

Giraffe Heroes Project 2020 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*.

A FOCUS ON THE PANDEMIC

As it was for everyone, 2020 was an extraordinary year for the Giraffe Heroes Project because of the pandemic. In the spring, when the crisis hit, we asked ourselves what was the best thing we could do to be of service. It was obvious that what we could do was what we do best—tell stories. So we shifted major resources into telling the stories of people doing heroic actions to help keep the rest of us safe. These people were healthcare practitioners and other essential workers. All of them were sticking their necks out. We found them and ever since have been telling their stories everywhere, inspiring others. These “Pandemic Heroes” are people like:

Attorney **Rashid Dumbuya** is challenging his government in Sierra Leone to up-level its response to the virus, and educating citizens there on how to stay safe.

Covid nurse **Lauren Leander** stood on the capitol steps in Phoenix AZ, wearing her scrubs, facing down a mob demanding the governor rescind pandemic restrictions.

Richard Apramian detoured from his path to med school to work as a volunteer paramedic on ambulances that get Covid patients to hospitals in New Jersey.

Food consultant **Kimberly Barnes** gets healthy meals to people who live in “food deserts” across the US, many of them essential workers exposed to the virus daily.

Retired firefighter **Luis Garcia** is getting free personal protective equipment and supplies to his Florida community.

Wuhan physician **Ai Fen** defied a gag order to warn her fellow health workers and the public that she’d found a new, deadly virus in patients coming to her hospital.

We found these people, we sent their stories out to the locked-down world, and we created a cache of materials about them that families use for home-schooling. You can see it all at www.giraffe.org.



Our Team. Like most humans in this pandemic era, all of us on the Giraffe team have been finding our way, learning how to get the job done within the limitations of being locked down.

That job is getting these stories out to the world, because stories help us all grasp and shape our reality, even when the world is as strange as it is right now.

The feedback tells us that what we do matters. Message after message thanks us for giving people hope, for feeding their hearts and souls at a time when they're exhausted and discouraged.

“With all the terrible news that’s coming in day by day, it’s so valuable to get a glimpse of hope. Thank you.”

“You’re keeping me going, when I’ve been finding that harder and harder.”

Responses like that make us sure *we* have to keep on keeping on.

And this is us. The same bunch of semi-crazy idealists, all gig-working from our own places, at wages a lot of people would laugh at.



If you kick in, we can keep the enCouragement going out to you and to others across the world, making 2021 better in every way we can. Go to the Donate button now at www.giraffe.org. Any way you can get in on this, please do! We all need Giraffes now. We really do.

In addition to telling the stories of heroes, including pandemic heroes, we did and do a lot more at Giraffe:

The Project's leaders write books, articles and blogs, and give speeches and workshops, offering people both the inspiration and the 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. Much of the curricula is now available to teachers as free downloads on [the Project's website](#).

[Giraffe Heroes International](#) (GHI) is the Project's fast growing global arm. At the end of 2020, GHI comprised seven independent affiliates in India, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Argentina. In addition, there's Giraffe Heroes Europe, an ambitious expansion of the Giraffe Heroes movement to an entire continent.

All GHI operations are modeled on the same activities that have worked so well for the US-based Project for over three decades—finding local and regional Giraffe Heroes and telling their stories—and getting their stories told—in both traditional and social media. These stories inspire others to stick their necks out too, helping solve the public problems that concern them most, including corruption, injustice, poverty, crimes against women, poor leadership, environmental degradation, tribal violence and much more.

The Project also has a large global audience online. From a base operation near Seattle WA, the Project reaches around the world, via its website at www.giraffe.org; its [Facebook Page](#); its *Heads Up* e-zine, and its blogs and Op-Eds.

Descriptions of all the Project's programs are at 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 2020

Program: "Pandemic Heroes." We've just told you about our "all hands on deck" activities prompted by the pandemic. Now we need to tell you that the Project did well in meeting the mission, goals and objectives for 2020 that were set *before* the pandemic hit:

Program: Giraffe Heroes Stories—selecting Giraffe Heroes, writing and editing their stories, and putting those stories into a searchable web database.

