

# Giraffe Heroes Project

## 2016 Annual Report

### MISSION & MEANS

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Giraffe Heroes Project moves people to stick their necks out  
for the common good,  
and gives them tools to succeed.

## I. Background

The world needs people who stick their necks out for the common good. The Giraffe Heroes Project has been a pioneer in finding and honoring such people. We call them “Giraffe Heroes.” They are men and women, young and old, from every ethnic and economic background, and they’re tackling every public problem you can think of, from environmental pollution to gang violence. Others see, hear or read these stories and are moved into action themselves, helping solve the public problems of most concern to *them*.

The Project's leaders write books, articles and blogs, and give speeches and workshops, offering people both the inspiration and practical tools they need to meet the community and global challenges they care about.

Since 1991, the Project has also been developing and distributing classroom materials for character development, service learning, civic engagement, experiential learning and literacy. Giraffe curricula help young people build lives as courageous and compassionate citizens. Using the compelling stories of Giraffe Heroes and a unique coaching framework developed for a wide age-range, Giraffe programs have helped over half a million kids create and carry out their own initiatives to solve public problems of concern to them. In the process they

learn critical academic and life skills, as well as how to be active and successful citizens in their communities and beyond.

Giraffe Heroes International (GHI) is the Project's fast growing, on-the-ground, global arm. At the end of 2016, GHI comprised eight independent affiliates in India, Nepal, UK, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Egypt. Each is dedicated to finding the Giraffe Heroes in that country and getting their stories told in their country's media, inspiring others to stick their necks out too, helping solve the public problems that are most pressing for them, including corruption, poverty, crimes against women, poor leadership, environmental degradation, tribal violence and much more. See below and also the GHI web section [here](#).

The Project also has a large global audience online. From a home office near Seattle WA, the Project reaches around the world, via its main webpage at [www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org); its Facebook page [www.facebook.com/giraffeheroes](https://www.facebook.com/giraffeheroes); active accounts on Twitter and Pinterest; its *Heads Up* e-zine and its blogs and Op-Eds.

Descriptions of all the Project's programs are at [www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org). There, you'll also find an "[About Us](#)" section that contains Giraffe FAQs, notes on our donors, our most recent 990, A history of the Project, our privacy policy, this Annual Report, our board and staff, and "25 Reasons to Support Us."

## II. A Summary of the Project's Accomplishments in 2016

The Project did well in meeting its stated mission, goals and objectives for 2016—while keeping its finances solidly in the black.

### 1. Finding New Giraffe Heroes & Telling Their Stories

**2016 Goal: Hold Giraffe juries four times in 2016, commending at least fifteen new Giraffe Heroes, and then telling their stories.**

- We up-leveled the choosing system in 2016; our jury met regularly online throughout the year and commended 27 new Giraffe Heroes, adding their stories and pictures to the 1,363 already in our website database and publicizing them in our fast-growing social media network (see below).

**2016 goal: Expand the Giraffe Hero Database.**

- Using contract and volunteer writers (and a management system we created in 2015 to catalog mountains of archives), in 2016 we tracked hundreds of Giraffe

Heroes stories in various stages of completion; we edited, updated and posted 270 Giraffe Heroes' stories, complete with photos and contact information. 27 were new stories, as noted above, and 243 were stories from Giraffe Heroes commended in earlier years but whose stories had been incomplete.

We invite you to visit this [amazing storybank](#) of inspiring heroes. This online database is a key part of the Giraffe Project's long-term gift to the world; a treasury instantly available, free, to teachers, parents, kids, media – anybody who can get onto the Internet, anywhere in the world.

- In addition, in 2016 we linked these heroes' websites to their online Giraffe profiles, so anyone viewing these stories can also link directly to the Giraffe Heroes themselves.

