

# Giraffe Heroes Project

## 2017 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 2017, GHI comprised eight independent affiliates in India, Nepal, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Singapore and Argentina. In addition, in December, 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 dedicated to finding local and regional Giraffe Heroes and getting their stories told in both traditional and social media, inspiring others to emulate these heroes, sticking their own necks out to help solve the public problems that are most pressing for them – corruption, 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 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 2017

The Project did well in meeting its stated mission, goals and objectives for 2017.

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

**2017 Goal: Find and commend at least 27 new Giraffe Heroes and tell their stories.**

- Our jury in the US met regularly online throughout the year and commended 19 new Giraffe Heroes, adding their stories and pictures to the 1,390 already in our website database and publicizing them in our fast-growing social media network (see below). GHI branches honored a total of 48 new Giraffe Heroes, making a total of 67 new Giraffe Heroes for 2017.

### **2017 Goal: Expand the Giraffe Hero Database.**

- Using contract and volunteer writers, in 2017 we edited, updated and posted in our website database the inspiring stories of Giraffe Heroes, complete with photos and contact information. 19 were new stories, as noted above, and 37 were stories from Giraffe Heroes commended in earlier years but whose stories had been incomplete.

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. And it's going to get even better:

- Contractors had by the end of 2017 completed 90% of the massive, complex job of moving the entire Giraffe Hero database over to a new Wordpress site where it will be much more functional and findable. The websites of individual Giraffe Heroes will be linked to their online Giraffe profiles on the new Wordpress site, so anyone viewing these stories can also link directly to the Giraffe Heroes' own websites.

We also developed a plan to incorporate all the Giraffes found by GHI branches in the searchable database, as soon as it's available.

- In 2017 we prepared a closed group page on Facebook that will provide a forum for all Giraffe Heroes to interact with each other and with Project staff. We will go live with this page in 2018.

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

**2017 goals: 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. We will continue to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula. And we will raise to 200,000/month the number of people who see the Google ads marketing our "Giraffe Kit."

- In 2017, we continued to get the word out to teachers that our two flagships K-12 programs (including interactive, digitized lesson plans, handouts, audios and videos online) are now available as free downloads from our website. You can find these free downloads at <http://www.giraffe.org/resources/teaching-materials>.
- We continued to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula. More than 50 teachers now sign up for our web ezine every month.
- 150,000 people/month saw our ads on Google Adwords and we continued to sell "[Giraffe Heroes Kits](#)," a simplified version of our 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**

**2017 Goal: Complete the transition to a new state-of-the art website**

- Transition 90% complete. Now more than ever, our attractive, state-of-the-art website will be our "home-base" in the world.

**2017 Goal: working with professional consultants completely redesign our social media presence, and greatly increase its impact, inspiring many more 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. We will continue our active schedule of blogs, Op-eds interviews, speeches and broadcasts.**

- Social media redesign complete. The Project is increasingly online, reaching far more people with far less expense. 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 of our online messages are easily readable on smartphones and tablets, which is how most people—especially young people—access the internet.

All this has greatly increased the Project's outreach which is substantially bigger than in 2016 and far exceeds any outreach we had in the days before social media.

- Our Facebook fan base grew. Over 19,575 people are now signed up for our daily Facebook feed of stories of real heroes, an increase of 22% over 2016; many of these fans share these Giraffe stories and messages with friends—who share with still others. Take a look:  
<https://www.facebook.com/giraffeheroes>.

There were 19,499 Facebook Page "Likes" in 2017 (a 15% increase over 2016). 14,300 people clicked on the year's most popular Facebook post.

- Total Tweet Impressions were 46,526 in 2017. We averaged 7,900 monthly viewers on Pinterest, an increase of 360% over 2016.

**2017 Goal. We will continue to expand the list of people receiving our *Heads-Up* e-zine, to 5,500, spreading the Giraffe message of courageous, compassionate service, and attracting support for our work.**

- The number of people getting and opening *Heads Up*, the Project's popular e-zine rose substantially in 2017, but not to 5,500. *Heads Up* gives thousands of Giraffe constituents some Giraffe spark on their computers, smart phones, and tablets. (If you aren't getting it, email [office@giraffe.org](mailto:office@giraffe.org) and ask to join *Heads Up*).
- Our OpEds and blog posts about courage, citizen action, and current events were picked up by thousands of websites across the world.
- 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.

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

**2017 goal. We'll support existing GHI programs in Ghana, Sierra Leone, India, Nepal, Egypt, Zimbabwe 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.

- John Graham and Ann Medlock spent ten days in Basel, Switzerland in November-December, helping launch Giraffe Heroes Europe (GHE), an affiliate that will cover the entire continent. Our primary partner in GHE is Thomas Pilscheur, a German businessman who runs a publishing house in Basel and has set up GHE with an initial €50,000 of his own money,

GHE was eager to begin work with schools and youth in Europe, including getting teachers there using those parts of the GHP curriculum now available for free on the web. The GHE team is comprised of first rate professionals, including a PR person, an editor, a designer and business people with access to potential donors. What we've seen so far of the graphics and other materials produced by GHE is first rate. All Giraffe Heroes honored by GHE will also become part of the searchable database now being moved to a WordPress platform. We will then add all the Giraffe Heroes that have been honored by older GHI affiliates, and as they are named, GHE and GH Argentina.

