

Giraffe Heroes Project 2021 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 to solve tough public problems. The Giraffe Heroes Project has been a pioneer in finding and honoring such people. We call them “Giraffe Heroes” because they stick their necks out for the common good.

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.

The Project’s strategy is simple—and used by every culture and in every age to inspire citizens to act for the common good: people see, hear or read heroes’ stories and are moved into action themselves, helping solve the public problems of most concern to *them*.

It’s important to note that Giraffe Heroes are taking personal risks and making sacrifices that are way beyond tackling problems. There are many other organizations already honoring problem-solvers. The level of heroism—of risk and sacrifice—required to be named a Giraffe Hero is such that it significantly raises the bar of what’s possible for the rest of us. The term “sticking their necks out” isn’t just a clever tagline; it’s a key differentiator of Giraffe Heroes from everybody else

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 COVID.

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. In message after message people thank us for giving them 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.



In 2021 we gathered a new creative team to create the first one-minute Giraffe video, telling the story of Giraffe Hero Shalisa Hayes. You can watch this [new one-minute video](#), the first in a series we're creating to inspire people to action who experience the world in quick bursts, on their phones. It's one of the most powerful things we've ever done.

In addition to honoring real heroes and telling their stories, the Project's leaders write books, articles, blogs and do online video talks and interviews, giving 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. Those materials 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, including 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](#).

In 2021 we launched a new partnership with the Free Reading Program (FRP) a Rotary-backed, online, inter-active, nonprofit literacy program that has agreed to distribute materials from *Voices of Hope*, our book of Giraffe Heroes' stories for teens. We'll cover their programming costs of \$150 per story.

working with a non-profit that provides free literacy materials directly to kids all over the world. We agreed to give them our literacy reader for teens, which they will program into their online, inter-active system.

[Giraffe Heroes International](#) (GHI) is the Project's fast growing global arm. At the end of 2021, GHI had 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, Op-Eds and videos.

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 2021 (measured against goals set in December 2020)

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

Goal met The Giraffe jury in the US met three times online in 2021 and commended 40 new Giraffe Heroes. GHI affiliates (see below) honored an additional 36 new Giraffe Heroes, making a total of 76 new Giraffe Heroes for 2021.

Goal met: We edited, updated and posted to the Giraffe Hero database the inspiring stories of the 40 Giraffe Heroes chosen by the US jury in 2021, 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 link directly to the Giraffe Heroes’ own websites to follow their work and to support it

As time and resources permit, we add to this database a backlog of Giraffe Heroes commended in pre-Internet years as well as 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. **Goals met included:**

Growing outreach The Project’s adaption to ever changing communication opportunities, especially on social media allows us to reach far more people with far less expense. We are constantly refining our social media operations to take advantage of the latest and best options and making sure that our social media messages and website pages "pop" on phones, tablets, computers—and whatever may come next, especially where young people access the Internet.

More specifically, in 2021 we continued to expand and improve our strategies on Facebook to reach potential allies, partners, customers and funders. Our Facebook followers get a daily 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>.

Web activity. Google Analytics gives us a very good picture of how many people are visiting the various pages of giraffe.org and what’s noteworthy about them. There were 107,001 page views in 2021. The most popular pages were the free downloads of the Project’s school curricula, followed by the stories of Giraffe Heroes.

Facebook posts of Giraffe Stories. The “Insights” feature on Facebook offers detailed information on our posts there, especially our boosted posts. The Project’s most popular boosted post in 2021 reached 5,700 people, engaging 747 of them. Most recently, 496 people have to date opened our FB story of Ukrainian Giraffe Hero Hannah Hopko.

Facebook forum for Giraffe Heroes. We continued to expand our closed group page on Facebook, providing a forum for Giraffe Heroes to interact with each other and with Project staff.

The Giraffe E-zine, *Heads Up* is one area where the growth in readership has been disappointingly low. *Heads-Up* contains 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 receive *Heads Up*).