2020 Goal met The Giraffe jury in the US met regularly online throughout 2020 and commended 43 new Giraffe Heroes, adding their stories and pictures to the 1,400+ already honored. GHI affiliates (see below) honored an additional 36 new Giraffe Heroes, making a total of 79 new Giraffe Heroes for 2020.

2020 Goal met: We edited, updated and posted to the new Giraffe Hero database the inspiring stories of the 43 Giraffe Heroes chosen by the US jury in 2020, complete with photos and contact information. The websites of individual Giraffe Heroes are linked to their online Giraffe profiles in the new database, so anyone viewing these stories can also link directly to the Giraffe Heroes' own websites.

As time and resources permit, we'd like to add to this database 1) all those stories of Giraffe Heroes commended in prior years but whose stories were incomplete; and 2) stories of Giraffe Heroes commended by our GHI affiliates.

We invite you to visit this [amazing story bank](#) 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. With this updated database, now more than ever, our attractive, state-of-the-art website is our “home-base” in the world.

Program: Outreach — bringing Giraffe Heroes stories and Giraffe inspiration and skills to global audiences through traditional and social media.

2020 Goal met: Giraffe OpEds, speeches, interviews, podcasts and blog posts about citizen action, and current events were picked up by thousands of websites across the world. GHI Director John Graham continued his speaking and blogging in 2020. Both he and Executive Director Ann Medlock are a steady and informative presence on Facebook and other social media.

2020 Goal met: Our adaption to ever changing communication opportunities has greatly increased the Project's outreach, now substantially bigger than ever thanks to social media. The Project is increasingly online, reaching far more people with far less expense. We have 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, especially where young people access the Internet.

2020 Goal met: We continued to expand and improve our social media strategies on Facebook 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. Our Facebook fan base continued to grow. Our followers get a daily Facebook feed of stories of real heroes; many of these followers share these Giraffe stories and messages with friends—who share with still others. The stories we post on Facebook also go to Instagram. Take a look at the content we're posting: <https://www.facebook.com/giraffeheroes>.

2020 Goal met: We continued to expand the number of people reading our quarterly *Heads-Up* e-zine, containing selections of inspiring Giraffe stories, spreading the Giraffe message of courageous, compassionate service, and attracting support for our work. (If you aren't getting it, email office@giraffe.org and ask to join *Heads Up*).

2020 Goal not yet met: video work delayed by the pandemic: we have now begun to restart the work launched in 2019 to complete a proof-of-concept video, the first step of our major project to produce short one-minute videos of Giraffe Heroes. We'll seek funding to follow that up by producing more new videos and bringing them to the attention of the world. As time and resources permit, we'd also like to create and distribute teaching and training materials coaching kids all over the world to make their own videos of the Giraffe Heroes *they* see, and help them find means of distributing those videos.

2020 Goal met: We'll continue to expand our closed group page on Facebook providing a forum for all Giraffe Heroes to interact with each other and with Project staff.

Program: Giraffe Heroes International (GHI)

All 2020 goals met: GHI continues to support our partners overseas to launch their own affiliate programs, finding and honoring their country's inspiring heroes and 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. Specifically~

- We put substantial resources into helping assure the success of [Giraffe Heroes Europe](#) (GHE). GHE is now finding and honoring its own Giraffe Heroes.
- We continue to pay special attention to [Giraffe Heroes Zimbabwe](#) and we do whatever we can to support our partners there in forging a new government that can bring stability, justice and prosperity to that beleaguered nation.
 - Many of the Giraffe Heroes whose stories are told in Zimbabwe are political activists who opposed the corruption, mismanagement and violence of dictator Robert Mugabe's regime and now are now fighting to pressure autocratic new rulers to finally bring to the country the stability, justice and prosperity it deserves. Some of these brave Giraffe Heroes have been imprisoned and beaten and one was snatched off the streets by government thugs and is presumed dead.
 - Giraffe Heroes Zimbabwe has now become 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.
- The Giraffe [affiliate in South Africa](#) is growing rapidly. It has already found and honored 27 Giraffe Heroes.