- In December, GHI launched Giraffe Heroes Argentina, its first affiliate in Latin America.
- In 2017 GHI continued to coach and support other Giraffe operations already launched in Nepal, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Singapore and India. Our work in Egypt is on hold because of government repression.
- In 2017, the largest GHI affiliate, in Zimbabwe, just honored it's 86th Giraffe Hero. 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 make sure that 1) upcoming elections are free and fair; and that 2) the new rulers will 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. 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

2017 Goal: Continue to keep the Project on a healthy financial footing.

•The Project finished 2017 in the black. See statement below and also our 2017 [Federal Form 990](#).

## III. Giraffe Heroes Project—Financial Information for 2017

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 2017, compared to 2016:

	2016	2017
<b>a) Year-end net assets (equity):</b>	26,547	29,939
<b>b) Income</b>		
Contributions from individuals	93,914	81,395
Foundation and corporate grants	7,000	1,896

Sales of products and services	510	793
Other income	300	2,373
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$101,724</b>	<b>86,457</b>

#### c) Expenses

##### Program services (68.9.0% in 2017)

Civic engagement programs	3,848	2,500
Giraffe Heroes, selecting and publicizing	15,129	15,547
Giraffe outreach	36,321	23,942
Giraffe Heroes International	17,541	15,208

##### Supporting Services

Fundraising (7.3% in 2017)	4,798	6,099
Administrative (23.8% in 2017)	<u>22,179</u>	<u>19,770</u>

<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$99,807</b>	<b>83,066</b>
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**Note:** Smaller budget in 2017 reflects the end of contributions made to us from a large bequest in 2014.

## IV. Giraffe Heroes Project — Our Goals, Objectives and Recommendations for Future Actions in 2018

**Outreach: Bringing Giraffe Heroes stories and Giraffe vision, inspiration and skills to global audiences through traditional and social media.**

- We'll continue our active schedule of blogs, Op-eds interviews, speeches and broadcasts.



- We'll continue to expand effective social media strategies on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram 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. Specifically,
  - ~ On Facebook, we'll develop a new strategy that will please Facebook's new algorithm and provide more opportunities for engagement. Our 2018 strategy will include more videos (posted natively to Facebook), more tagging of Giraffe profiles and sharing their current events, and less outward-leading posts to YouTube and less boosting.
  - ~ Our strongest relationships on Twitter are with 1) Giraffe-founded organizations and 2) educational organizations and educators. Our 2018 strategy should continue to push Giraffe Heroes as thought leaders and innovators in education and activism, as well as boosting the efforts of organizations founded by Giraffe Heroes.
  - ~ The majority of Pinterest users are crafty, do-it-yourself people, who are primarily teachers, moms, and/or women between 20 and 35. Our 2018 strategy will build on our 2017 success, creating content based on our materials that will appeal to this demographic, such as free classroom resources, activities for families, inspiring quotes, and profiles of Giraffe Heroes.
  - ~ High-quality visuals are essential to succeeding on Instagram. Our 2018 strategy will prioritize only the best images from the Giraffe database. Giraffe posts should continue to share a balanced ratio of Giraffe Heroes, quotes, education statistics, short videos or stories, photographs of Giraffe classroom materials, and related stock photography to reach our primary Instagram audience of teachers. Engagement goes a long way in building relationships on Instagram, and industry experts predict that Instagram will only grow in influence in 2018.
- We will go live with a closed group page on Facebook that will provide a forum for all Giraffe Heroes to interact with each other and with Project staff.

**Giraffe Heroes International: Establishing Giraffe affiliate programs overseas.**

- We'll put substantial resources into helping assure the success of Giraffe Heroes Europe. The potential for GHE to grow into a mainstay of the entire Giraffe Movement is high and we must fully support this opportunity.
- We'll nurture the newly formed affiliate in Argentina and will use their Spanish translations of Giraffe materials to reach other Spanish-speaking populations. We'll continue to support existing GHI programs in Ghana, Sierra Leone, India, Nepal, Egypt, Zimbabwe and Kenya. In particular, we'll pay special attention to Giraffe Heroes Zimbabwe and 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.

**Giraffe Heroes Stories: Selecting Giraffe Heroes, writing and editing their stories, and putting those stories in a searchable web database.**

- Funding permitting, we'll add more high quality photos and even short videos to Giraffe Heroes' stories for use on all platforms.
- We'll complete the process of moving the entire Giraffe Hero database to a new Wordpress site for greater accessibility and ease of use. Now more than ever, our attractive, state-of-the-art website will be our "home-base" in the world.

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

- We'll continue to build our growing global web dialogue with teachers and other users of our curricula.
- We'll do a short proof-of-concept training video for teachers; its purpose will be to help them get optimum results from their uses of Giraffe curricula. We'll seek funding for filming an entire training.
- We've hired a contractor to improve the effectiveness of our Google Adwords ads. This should help us raise to 200,000/month the number of people who see these ads, which draw attention to individual Giraffe Heroes and market our "Giraffe Heroes Kit" and other products tied to Giraffe curricula and speeches by Project officers.

We'll complete work on a stand-alone deck of Giraffe Hero trading cards.....

## **V. Giraffe Heroes Project Board for 2017**

Aaron Davis, Chair

Jayasri Ghosh, Secretary

Malory Graham, Treasurer

Ann Medlock

Pat Wright

Peter Tavernise

Ron Reed