

## Libraries for Liberia Foundation

Libraries for Liberia Foundation is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower and engage people to collect educational materials and technologies to set up libraries for deserving schools and communities in Liberia. The Foundation will provide the network and infrastructure for collecting and shipping donated educational materials to Liberia.

There is no modern public or school library in Liberia. Some schools have reading rooms that one would call library but the books in these rooms are more than a decade old. New books will have to be purchased for new libraries but the communities or schools do not have the money. Libraries for Liberia Foundation realizing this need has started book drives to collect books for schools in around Monrovia. It is not an easy task but we intend to be the voice of that child who wants to achieve his/her highest reading potential or improve his or her self confidence but cannot afford to go to attend schools that have these opportunities.

The idea of collecting fairly used books to establish a library has been widely accepted because it is better than none at all. Our goal is to collect books and also to build a model Library to address the major trends shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library and the rapid expansion of high speed broadband internet access across Africa. The model will serve as a design to be clone as many times. To make this work the building of each physical structure will be in collaboration with the community.

Libraries for Liberia Foundation was founded in January 1, 2011 after the launching of the Westerville book drive in October 2010 with the theme "Libraries for Liberia" to collect books for schools in Liberia by the Huber Ridge Elementary School in Westerville, Ohio. Thanks to the Asst. Principal, Lucy Rader-Brown, who spearheaded the project and Lynne Maslowski, who contacted the news media for an interview.

The awareness has increased to the point that the other elementary schools in the district have participated in the drive and members of the community as well. It is important to note the power of the media. If it was not for the interviews we had with the Westerville News and ThisWeek newspapers this drive would not have been a success. Having seen the public and community response in the book drives, we decided to launch this foundation to continue the effort that we have started. We intend to establish branches across the United States and other parts of the world where we have Liberian civic organizations.

This non-profit organization is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by an Executive Director, who is also a member of the Board. Our goal is to link the library to every school in Monrovia and its environs. We have targeted three schools for the pilot project and they have received the books that we collected in 2011. The Schools are St. Peter's Lutheran High School, Bromley Episcopal Mission School, and Presbyterian Todee Mission. We have collected 600 boxes or 10 pallets of reading books for Pre-K through 12 and they were delivered to the schools in April 2012. We also delivered a donation of 10 refurbished Pentium 4 from Columbus Microsystems for a tax deductible

receipt. The books were shipped to Liberia through a humanitarian assistance program of the U.S. Department of Defense

We have completed the first phase, now need to set up the library software in to catalogue the books otherwise the circulation of the books will be done manually which is a tedious exercise. Phase two is setting up the computer lab and library at St. Peter's Lutheran School. A library is not complete without computers. We have identified the software but we need to develop the software and customize it for Liberia. We are currently in discussion with other users of the software to assist us with the pilot program.

Huber Ridge Elementary School in Westerville has agreed to partner with St. Peter's Lutheran Elementary section so that students can use Skype or some other means of collaboration and using Cloud Technology to interact with each other. Skype is an easy way for teachers to open up their classroom and their students to a world beyond the class. With Skype students can learn from other students, connect with other cultures and expand their knowledge in amazing ways. Teachers can also benefit from Skype for professional development and exchanging curriculum. We estimate that we will need 75 portable computers for this program because desktop computers will consume a lot of power and take up space. The following is an estimated break down for equipment needed for the three Liberian Schools:

1. 75 Intel –powered convertible Classmate PC (WIN 7) ---- \$39,375.00 for students
2. 10 laptops ===== \$5000.00 USD for teachers (3 for each school)
3. 3 laser printers ----- \$1800.00
4. Total Cost: \$46,175.00

### **Installing Library Software**

Koha Integrated Library System (ILS) OpenSource hosted or server version – ByWater Solutions

The first task of starting the library project would be to enter the Titles and ISBN numbers of all the books onto a spreadsheet. This data can either be exported and install on a server in Liberia or hosted on another server here in the United State. Since we do not have any trained Koha specialist in Liberia right now we are considering either sending a librarian for training to an institution in Africa or hosting it.

### **Internet Service for Library**

We have not yet decided on the Internet Service Provider (ISP) but whatever service we choose but we are considering the use of Cloud Technology in connecting the three schools. We have been researching Meraki, which is known to be the leader in cloud technology and we have participated in a webinar which demo some of their products. We are in the process of receiving a demo unit experiment with technology. Our intent is

set mesh network between three schools. We are looking for a device that we manage and control in collaboration with the staff in Liberia from anywhere in the world.

### **Office Space**

-Libraries for Liberia Foundation Liberia has a satellite office in CongoTown, Liberia

### **Libraries of Liberia Foundation Model Library**

The Executive Director contacted Triad Architects of Westerville, Ohio to design a model library that the Foundation intends to build on a plot of land in Liberia that will be donated to build the first modern public library to be supported with the latest technology and a backup solar powered system. The Executive Director and Board member Peter Tenny have had discussions with the architects on the design phases of the library project. Triad Architects sent us an email itemizing the design cost which is about \$37,000.00 and an estimated cost of \$1.2M for the construction. We presented Triad Architects cost analysis to the Board. The next stage was to formulate a plan to formally launch Library fund drive which was held on October 23, 2012 with Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee as the Keynote Speaker at Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio.

### **Core Staff**

#### **Executive Director – Zuulu Cooper**

Currently LAN Technician for Westerville City Schools IT Department. Prior to this position he worked for Ohio Wesleyan University IT Department. Zuulu's life has been centered around computer support as a full-time job and after hours, and also helping users, most especially supporting Westerville City Schools library specialists transition from a stand alone system to networked system was a remarkable challenge. He has worked not only in the US but Africa as well where he worked for United States Aid for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Development Bank (ADB), and Computer Consultants, Inc., the first Liberian owned computer firm as Managing Partner.

The following individuals are members of the Board:

#### **Himie-Budu Shannon – President**

The Rev. Fr. Himie Budu Shannon is the Rector Of The Historic St. Andrew's Episcopal church in the city of Cleveland, Ohio. Fr. Shannon is a native of the Republic of Liberia and completed his primary, secondary, and High School Education at The Bravid Washington Episcopal School in Monrovia, Liberia. He has been an Episcopal priest for over twenty years and served in many roles with nonprofits in Liberia and the United States. His greatest accomplishments with nonprofits is the building of fifty houses for first time home buyers and his tenure as National Chairman of B.W.Harris alumni association in the U.S.A. Fr. Shannon present passion is "books for Liberian children" He is Married to Madia Garga Shannon with four children and four grandchildren.

Dr. Joseph Verdier – Vice President

**Peter Tenny**

– Engineer – Consultant, Supervision of Library Construction

Peter has over twenty years of diverse experience in construction management and currently works as a contractor. He has served in various capacities in Africa and the US within the construction industry. He was Project Manager, Monument Construction Corp., Temple Hills, MD, Construction Engineer, Environmental Engineering Limited, Accra, Ghana, Civil Engineer, David Walter Limited, Accra, Ghana, Civil Engineer, WENCO Engineering and Construction, Monrovia, Liberia

Brent Foley – Acting Secretary

Beatrice Itoka - Treasurer