Giraffe Hero videos: After a pandemic-induced delay, we’ve restarted the work launched in 2019 and, in 2021, completed [a proof-of-concept video](#), the first step of our major project to produce a series of short one-minute videos of Giraffe Heroes. Please take a minute to watch it here—it’ll give you a good sense of the quality and power of the work we do. We are seeking funding to follow-up this initial video with more one-minute videos we will bring to the attention of the world.

Op-eds interviews, podcasts and blog posts. Project leaders John Graham and Ann Medlock are both steady and informative presences with global audiences on Facebook and other social media.

Program: Giraffe Heroes International (GHI)

Goal met: GHI continues to support our partners overseas to launch and sustain 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](#), doing whatever we can to support our partners there in pressuring the government to 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 leadership 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 30 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 the Project's flagship *Service-Learning Guide* into Spanish is now complete and it's ready to be disseminated throughout the Spanish-speaking world
- Giraffe Heroes Sierra Leone focused on honoring female Giraffe Heroes in 2021, many of them fighting to end widespread injustices and violence visited on women in that country.

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.

Goal met: We continued to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula. As of December 31, 2021, over 2500 educators had downloaded

one or both of our two 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>. The “Wufoo” system we use to track those downloads gives us names, emails, schools, locations and grade levels.

As noted above, in 2021 we began working with a non-profit that provides free literacy materials directly to kids all over the world. We agreed to give them our literacy reader for teens, which they will program into their online, inter-active system.

Financial Goal

Goal met: The Project finished 2021 in the black. See summary financial statement below. Our 2020 [Federal Form 990](#) is posted on the Project’s website and the 2021 version will be up soon. We are very impressed with a steady growth of donors who make monthly pledges to the Project, providing a much-appreciated steady source of income especially over the lean summer months. Pledges now account for more than 11% of the Project’s contributed income. Consider making a month pledge rather than a one-time gift the next time you get one of our “asks”

III. Giraffe Heroes Project—Financial Information for 2021

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 significantly lower expenses in 2021 over 2020 is the result of the two most senior contractors taking substantial, temporary cuts in their fees.

The Project has been weathering the impact of the pandemic pretty well, thanks to an uptick in the number of donations from individuals.

The following is a summary of our financials for 2021, compared to 2020:

	2020	2021
a) Year-end net assets (equity):	39,362	42,996
b) Income		
Contributions from individuals	60,831	62,211
Foundation and corporate grants???	10,000	0
Sales of products and services	115	216
Other income	<u>896</u>	<u>1,355</u>
Total income	71,842	63,782
c) Expenses		
Program services (79% in 2021)		

Civic engagement programs	5,000	3,000
Giraffe Heroes, selecting and publicizing	14,270	11,552
Outreach	23,134	21,283
Giraffe Heroes International	14,574	11,745
Supporting Services		
Fundraising (9% in 2021)	6,865	5,453
Administrative (12% in 2021)	<u>7,767</u>	<u>7,330</u>
Total Expenses	71,610	60,363

IV. Giraffe Heroes Project — Our Goals, Objectives and Recommendations for Actions in 2022

Giraffe Heroes Stories

- Commend 75 new Giraffe Heroes worldwide and put them all into the database.

Outreach

- Continue our active schedule of blogs, Op-eds, interviews, and podcasts.
- Continue to expand and improve our social media strategies on Facebook and other avenues to reach potential allies, partners, customers and funders.
- Follow up our [proof-of-concept video](#) by producing more of these short, impactful videos of Giraffe Heroes 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.

Civic Engagement Programs

- Continue to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula.
- Expand our new partnership with the Free Reading Program (FRP) to distribute materials from *Voices of Hope*, our book of Giraffe Heroes' stories for teens.

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. We are launching a \$3,000 social media campaign in 2022 to help bring the program to the attention of teachers and parents in Argentina and in other parts of the Spanish-speaking 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.

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
Miffy Ruggiero, Secretary
Ann Medlock
Pat Wright
Peter Tavernise