During much of 2020, Mongolia seemed to be in the clear, enforcing tight border lockdowns and having almost no cases of Covid-19. However in the fall, that suddenly changed as cases started popping up in Darkhan and Ulaanbaatar. On Nov 13, the government enforced a lockdown, which in turn made it more difficult for already vulnerable people to gain income for even the most basic needs.

As some of you recall, in August 2020, Friends of Mongolia launched a GoFundMe page to help Mongolians stranded in the USA. We generously received 2,429$ USD, yet by the time the GoFundMe payout was received in late October, the need had shifted and we assessed that the most effective use of these funds was in partnering with other established operations in Mongolia.

Friends of Mongolia signed an MOU and partnered with People in Need, Swiss Agency for Development Affairs, German Embassy, Ministry of Labor Affairs, providing 100,000 tugruk vouchers to 1,550 vulnerable people, including students and people with disabilities. This was the 2nd time Friends of Mongolia donated over 2,000 $ and partnered with People in Need to provide Covid-19 relief. Soon, though our Small Grants programs (also mentioned in this issue) we hope to support other innovative solutions.

Mongolian News of this partnership can be seen here: https://www.facebook.com/Mmelmii/videos/428932125152578
A huge Thank You to Ariel Wycoff, Delgertsogt Manaljav, Myagmar Saruul-Erdene, Gankhuyag Natsag, the Mongolia Society, Arjia Rinpoche, Indiana University, Patrick Somerville, Ambassador Otgonbayar and the Embassy of Mongolia in the U.S., Ger YouthCenter, Naraa Ochirbat Koppers and the Mongolian School of Colorado, Saran Erdenebat and her Sara VOCE Studios students, U-Mon TV, The Poppies and Keysel Pelaez, Dulgun of Magnolian, Tsojo of Mohanik, Nicholas Freer and the Mongolian Archery Club, Peter Bittner for hosting us on HappsTV, and of course the Friends of Mongolia team (William Federer, Undram Nyamaa, Lauren Alexandra Javins, Alice Chang, Uchral Ganbaatar, and Davaakhuu Baasandorj) for making the first ever FOM Virtual Tsagaan Sar Celebration a success.

In the 2020-2021 school year, with grants from the Matthew Girvin Scholarship Fund at Innovia Foundation, the Friends of Mongolia Scholarship Program funded tuition for 10 underprivileged applicants from rural areas. Scholarships are provided on an annual basis, and students may apply to have their scholarships renewed if they have kept up with the academic requirements. Each of our Scholars have unique stories we wish to share. In 2021, some of our Scholars have also started interning with Friends of Mongolia and are helping document these success stories shared on our facebook page, and we will be sharing a few in each quarterly newsletter.

For many in Washington DC and surrounding areas, Friends of Mongolia is known for our festive, in-person Tsagaan Sar events. As this was not possible due to Covid-19, on February 13th we launched ‘Tsagaan Sar 2021: Year of the Ox, Virtual event’ which received nearly 2,000 views within the first 24 hours, and over 5,000 views to date, raising 800$ for our small community grants programs!

The recording can still be seen on the Friends of Mongolia Facebook page here: https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=889741568526172&ref=watch_permalink

Scholarship Success Stories

In the 2020-2021 school year, with grants from the Matthew Girvin Scholarship Fund at Innovia Foundation, the Friends of Mongolia Scholarship Program funded tuition for 10 underprivileged applicants from rural areas. Scholarships are provided on an annual basis, and students may apply to have their scholarships renewed if they have kept up with the academic requirements.

Each of our Scholars have unique stories we wish to share. In 2021, some of our Scholars have also started interning with Friends of Mongolia and are helping document these success stories shared on our facebook page, and we will be sharing a few in each quarterly newsletter.

Nyamdorj Erdenesuren

Mongolian State University of Education

When I found out that I was accepted at a program, my parents were the first people to hear about it and share my happiness. I believe the Friends of Mongolia Scholarship Program is the reward for my hard work for all these years. As I started receiving the scholarship, I earned a lot more time for myself and I started developing new skills including doing academic research, public speech, debating and volunteering.
My name’s Erdenesuren Nyamdorj. I am currently studying at Mongolian State University of Education as a senior student. I’ve been an awardee of Friends of Mongolia Scholarship Program for the last two years. I remember that I stayed all night long preparing to submit my application to this scholarship program and it feels like it was yesterday that I felt excited and a bit nervous that I couldn’t wait for it’s result to be out. As a sophomore student I worked at a daycare center in order to support my parents that they were paying my tuition fee. Meanwhile I was trying my best to continue to be socially active and personally developed. When I found out that I was accepted at a scholarship program, my parents were the first people to hear about it and share my happiness. I believe the Friends of Mongolia Scholarship Program is the reward for my hard work for all these years. As I begin to receive the scholarship, I started having a lot more time for myself and I started developing new skills. Replacing working hours by studying hours made a huge impact on me and I’m grateful for Friends of Mongolia for making it possible and supporting through. While I got more time for my studying, I studied harder than ever and it was significantly showing great results that I got a chance to represent my country to the International competition of “Teaching didactics” in Russia and took 1st place and was named as the best researcher student in my province and some more to name. I deeply appreciate Friends of Mongolia and the Girvin Family for this scholarship opportunity.