## **2. Giraffe Programs in Schools & After School**

**2016 goal: We'll reach kids wherever we find them with our educational materials – inspiring them with the stories of real heroes, coaching them to do service projects that solve real problems they care about, and changing their own lives in the process.**

- In 2016, we followed up on the pathbreaking work we completed the year before. In 2015 we completed the massive transformation of our print and disc materials for Kindergarten through second-grade classrooms, putting the entire interactive, digitized program of lesson plans, handouts, audios and videos online, free. This followed the digitization of our curriculum for younger teens in 2013. Also in 2015, we translated our free, all-ages, classroom session into Spanish and German. You can find all of these as free downloads at <http://www.giraffe.org/resources/teaching-materials>.
- We continue to sell "[Giraffe Heroes Kits](#)," a simplified version of our landmark curriculum for kids aged 8-14. The Kit includes a Facilitator's Guide, a deck of trading cards featuring Giraffe Heroes, plus buttons, stickers, a CD and a DVD. The Kit is designed to be used by afterschool program facilitators and home-schooling parents, as well as in classrooms.

## **3. Outreach: Giraffe website, E-newsletters, blogs, articles, posts, tweets and interviews**

**2016 Goal: Complete the transition to a new state-of-the art website**

- Transition complete. Now more than ever, our attractive, state-of-the-art website is our “home-base” to the world. To see the full breadth of Giraffe programs on it, start with our Home Page at [www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org).

**2016 goal: working with professional consultants completely redesign our social media presence, and greatly increase its impact, inspiring many more people to stick their neck out for the common good.**

- Redesign complete. The Project is increasingly online, reaching far more people with far less expense. Bonnie Stinson, our social media specialist, has greatly increased the pace, variety and reach of our social media operations, constantly refining them to take advantage of the latest and best options, and making sure that our social media messages and website pages really “pop” on phones, tablets, computers – and whatever may come next. All this has greatly increased the Project’s outreach which is substantially bigger than in 2015 and far exceeds any outreach we had in the days before social media.

- Our Facebook fan base grew by 409% in 2016. We reached over 11 million people via Facebook in 2016 and over 16,000 are now signed up for our daily feed of stories of real heroes; many share these Giraffe stories and messages with friends – who share with still others. See the Giraffe Heroes page on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/giraffeheroes>.

- We chalked up 285,852 Twitter impressions in 2016 and averaged 2,505 monthly followers on Pinterest.

- All of our online messages are now easily readable on smartphones and tablets, which is how most people – especially young people – access the internet.

- Our OpEds and blog posts about courage, citizen action, and current events were picked up by thousands of websites across the world, and are regular features on prestigious online blogs such as *Huffington Post*  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-graham/>  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ann-medlock/>

- Both the ED and the GHI Director did numerous online interviews and broadcasts about the Project, about teaching courageous compassion, and about the importance of sticking one’s neck out for the common good.

**2016 Goal. We will continue to expand the list of people receiving our *Heads Up* e-zine, spreading the Giraffe message of courageous, compassionate service, and attracting support for our work.**

- The number of people getting *Heads Up*, the Project's popular e-zine rose in 2016 to almost 5,000. *Heads Up* gives thousands of Giraffe constituents some Giraffe spark on their computers, smart phones, and tablets. People see the stories and faces of Giraffe Heroes, and are inspired to move into compassionate action themselves. (If you aren't getting it, email [office@giraffe.org](mailto:office@giraffe.org) and ask to join *Heads Up*.)

#### 4. [Giraffe Heroes International](#) (GHI)

**2016 goal We'll support existing GHI programs in Sierra Leone, India, Nepal, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Singapore and Kenya, and launch one new program.**

Led by Director John Graham, GHI helps our partners launch their own affiliate programs to find and honor their country's inspiring heroes, fostering active citizen engagement in places that urgently need role models of compassionate, courageous service. GHI also offers citizens the tools and training they need to move into courageous service.

