

Giraffe Heroes Project 2019 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 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 2019, GHI comprised nine independent affiliates in India, Nepal, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Singapore, South Africa and Argentina. In addition, in December of 2017, GHI launched Giraffe Heroes Europe, an ambitious expansion of the Giraffe Heroes movement to an entire continent. GHI has shut down its affiliate in Egypt because of threats by the military government there.

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 2019

The Project did well in meeting its stated mission, goals and objectives for 2019.

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

2019 Goal exceeded: The Giraffe jury in the US met regularly online throughout 2019 and commended 36 new Giraffe Heroes, adding their stories and pictures to the 1,400+ already honored. GHI affiliates (see below) honored 47 new Giraffe Heroes, making a total of 83 new Giraffe Heroes for 2019—more than double the 2019 goal.

2019 Goal met: We finished the massive job of reprogramming and redesigning the entire Giraffe Hero database and moving it to a [platform](#) where it is much more functional and findable. We edited, updated and posted in this new database the inspiring stories of the 36 Giraffe Heroes chosen by the US jury in 2019, 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.

However, we fell short of adding to this new 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 recognize now that this is an ongoing project. It may never be completely finished because not all the data is available. But we will continue to make progress in 2020.

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.

2019 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 2019. Both he and Executive Director Ann Medlock are a steady and informative presence on Facebook.

2019 Goal met: 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.

2019 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>.

2019 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*).

Our adaption to ever changing communication opportunities has greatly increased the Project’s outreach, now substantially bigger than ever thanks to social media.

2019 Goal met: a \$5,000 grant from the M.J Murdock Trust allowed us to kick off a major project of creating short one-minute videos of Giraffe Heroes to support our print and online stories of these remarkable people. This project will also include templates and instructions for K-12 schools so that kids around the world can make their own short videos of the Giraffe Heroes *they* see.

2019 Goal met: We went live with a closed group page on Facebook that now provides a forum for all Giraffe Heroes to interact with each other and with Project staff.

Program: Giraffe Heroes International (GHI)

2019 goals met: GHI continues to help our partners overseas 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. Specifically~

- We put substantial resources into helping assure the success of [Giraffe Heroes Europe](#) (GHE). GHE has now begun finding and honoring its own Giraffe Heroes. There are now nine. All Giraffe Heroes honored by GHE will also become part of our searchable web database.
- We continue to paying 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. GHI Director Graham's contacts with the US Embassy in Harare have been important.
 - 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 newly formed [affiliate in South Africa](#) is growing rapidly. It has already found and honored eight Giraffe Heroes to date.
- Even in its first year of operation, [Giraffe Heroes Argentina](#) has become a significant educational force, introducing state-of-the-art Giraffe service learning programs to the schools in that country. A grant from the M.J. Murdock Trust is funding the translation of these programs into Spanish for use throughout the Spanish-speaking world.
- We continue to support other GHI programs in Ghana, Sierra Leone, India, Nepal, Singapore and Kenya. Giraffe work in Egypt is on hold because of government repression.

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.

2019 goal met: We continued to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula. Over 900 teachers have now downloaded for free 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>.

2019 goal met: We continued to sell "[Giraffe Heroes Kits](#)," the most popular version of our curriculum for kids aged 8-14.

And.. The Giraffe Heroes Project helped invent the concept and Best Practices of Service Learning two decades ago—a powerful model for schools and youth programs to get kids involved in service projects while improving their 3R skills. Now our Service Learning Guide will be included in a UNESCO online course for 2020, helping young people all over the world build courageous and compassionate lives.

Financial Goal

2019 goal met: The Project finished 2019 in the black. See statement below. Our 2019 [Federal Form 990](#) will be available and uploaded by April 2020.

III. Giraffe Heroes Project—Financial Information for 2019

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 following is a summary of our financials for 2019, compared to 2018:

	2018	2019
a) Year-end net assets (equity):	34,271	37,864
b) Income		

Contributions from individuals	80,108	41,296
Foundation and corporate grants	1,000	41,000
Sales of products and services	1,208	220
Other income	<u>1,648</u>	<u>603</u>
Total income	83,964	83,120

c) Expenses

Program services (71.1% in 2019)		
Civic engagement programs	3,000	6,595
Giraffe Heroes, selecting and publicizing	15,172	8,132
Giraffe outreach	25,269	31,556
Giraffe Heroes International	9,641	10,666
Supporting Services		
Fundraising (6.6% in 2019)	6,725	5,275
Administrative (22.3% in 2019)	<u>19,825</u>	<u>17,903</u>
Total Expenses	79,632	80,127

IV. Giraffe Heroes Project — Our Goals, Objectives and Recommendations for Future Actions in 2020

Giraffe Heroes Stories

- Commend 70 new Giraffe Heroes worldwide. Put all newly commended US Giraffe Heroes into the database. Continue to complete as many stories of Giraffe Heroes previously commended (but whose stories are incomplete) and add them to the database. Continue to add to the database stories of Giraffe Heroes commended by our GHI affiliates.

Outreach

- We'll continue our active schedule of blogs, Op-eds, interviews, speeches and podcasts.
- We'll continue to expand and improve our social media strategies on Facebook and other avenues to reach potential allies, partners, customers and funders.
- We will 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 five new videos and bringing them to the attention of the world. We will also in 2020 complete and distribute teaching and training materials coaching kids all the world to make their own videos of the Giraffe Heroes *they* see, and help them find means of distributing those videos.

- 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.

Giraffe Heroes International

We'll continue to:

- work with our partners in Europe to build Giraffe Heroes Europe.
- continue to support Giraffe Heroes Argentina as a major voice for civic education in Argentina and to fund the translation of our Giraffe materials into Spanish for use in Spanish-speaking classrooms across the world.
- continue to 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.
- continue to 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.
- We'll add landing pages on the education section of our website for teachers re: bullying, literacy and building a community of learners.

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 2020

Ron Reed, Chair

Jayasri Ghosh, Secretary

Melissa Ransdell, Treasurer

Ann Medlock

Pat Wright

Peter Tavernise