I am Yerkyetai Akhylbyek and I came from Bayan-Ulgii province. I’m a 4th grade student at Mongolian National University of Medical Science. I’ve been an awardee of Friends of Mongolia Scholarship Program since 2019 and it’s been a life changing opportunity for me for all these years that I benefited a lot and became able to accomplish a lot as well. Thus I wanted to share my success story of being a scholarship awardee for 2 years to inspire, to express my appreciation.

Since high school I was truly interested in science specially maths, physics, chemistry and biology and that’s why I decided to study medicine to become a doctor. To be a good doctor, of course I have to study hard and also be concerned with my personal development. As being an awardee of FOM Scholarship Program, it made it more possible to do both very well. In the recent years, I successfully participated in the numerous science and medical olympics to enhance my professional experiences as a medical students as well as to learn to be a team player, leader and learner. To name a few:
- 3rd place at the 2nd annual State Surgical Olympics in 2018
- 1st place at the 3rd annual State Surgical Olympics 2019
- 3rd place at the 5th State Radiology Olympics by the Department of Radiology at MNUMS in 2019 and I have also done well in other competitions for medical students.

As a young individual, besides my professional area, I wanted to learn more about our community and country. Thus I convinced myself to apply for the Friends of Mongolia Internship Program 2021 this spring to invest in myself and to contribute towards positive changes in our community through its’ programs as part of the dynamic team at FOM. I am looking forward to committing myself to further activities such as Mentorship Program as well as other community outreach works that are coming soon.

To read more please follow us on facebook at https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfMongolia/
Virtual Happy Hour with Peace Corps Mongolia

Thursday, April 15, 2021
8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. EST

Want to reconnect with Mongolia? Missing Hushuur? Friends of Mongolia, Peace Corps Mongolia, and the Office of the Third Goal invite you to a virtual gathering to hear updates from PC and mingle with RPCVs! It will be on April 15th, at 8pm EST.

Register to receive your ticket with the Zoom link. Once you receive your ticket, click on the orange "view the event" button to claim the Zoom link after you login.

Eventbrite link: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-happy-hour-with-peace-corps-mongolia-tickets-149260376805

Upcoming Event:

Community Development Grants 2021 Call for Proposals

The Friends of Mongolia Community Development Grant program provides financing for small community-based projects in Mongolia and the United States that further education, cultural exchange, and community development between both countries. These grants provide a small amount of funding ($500-$1000) that can go a long way for the right cause.

Community projects generally do not attract funding from large multi-lateral or bi-lateral donors, and modest community-based programs struggle to find appropriate funding to support their program goals. The FOM Community Development Grant program is intended to address these issues. This program was inspired by the Small Project Assistance (SPA) grant program that has been used by many Peace Corps Volunteers to help their communities. The Friends of Mongolia grant program began in 2006 with a grant to the National Center Against Violence and a 2007 grant to the Gobi Radio Project.

All FOM Community Development Grants are community initiated and implemented.

Proposals will be accepted until May 15th, 2021 and each proposal is reviewed by a committee made up of Friends of Mongolia Members using a standard scoring method. Final funding approval for proposals is made based on review committee recommendations and the availability of funds. Each proposal should demonstrate community-based support for a project through a minimum 25% local in-kind contribution of labor and materials to the overall budget of the project. While there is no limit for how much an application can request, historically Friends of Mongolia has awarded grants of $500 to approve as many proposals as possible. While we try to accommodate both languages, we encourage applications in English as much of the reviewing panel is based in the USA.

Proposal Template:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByFtrcBeaxIDT1RQX01lLUtMaVk/view?usp=sharing

Helpful Links:
http://friendsofmongolia.org/what-we-do/grants/grant-examples-and-resources/
http://friendsofmongolia.org/what-we-do/grants/
Call for Volunteers

Friends of Mongolia was founded by returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and it has remained a volunteer-operated organization ever since. Membership was and still remains open to all people with an interest in cultural and educational exchange between the United States and Mongolia.

Current members include returned Peace Corps Volunteers, individuals from the private sector, people who have served in the diplomatic corps, and those who have an interest in or family connections to Mongolia.

Friends of Mongolia has great potential, but as is the case for every organization, we are only as good as our people. If you are looking for professional development volunteer opportunities and have an interest in what we do, get in touch with us!

Supporting our Cause

Friends of Mongolia (FOM) is organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, and developmental purposes. Our mission is to develop partnerships with the people of Mongolia in furtherance of cultural exchange and human development. FOM is incorporated in the United States of America as a 501(c)( 3) nonprofit organization, conducting activities in both Mongolia and the United States. It is also affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association, but Friends of Mongolia membership is open to anyone with an interest in Mongolia.

If you wish to donate, your donation will support our programs in Mongolia that strive to improve the lives of those who are most vulnerable. Friends of Mongolia depends on the support of people like you to make these programs happen.

We are also always looking for new partnerships and ways to increase our scholarship programs. Please feel free to learn more following the contacts and links below.

William G. Federer, Co-Director, USA:
codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org
Uchral Ganbaatar, Co-Director, Mongolia:
codirector.mon@friendsofmongolia.org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfMongolia
Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-mongolia
Website: http://friendsofmongolia.org/