- GHI launched its newest affiliate, Giraffe Heroes Ghana, in March, 2016, during a packed ten days of media appearances by Graham and GHG Director Nana Darkwa. The two of them were a steady presence on Ghana's major television, radio and print outlets, leading to a major speech at Accra's International Conference Center. They called for a "New Narrative" of courage, taking responsibility and compassion to replace current corruption, economic injustice, poor leadership, citizen apathy and tribal and electoral violence. The pair also kicked off a National Peace Campaign aimed at ensuring that Ghana's hotly contested elections would be free, fair and nonviolent
- In 2016 GHI continued to coach and support other Giraffe operations already launched in Nepal, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Kenya and India. Our work in Egypt is on hold because of government repression. The affiliate in Singapore never took root, despite a very promising launch-week of presentations by the Project's leaders.
- The largest GHI affiliate, in Zimbabwe, just honored it's 61st Giraffe Hero. Many of the Giraffe Heroes whose stories are told in Zimbabwe are political activists opposing the corruption, mismanagement and violence of dictator Robert Mugabe's regime. Some of these brave Giraffe Heroes have been imprisoned and beaten and one was snatched off the streets by government thugs over a year ago and has yet to be heard from. Giraffe Heroes Zimbabwe is becoming a significant political force in the country, supporting those fighting for change and giving hope to the many Zimbabweans who yearn for new leadership that is honest, competent, fair and nonviolent. See [www.giraffe.org/global-Zimbabwe](http://www.giraffe.org/global-Zimbabwe).

For an update on all GHI programs, see <http://www.giraffe.org/global>.

## 5. Finances

**2016 Goal: Continue to keep the Project on a healthy financial footing.**

- The Project finished 2016 solidly in the black. See statement below and also Federal Form 990.

### III. Giraffe Heroes Project – Financial Information for 2016

The Project's work has been **funded** by private donors, by foundations and by the sale of our books and school programs. Our financial documents are filed on Form 990 with the Internal Revenue Service; you can see a [copy of our latest filing](#) on the Project's website.

The following is a summary of our financials for 2016, compared to 2015:

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>a) Year-end net assets (equity):</b>	24,631	26,547
<b>b) Income</b>		
Contributions from individuals	95,419	93,914
Foundation and corporate grants	17,385	7,000
Sales of products and services	209	510
Other income	4,693	300
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$117,706</b>	<b>101,724</b>
<b>c) Expenses</b>		
<b>Program services (73.0%)</b>		
Civic engagement programs	11,622	3,848
Giraffe Heroes, selecting and publicizing	10,833	15,129
Giraffe outreach	52,825	36,321

Giraffe Heroes International	12,993	17,541
<b>Supporting Services</b>		
Fundraising (4.8% in 2016)	3,034	4,798
Administrative (22.2% in 2016)	<u>23,815</u>	<u>22,179</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$115,122	99,807

**Notes:** The drop in Income for 2016 reflects the end of a three-year bequest. The drop in Expenses for Civic Engagement reflects the completion of an expensive curriculum digitation process in 2015. The drop in Other Income reflects the vagaries of the stock market.

#### **IV. Giraffe Heroes Project – Our Goals, Objectives and Recommendations for Future Actions in 2017**

- **Find and commend new Giraffes.** We'll find and commend at least 27 new Giraffe Heroes, and tell their stories.
- **Expand the Giraffe Hero Database.** Using contract and volunteer writers, we'll continue to write and publish in our website database the inspiring stories of Giraffe Heroes, including the 27 new ones and 200 from the current backlog, completing the online storybank in early 2018.
- **Curricula.** We'll continue to reach kids wherever we find them with our educational materials. Specifically we will:
  - ~ continue to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula;
  - ~ raise to 200,000/month the number of people who see the Google ads marketing our "Giraffe Kit," a simplified version of our landmark curriculum for kids aged 8-14 and our best-selling product.
- **Social Media.** We'll continue to expand effective social media strategies on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn and other avenues to reach potential allies, partners, customers and funders, as a way of inspiring vast numbers of people to stick their necks out for the common good. We will:

- ~ build our daily Facebook audience to 20,000, our Twitter impressions to 300,000 and our monthly Pinterest followers to 3,000.
- ~ continue our active schedule of blogs, Op-eds interviews, speeches and broadcasts.
- **Outreach.** We'll expand to 5,500 the number of people receiving our *Heads Up* e-zine, spreading the Giraffe message of courageous, compassionate service, and attracting support for our work.
- **Giraffe Heroes International.** We'll support existing GHI programs in Ghana, Sierra Leone, India, Nepal, Egypt, Zimbabwe and Kenya, and launch one new program.

## V. Giraffe Heroes Project Board for 2017

Aaron Davis, Chair

Jayasri Ghosh, Secretary

Malory Graham, Treasurer

Ann Medlock

Pat Wright

Peter Tavernise

Ron Reed