ambassador Sowa, the 65th. Independence reception at the Sierra Leone Embassy. In his remarks, Ambassador Sowa thanked Friends of

Sierra Leone for its service to and its ongoing commitment to not only providing assistance to Sierra Leone, but also through its advocacy for a continued Peace Corps presence in Sierra Leone, and for its ongoing advocacy efforts. In attendance were Kimberly A. Bassett, Secretary of the District of Columbia and George Segas, Director of African Affairs at the US State Department. Ms. Bassett presented a proclamation commemorating Sierra Leone's 65th Independence anniversary of behalf of Mayor Muriel



Bowser, and Mr. Segas delivered remarks commemorating the occasion on behalf of the US Government. Next, Aiah Fanday, FoSL's Co-President, began his remarks by thanking Ambassador Sowa for his and the embassy's support to FoSL and ensuring those present that FoSL stands as a partner with the embassy and the Sierra Leonean government is its efforts to advocate policies with the US Government favorable to Sierra Leone

More Images from 65th Independence Anniversary



Presidents' Address

By Aiah Fanday & Anthony McMillon



Both of us would like to thank the entire FoSL Membership and 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.

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, 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 thank you in advance for your support.

Thanks to all the Virtual Monthly Presenters to the FoSL Members and Friends of Sierra Leone; in addition, thanks to our Advocacy Committee Members, headed by Marco Cavallaro for organizing the virtual presentations.

We wish to thank Nat Kofi, our new Fundraising Committee chair who has presented some innovative means to more effectively promote FoSL through its fundraising efforts and to provide more reliable funding.

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. We are indebted to all our Donors in support of our Small Grant Funds. In 2025 we funded \$18,550 projects in various Districts in Sierra Leone. Many thanks to the Fund Raising Committee Members for their in vetting and approval of grant applications.

Our 2026 Annual Meeting will be held at the Embassy of Sierra Leone in Washington, DC Thursday July 16 through July 19. If you haven't already done so, please register for the 2026 Annual Meeting. Please take a couple minutes to complete this registration form to let us know which events you plan on attending for planning purposes:

<https://forms.gle/XAyNAXLKrqCuSkP76>

Both of us are committed to serving you as servant-leaders of this great organization, 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 yet to accomplish our common goals for the both FoSL and Sierra Leone.

Thank you for your continued dedication and support of FoSL and its mission. We hope to see at the 2026 Annual Meeting.



FRIENDS OF SIERRA LEONE

Annual Meeting 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. | JULY 16-19, 2026

Friends of Sierra Leone (FoSL) is excited to welcome members, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, partners, and friends to Washington, D.C. for our 2026 Annual Meeting. This year's gathering will provide opportunities to reconnect, learn about current developments in Sierra Leone, hear from distinguished guests, and celebrate the enduring impact of the Peace Corps and the FoSL community.



THURSDAY
JULY
16



★ The Annual Meeting officially begins with the FoSL Board Meeting for FoSL Board Members.

🍷 At 5pm, all FoSL Members are invited to gather for an informal evening of dinner, drinks, and fellowship as we kick off the weekend's activities.

FRIDAY
JULY
17



The first full day of programming will feature updates from Sierra Leone, Peace Corps leadership, and partner organizations.

Highlights include:

- Opening remarks from outgoing FoSL President Michael Lee, followed by introductions from current FoSL Presidents Aiah Fanday and Anthony McMillon
- A special country update from the Sierra Leone Ambassador to the United States
- Presentations from Peace Corps Sierra Leone Director Tim Miller and currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers
- Remarks from a representative of the U.S. Department of State
- Updates from Peace Corps Washington and Peace Corps Park leadership
- A featured presentation by Chris Siegler

🍴 Refreshments and lunch will be provided throughout the day.

👥 Attendees are invited to continue conversations and networking during a group dinner at **Bukom Cafe**.



SATURDAY
JULY
18



Saturday's program will focus on organizational updates, committee reports, and special presentations.

Featured sessions include:

- FoSL Committee Reports and organizational updates
- A presentation by Dr. Fouad Sheriff

🍴 Lunch will be provided during the meeting.

👥 Join fellow attendees for dinner and fellowship at **Sweet Sweet Kitchen**.



SUNDAY
JULY
19



The Annual Meeting will conclude with a group visit to the **National Museum of African Art**,

offering attendees an opportunity to explore African history, culture, and artistic expression together.



Click Here to Register or goto <https://forms.gle/XAyNaxLKrqCuSkP76>



We look forward to welcoming members and friends from across the country for a weekend of learning, service, connection, and celebration of the enduring friendship between the United States and Sierra Leone.



Gary Schulze



Gary Schulze, long-time FOSL board member and one of the first group of Peace Corps Volunteers to serve in Sierra Leone, died in Long Island, New York on May 19. His health had worsened since his last trip to Sierra Leone in 2024. He was 88 years old.

Gary was born, raised and educated in New York City. Following his Peace Corps service he returned to academia, and completed a Master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia University. In 1965 he was recruited to work at Sherbro Minerals (now Sierra Rutile) in Sierra Leone's Imperri Chiefdom. He left after two years, telling friends later that it was because of the racism expressed by (many of) the expatriate staff. Back in New York City, he worked at Time magazine for several years, then moved to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority where he was a member of the MTA's Interagency Counterterrorism Task Force. He continued to live in New York City; since 1994 he returned frequently to Sierra Leone, and it is there that his legacy will be best remembered.

