



Annual Report – 2019

Annual Meeting 2019

The 2019 annual meeting was held in San Jose, California on November 2nd. The theme of the year's program was "Appreciating the Past and Anticipating the Future." More than 80 people attended the afternoon of talks and socializing. One of the program highlights included: a panel discussion by several of the Youth Ambassadors, high school students who are part of a year-long intercultural outreach program sponsored by the Pacific Century Institute and The Korea Society.

The program also included a highly engaging and provocative presentation on 'The Globalization of Korean Popular Culture' by Dr. Dafna Zur of Stanford University. Dr. Zur is an Associate Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Stanford University where she teaches courses on Korean literature, cinema, and popular culture. Her book, Figuring Korean Futures: Children's Literature in Modern Korea (Stanford University Press, 2017), traces the affective investments and coded aspirations made possible by children's literature in colonial and postcolonial Korea.



Another highlight of the meeting was an exhibit of photos that FoK solicited from members and colleagues in the summer. All who submitted were asked to include a short comment about why they liked the photo. Over 200 photos were collected and were exhibited alongside images that the Consul General's office already had in their collection.

The event culminated in a wonderful dinner – this year hosted by the Consul General of the Republic of Korea in San Francisco, Ambassador Park Joon-yong.

Kevin O'Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award

The annual meeting was also the venue for the presentation of the fourth Kevin O'Donnell Distinguished Friend of Korea Award to 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.

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.

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 is remembered for his extraordinary leadership which 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 FoK 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.

Two organizations were recognized for their work at the 2019 annual meeting - the Korean War Memorial Foundation and the Bronx Charter School for Better Learning. While focusing on very different topics, both organizations share an interest in the education of school children about Korea, its history and culture. The Korean War Memorial Foundation has developed a high school curriculum on the Korean War, its causes, costs and consequences. Originally taught to students in the San Francisco Bay area, this curriculum has been shared with social studies teachers in numerous school districts throughout the country. See <https://www.kwmf.org/education/>.

The Bronx Charter School for Better Learning has, with the support and leadership of Bruce Ballard, developed an extensive Korean language and culture program for elementary school children. The

program includes language instruction and exposure to Korean culture through folk dance, music, and food. To learn more, visit <https://www.bronxbetterlearning.org/apps/news/article/966976>

Since the *Giving Back Initiative* was launched in the fall of 2014, more than \$30,000 has been donated. Recipients have included:

- Los Angeles, 2014: Korean American Family Services
- Boston, 2015: National Assn of Korean American Inter-Cultural Family Mission & the Korean American Senior Citizen Association
- Washington, DC 2016: Virginia Korean American Disabled People's Association
- Ann Arbor, 2017: The Nam Center for Korean Studies at the University of Michigan
- Portage, Michigan, 2017: Korean Kids and Orphanage Outreach Mission (KKOOM)
- Annandale, VA, 2018: Korean Community Center Campaign
- New York, 2018: Community Inclusion and Development Alliance & the Esther Ha Foundation

Youth Ambassador Program

For 27 years, The Korea Society (TKS) in New York City and the Pacific Century Institute (PCI) in Los Angeles have selected 16 public high school students to become Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors (YAs). Originally created in response to the 1992 Los Angeles riots as a means to address race relations in the U.S., the Project Bridge (PB) program also cultivates leadership and intercultural competence skills as well as an in-depth understanding of Korea—its history, language, culture, economy and relations with the U.S. The Program culminates in a ten-day study tour to the Republic of Korea and with community presentations that YAs make on their return.

