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Friends of Korea to Honor Achievements of Educator Bruce Ballard and Author Sook Nyul Choi

[Washington DC – July 27, 2019] Friends of Korea (FOK) will present the fourth annual Kevin O’Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award to two recipients this year. The honorees are: Bruce Ballard, a life-long educator and teacher trainer, and Sook Nyul Choi, an award-winning author of books on Korean and Korean-American themes. The awards will be presented at FOK’s annual meeting in San Jose, California on November 2, 2019.

Bruce Ballard served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Republic of Korea, teaching English to Korean teachers of English and university students. He went on to receive advanced degrees in language education and a doctorate in applied linguistics from Columbia University. Throughout his career he has concentrated on teacher training, and also has taught both English and Korean directly to students. Dr. Ballard is currently affiliated with the Bronx Charter School for Better Learning, where he helps make Korea and the Korean language a vital part of the children’s lives.

Sook Nyul Choi was born in Pyongyang and fled with her family to South Korea during the Korean War. After emigrating to the United States, she began a career as a writer, lecturer and teacher. Her first young-adult book, *The Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (1991), told the story of life in Korea under the Japanese occupation and the ravages of the Korean War through the eyes of a young girl. It won numerous awards and is frequently assigned in schools. Ms. Choi has written a number of other books on Korean-American themes. Her work has provided great insight for her readers into Korean history and the lives of Korean-Americans.

“We had several wonderful nominations for this year’s award and the decision was a difficult one,” stated Gerard Krzic, President of Friends of Korea. “In the end we decided to select Dr. Ballard and Mrs. Choi since they share a common focus. Both have devoted their lives to introducing Korea, its culture and history, to children. With this award we recognize their lifelong contributions to a better understanding and appreciation of Korea.”

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, the Peace Corps' first country director in Korea. O'Donnell accepted the post in 1966, served for four years, and is remembered for his extraordinary leadership that created the foundation for the 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.

About Friends of Korea:

Friends of Korea is dedicated to enhancing cultural awareness and friendship between Americans and Koreans. It was founded in 2002 by former Peace Corps volunteers who served in the Republic of Korea between 1966 and 1981. In recent years it has grown to include participants from variety of backgrounds who share an interest in promoting greater understanding and friendship between the United States and Korea. Friends of Korea sponsors a variety of events across the United States. Its flagship event is an annual meeting, held in the fall, at various cities across the United States. For more information, visit the website at: www.friendsofkorea.net.

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