



Friends of Korea

Dedicated to fostering cultural awareness and
friendship between Americans and Koreans

Annual Report – 2017

Annual Meeting 2017

The Friends of Korea annual meeting is the flagship event of the organization. The 2017 annual meeting was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan – a first for Friends of Korea. Previous meetings have been held most frequently in the Washington DC metropolitan area but the meeting is now being taken on the road! Recent meetings have been held in Los Angeles and Boston and were well received.

The meeting was held at the Michigan Union on the 57th anniversary of JFK's speech on the steps of the same building where he famously asked who would be willing to give up two years of their life to volunteer overseas. In addition to being an opportunity for more than 60 members and friends to gather and renew old friendships, participants were provided with a great program. Below are some of the highlights:

Margaret Condon Taylor shared some her photos taken as a volunteer back in the late 1960s and encouraged everyone to look in closets and get those containers of slides out and digitized! Michael Robinson, Professor Emeritus at Indiana University, gave a thought provoking talk called "Reflections on North-South-US Relations in the Trump Era." Nojin Kwak, Director of the Nam Center at UMICH, gave a short history and overview of the center and its many activities. The Nam Center was a recipient of the fourth annual '[Giving Back Initiative](#)' in recognition of its extensive public programming in the community and dedication to encouraging social, political, cultural and economic understanding of Korea.

The afternoon was capped off by an unscripted conversation with five of the O'Donnell honorees. This year, the FOK Board presented the second annual Kevin O'Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award to an eminent group of fourteen scholars whose interest in Korea dates from their Peace Corps service. Five of the honorees were in attendance - Mike Robinson, David Nemeth, Laurel Kendall, Milan Hejtmanek, and Don Baker - and they shared their perspectives on the development of Korean studies and the changes in the field over time.

The day concluded with a wonderful dinner hosted by Consul General Jong-Kook Lee at a nearby Korean restaurant.

Kevin O'Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award

One of the highlights of the annual meeting was the presentation of the second Kevin O'Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award to an eminent group of fourteen scholars. Maura O'Donnell-McCarthy, daughter of Kevin O'Donnell presented the award on behalf of Friends of Korea.

The honorees are all returned Peace Corps Korea volunteers who, after completion of their service, pursued graduate studies in a variety of academic disciplines focused on Korea. These pioneers went on to spend their professional careers researching, publishing, and teaching about Korea. Through their pioneering efforts as specialists in Korea, they have made notable contributions to the development and expansion of the field of Korea Studies not only in the United States and Canada, but also in Europe and even in Korea. Thanks in substantial part to these pioneers, the field of Korean Studies is thriving and now attracts students whose first exposure to Korea may well have been a course offered or a book published by one of these individuals.

The honorees are: Donald Baker, Edward Baker, Donald Clark, Bruce Cumings, Carter Eckert, Bruce Fulton, Milan Hejtmanek, Laurel Kendall, Linda Lewis, David McCann, Robert Mowry, David Nemeth, Michael Robinson and Edward Schultz.

The Kevin O'Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award recognizes individuals and their accomplishments that further cultural awareness and friendship between Americans and Koreans. This award is a tribute to the ground-breaking contributions made by Kevin O'Donnell, U.S. Peace Corps' first country director in Korea and the fourth director of the Peace Corps. O'Donnell accepted the post in 1966, served for four years, and is remembered for his extraordinary leadership that created the foundation for Peace Corps' successful 15 year commitment in Korea. Following his service in Korea, he served as the fourth director of the U.S. Peace Corps.

Giving Back Initiative

The *Giving Back Initiative*, which the board launched in 2014, is the organization's primary philanthropic activity – broadly, it is about finding ways that we can give back to the country and the people with whom we have developed such a close and sustaining bond.

Since that time, Friends of Korea has identified 5 organizations to support. The recipients have been:

- 2014 Los Angeles, CA: Korean American Family Services
- 2015 Boston, MA: National Association of Korean American Inter-Cultural Family Mission and the Korean American Senior Citizen Association
- 2016 Washington, DC: Virginia Korean American Disabled People's Association
- 2017 Ann Arbor, MI: The Nam Center for Korean Studies at the University of Michigan
- 2017 Portage, MI: Korean Kids and Orphanage Outreach Mission (KROOM)

Outreach - Korean Consuls General & Education Seminars

Friends of Korea continued with its outreach to Korean Consuls General at the ten Korean Consulates throughout the U.S. In the past year FOK has recruited and named "Primary Liaisons" in each of the ten consular areas and has named "Secondary Liaisons" in six areas. These liaisons are tasked with formalizing and strengthening the relationship between the Consulate and Friends of Korea and finding ways that FOK and the Consulates can work together. Friends of Korea published a document that outlines the role and goals of the outreach initiative.

During 2017 FOK Liaisons worked on projects with Korean Consulates in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C. As a result of the outreach initiative, the Korean Consulate in Chicago assisted with the Friends of Korea annual meeting in Ann Arbor, MI and generously hosted a dinner for all of the participants.

In addition to the work with the Consuls General, FOK was involved in educational outreach activities. Utilizing the FOK-produced Korean Transformation DVD and the accompanying study guide, FOK presented Korean culture and history seminars to high school students in Northern Virginia and to teachers in Atlanta, Georgia. The Northern Virginia session was organized in conjunction with the Korean Embassy in Washington, DC and the Atlanta session was planned with the National Association for Korean Schools (NAKS).

3rd Pan-Yellow Sea Forum

Friends of Korea was invited to attend the 3rd Pan-Yellow Sea Forum sponsored by Chungcheongnam-do Docheong. Suzanne Crowder-Han, FOK VP in Seoul, James Mayer, FOK Treasurer and Yongbok Mayer, FOK Life Member represented us at this prestigious event. The Forum drew scholars and political leaders from Korea, Japan and China to discuss a wide range of topics that concern the region, including fisheries, environment, business development, and political leadership. There were several panel discussions for two days and shared each other how to improve and what they need to do for improvement in the countries surrounded Yellow Sea.

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Seong-hwan and Special Presidential Advisor for International Relations Dr. Moon, Chung-in were among the featured speakers. The three FOK attendees were introduced to the Forum as "special honored guests."

Governance

Two new members joined the Friends of Korea board at the fall annual meeting. They are Thomas Byrne and Janice Pettey. In addition, there was a change in the leadership with Nancy Kelly stepping down after five years of serving as President. Gerard Krzic became the President and Nancy Kelly became Vice President. Other officers include: James Mayer, Treasurer; Robert Ichihana, Secretary, and Suzanne Crowder Han, Vice President.

For a full list of the board and their bios, please visit our website.