Through the generous support of a three-year grant from PCI, Friends of Korea (FoK) has been able to award life-time membership to thirty-two 2018 and 2019 YA participants, enabling them to sustain their engagement with Korea and enabling FOK to enroll and attract a younger demographic. FoK YA liaisons, Mary Broude in LA (former Board member) and Linda Tobash in NY (current Board member and TKS PB director), collaborate with Angie Pak, PB coordinator in LA, to explore strategies for both serving and involving this new FoK demographic. Plans for 2020 include a) expanding the 2020 cohort to include four rural youth through a new PB partner - the University of Montana's Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center; b) offering YAs webinars/workshops in how best to represent their experiences on resumes, college applications, and in interviews; and c) reaching out to YA alumni from earlier cohorts. Additionally, FoK Board members have sponsored 12 YA alumni for annual FoK memberships.

2019 Revisit

In October of 2019, the Korean government hosted the 10th Korea Revisit. This was an opportunity for 41 Peace Corps volunteers to spend a week as guests of the generous Korean people as they returned to visit the country where they served some 40-50 years ago. For some participants, this was their first trip back and they were amazed to witness the changes that had occurred. In addition to excursions to Mt. Naksan Fortress, Namsan Hanok Village, the DMZ, and a visit to a school for children with disabilities, the volunteers were hosted at the US ambassador's residence and enjoyed delicious Korean meals throughout the visit.



The highlight of the trip, though, was the chance to visit the sites where they served. These visits brought emotional reunions with host families, work colleagues, students, and friends from the area. The opportunity to renew old friendships and share stories of events from years ago was an unforgettable experience. A number of the participants had gone on to careers working with Korea in some way, yet this trip reignited their initial love for the country and its warm and generous people. Friends of Korea extends its heartfelt appreciation for these Revisits, as they are a reminder of how much Korea and the time spent there as volunteers meant to so many people.

Outreach - Korean Consuls General

Friends of Korea continued with its outreach to Korean Consuls General at the ten Korean Consulates throughout the U.S. We sent a letter to each consulate with greetings for the New Year and expressions of appreciation for their cooperation and collaboration during the past year.

During 2019, FoK Liaisons worked on projects with Korean Consulates in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York, Boston and Houston. There were numerous events across the country – lunches, films, presentations and seminars – to which members of FoK were invited. A few of the highlights included:

- The Los Angeles Consulate hosted a Temple Food dinner in downtown LA in September as part of Temple Stay & Temple Food Culture Week. The 24-dish dinner was prepared by Ven. Sun Jae, master of Korean Temple Food. Several Friends of Korea members were invited.
- Chicago Consulate hosted a dinner and fundraiser attended by “Friends of Korea” to support “Korean Kids and Orphanage Outreach Mission (KKOOM)” in Detroit in November. Approximately 150 guests attended.

- The Boston Consulate provided \$5,000 in funding for a lecture series featuring former Peace Corps volunteers/Korea and school visits.
- New York Consul General, Ambassador Hyo-Sung Park, hosted his final reception and dinner for Friends of Korea (FOK) members in November at the consulate. Participants included former Peace Corps volunteers, language teachers, Fulbright Scholars, Korean studies professors, KOICA volunteers, former and current Project Bridge youth ambassadors and Korean adoptees.



Governance

Two new members joined the Friends of Korea board at the fall annual meeting. They are Bruce Fulton and Ekaterina Mozhaeva. Officers of the board are Gerry Krzic, President; James Mayer, Vice President; David Roden, Treasurer; Robert Ichihana, Secretary; and Suzanne Crowder Han, Vice President. Nancy Kelly assumed the newly created (and unpaid) position of Chief Operating Officer. For a full list of the board and their bios, visit the FoK website.

Membership & Communications

As of the November annual meeting, FoK had 265 dues paying members and a mailing list of just over 3900 names. There are also 29 donors and 3 honorary members. Our Facebook page, started in November of 2012, now has over 2685 followers, a 12% increase over the previous year. The FoK website attracted almost 5100 users in 2019 (up from 4300 in 2018). FoK continues to welcome anyone with an interest in enhancing cultural awareness of and friendship with Korea.

For more information on the various activities and ways to get involved in Friends of Korea, visit our website at www.friendsofkorea.net. We encourage you to sign up for our newsletter as well.

April 2020