Gary first arrived in Sierra Leone in 1961, the year of the country's independence. He taught history and civics at the Albert Academy in Freetown, and it was he who changed the school's curriculum from the study of European History to the study of African History. After Peace Corps, on the recommendation of then-Minister of External Affairs Dr. John Karefa-Smart, Gary was assigned to assist Dr. M.C.F. Easman in establishing the Sierra Leone Museum.

It was Gary who suggested that they commission a statue of Bai Bureh, and Dr. Easman agreed. Gary went to a Creole artisan near the seashore who made

statues for grave sites. Gary showed him the watercolor drawing which showed Bai Bureh in profile, and the man asked Gary when he looked like in front. Gary replied, "No one knows, use your imagination." The completed statue was carried up from the seaside on a litter, and Gary recalled that some of women along the way burst out crying, assuming it to be a corpse. At the museum, Gary wired a machete to the statue's hand and chose a cap from a box of hats. Gary recalled that people lined up for blocks to view the statue, and even Prime Minister Sir Milton Margai visited the museum to see it in person. A picture of the statue was featured on Sierra Leone's Le1,000 bank note.



In a short bio he last updated in 2010, Gary also noted that he served as Secretary to the Sierra Leone Monuments & Relics Commission, and that he made the model of the DeRuiter Stone displayed at the Sierra Leone Museum. He returned to Sierra Leone in 1996 as an election observer for Sierra Leone's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.

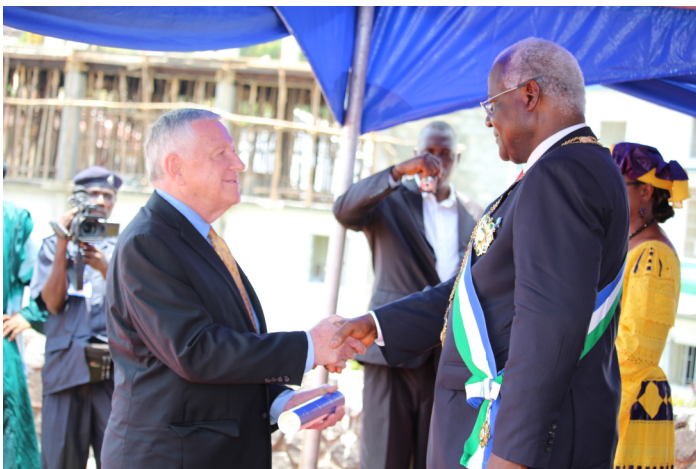
Gary was "an avid collector of traditional African art," and this included a large collection of historic postcards of Sierra Leone by noted Sierra Leonean

photographers going back more than a century.

In 2013, again on Ebay, Gary came across a photo album created by a British military officer who served in Sierra Leone in the late 1800s. The seller stated it included a picture of “Bai Bureh, King of the Temnes.” Gary was able to establish its provenance and made a bid for the album. Shortly before the bidding ended, at midnight, Gary doubled his bid and then dozed off. When he woke ten minutes later, someone else had outbid him. Gary tracked down the successful bidder and bought the album from him for over \$11,000 from his retirement savings. That picture, probably a 4x4 inch contact print, was restored, with a mural given to the Sierra Leone Museum and prints presented to President Ernest Bai Koroma and to former President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

In 2013, after traveling to Shenge from the fishing village of Tombo by pampa (a motorized wooden boat), Gary was made an honorary paramount chief by PC Charles Caulker, Chairman of the Council of Paramount Chief., Gary was installed as Honorary Paramount Chief Pieh Gbabor Caulker II of Kagboro Chiefdom, Moyamba District.

In April 2014, President Koroma made Gary an Officer of the Order of the Rokel “in recognition of his tremendous contribution to the development of Education and the History and Culture of Sierra Leone.”



Gary receiving the Order of the Rokel (OOR) on 28 April 2014 from President Koroma.

While a Peace Corps Volunteer, Gary recalled going to Lumley Beach with a couple friends where they met three men. One, dressed in flowing robes, introduced himself as the Nigerian High

Commissioner. Another, dressed (as Gary described him) like “any Pa from the village” introduced himself as the Prime Minister (Sir Milton Margai), adding “we are a simple people!”



In New York City, Gary told of taking a taxi and discovering that the young driver was a Sierra Leonean. In conversation, Gary told him he was an honorary paramount chief, and the young man said he wouldn’t charge him for the ride. Gary objected, but the young man said “If I charged you, my dad would be upset!”

Gary served on a number of boards, including Friends of Sierra Leone, the National Peace Corps Association, and the Magic Penny, “devoted to improving the lives of schoolchildren in the Shebro area.” He maintained a lifelong relationship with the Albert Academy through the AA Alumni Association. In recent years he commissioned an artist to paint murals near the Sierra Leone Museum and Big Market of some of Sierra Leone’s greatest heroes.

Gary directed that his body be cremated and that his ashes be scattered in “the land that we love”, his beloved Sierra Leone. May he rest in peace.

Funeral arrangements are pending.



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Or renew through our website:

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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"/> 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
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Membership dues support operations for Friends of Sierra Leone, including meetings, newsletters, and the website. All other donations support FoSL projects in Sierra Leone.	
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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. →	
FoSL P.O. Box 667553 Houston, TX 77266-7553	

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		Aiah Fanday (Upper Marlboro, Maryland)
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