

Frequently Asked Questions

Growing Liberia's Children wants to provide you information regarding our efforts to educate the children of Liberia. If you do not find the answers to your questions in these Frequently Asked Questions, please e-mail info@growingliberiaschildren.org or call 1-858-539-0954.

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What is Growing Liberia's Children?

Growing Liberia's Children is a non-profit humanitarian organization founded in 2008 to provide educational opportunities to Children in war-torn Liberia. We are volunteer-run and operated, so sponsorship donations go directly to provide educational opportunities to Liberian children and not to the organization's administrative costs and salaries.

How did Growing Liberia's Children begin?

Growing Liberia's Children was founded in 2008 by Malia E. Harris, a Liberian refugee who had fled Liberia's civil war in 2000 after her family had been detained and tortured by Charles Taylor's rebel forces. In 2007, Ms. Harris inspired fellow members of First Presbyterian Church in San Diego to help her rebuild St Paul's school in Gardnersville, Liberia, which she had helped found in the 1980's. Dismayed by the utter destruction of Liberia's educational system during the war, Ms. Harris founded Growing Liberia's Children to provide educational opportunities to Liberia's most needy children.

Is Growing Liberia's Children a faith-based organization?

No, Growing Liberia's Children is a secular, humanitarian organization. We will support schools, whether religious or not, that are improving the education of children and making education available to those with financial needs. St. Paul's, the first school we have started supporting, is a Presbyterian school.

Why does Liberia need assistance in educating its children?

Liberia has recently emerged from a fourteen-year civil war which reduced the country and its infrastructure to rubble. Because of the war, an entire generation of children has had little opportunity to attend school. As a result, most of Liberia's young people are illiterate. While peace has returned to Liberia, the economy is in shambles and many public schools are still not operational. As a result, many children still cannot attend school.

How does the program work?

Growing Liberia's Children builds, refurbishes, supplies, staffs, and supports Liberian schools, and provides teacher training. Poor children whose families could not otherwise afford to send them to school are able to attend the schools we support at reduced fees or tuition-free.

How are educational programs funded?

Educational programs are funded through school sponsorships and other individual donations, our Change-for-Children sister-school partnership program and other fundraising events.

How does the school sponsor program work at St. Paul's school?

The school sponsor's monthly or yearly donation will be dedicated to paying the teachers' salaries at St. Paul's Presbyterian School. *All* of the students are sponsored because they can attend a stable school at school fees which are more affordable than those of surrounding schools. This support is vital to the school, because it establishes and maintains stability for the faculty. The faculty is also able to benefit from various training opportunities which in turn benefit the children at St. Paul's. *The school identifies the neediest children and gives them the tuition/fee assistance they need in order to remain at St. Paul's.*

What is a school ambassador, and how do I hear from the children I'm helping educate?

The St. Paul's faculty at the school selects girls and boys on the basis of academic performance and citizenship to be "school ambassadors" to you and all the sponsors as a group. These school ambassadors write to you twice a year, and keep you abreast of the goings on at the school, and draw pictures for you. We post these and send them to you in e-mails. Any time you wish to write to one of the ambassadors, to the student body in general or to a class, we will be happy to send your letters, cards or photos on and make sure that they are delivered and/or read to the intended recipients. We send holiday greetings to the school on your behalf as well.

Does the monthly or annual donation I pay go directly to any child or family?

No, your donation goes to a pool of funds which supports a school or school program. Any school receiving assistance from Growing Liberia's Children must offer financial assistance to needy Liberian children.

What percentage of the organization funds goes towards administration?

Growing Liberia's Children's administrative costs to start the organization has been funded by individuals and organizations separately from the sponsorship program so that the organization does not have the burden of initial administrative expense. 100% of contributions for sponsorship go to the program for the children's education. This is the teacher salaries, school staff and educational expenses that are paid directly to Liberian schools.

Will my contribution make a difference?

Yes, because of you, children with no little or no chance of receiving an education will get to go to school. Your donation will also help fund schools and teacher-training programs to ensure a quality education for all the Liberian students whose schools we support.

Can I correspond with the school ambassadors who attend the school I'm assisting?

Yes, we encourage you to write letters and send pictures to the school ambassadors or any of the classes at the school. Nevertheless, we do not support a specific, matched pen-pal style relationship. We will post letters and drawings we obtain from the school ambassadors on the Growing Liberia's Children web site, and in e-mails to you.

Can I send gifts to the ambassadors or any of the children?

Not at this time. It is difficult to forward packages and there are issues concerning payment of duties and fees in sending items to Liberia.

How long can a school sponsorship last?

A school sponsorship can last as long as the donor wishes to fund it. St. Paul's is an elementary school, and offers pre-school through 6th grade.

How does the sister-school sponsorship work?

American school children can support the education of Liberian children through our Change for Children program. Your classroom or school will be provided materials about Liberia, fundraising ideas, and collection canisters. Your students will be encouraged to raise funds for Liberian schools by bringing in pocket change and organizing fundraising events. They will also correspond with their sister-school or class through letters, pictures or e-mail (where available). Through this program, we hope to empower children to become future leaders in social change.

Can I support a special project?

Yes, you can contribute on a regular or one-time basis to special projects (such as building a computer lab) as they are developed and identified. We will update you on the progress of the project.

Will I receive a tax deduction?

Growing Liberia's Children is organized under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) for nonprofit status under federal and California law and approved by the Internal Revenue Service. You will receive an annual receipt for funds contributed for the calendar year.

What payment options are available?

You may make a secure on-line payment through PayPal at our web site www.growingliberiaschildren.org, or by sending a check. You may also pay by credit card through PayPal.