- [Giraffe Heroes Argentina](#) has successfully introduced state-of-the-art Giraffe service learning programs to the schools in that country. The translation of these programs into Spanish is now complete and they are ready to be disseminated throughout the Spanish-speaking world.
- We continue to support other GHI programs in Sierra Leone, India, Nepal, and Kenya.

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

Program: Civic Engagement Programs include training programs building civic engagement skills, and a K-12 curriculum helping kids build lives as courageous and compassionate citizens.

2020 goal met: We continued to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula. Over 1,440 teachers are now using free downloads of one or both of our two flagship K-12 programs (including interactive, digitized lesson plans, handouts, audios and videos online) You can find these free downloads at <https://www.giraffe.org/for-teachers-families>.

2020 goal met: Using the landing pages of the education section of our website as our major marketing tool, we continued to sell "[Giraffe Heroes Kits](#)," the most popular version of our curriculum for kids aged 8-14.

Financial Goal

2020 goal met: The Project finished 2019 in the black. See statement below. Our 2020 [Federal Form 990](#) is now posted on the Project's website

III. Giraffe Heroes Project—Financial Information for 2020

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 Project's budget is remarkably small for its impact because of the generosity, talent and enthusiasm of volunteers.

The pandemic cut into our funding in 2020, but, all in all, we weathered the downturn pretty well. An increase in contributions from individuals helped offset a drastic downturn in foundation grants.

The following is a summary of our financials for 2020, compared to 2019:

	2019	2020
a) Year-end net assets (equity):	37,864	39,362
b) Income		
Contributions from individuals	41,296	60,831
Foundation and corporate grants	41,000	10,000
Sales of products and services	220	115
Other income	<u>603</u>	<u>896</u>
Total income	83,120	71,842
c) Expenses		
Program services (79.6% in 2019)		
Civic engagement programs	3,000	5,000
Giraffe Heroes, selecting and publicizing	15,172	14,270
Giraffe outreach	25,269	23,134
Giraffe Heroes International	9,641	14,574
Supporting Services		
Fundraising (9.6% in 2020)	6,725	6,865
Administrative (10.8% in 2012)	<u>19,825</u>	<u>7,767</u>
Total Expenses	79,632	71,610

IV. Giraffe Heroes Project — Our Goals, Objectives and Recommendations for Future Actions in 2021

Giraffe Heroes Stories

- Commend 75 new Giraffe Heroes worldwide, including “Pandemic Heroes” and put them all into the database.

Outreach

- Continue our active schedule of blogs, Op-eds, interviews, speeches and podcasts.
- Continue to expand and improve our social media strategies on Facebook and other avenues to reach potential allies, partners, customers and funders.
- Complete a proof-of-concept video, the first step of our major project to produce short one-minute videos of Giraffe Heroes. We’ll seek funding to follow that up by producing more videos and bringing them to the attention of the world.
- Continue to expand our closed group page on Facebook providing a forum for all Giraffe Heroes to interact with each other and with Project staff.

Giraffe Heroes International

We’ll continue to:

- work with our partners in Europe to build Giraffe Heroes Europe.
- support Giraffe Heroes Argentina as a major voice for civic education in Argentina and to fund the distribution of the new Spanish-language version of our Giraffe materials for use in Spanish-speaking classrooms across the world.
- use our media power to amplify the brave voices of the Giraffe Heroes in Zimbabwe who are risking their lives to help create a government that is honest, fair and competent.
- support all GHI affiliates with coaching, media power, financial and other resources.

Civic Engagement Programs

- We'll continue to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula.

Finances

- We'll continue to keep our finances in the black, relying increasingly on the growth in the number of monthly pledges, and on the generosity, skills and enthusiasm of our volunteers.

V. Giraffe Heroes Project Board for 2021

Ron Reed, Chair

Melissa Ransdell, Treasurer

Ann Medlock

Pat Wright

Peter Tavernise

Miffy Ruggiero