

Friends of Mongolia

Newsletter

Jul-Sep 2023



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FOM Mission

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. In fulfillment of this mission, our membership and fundraising supports the core programs, listed below, that contribute to the future of Mongolia.

Jul-Sep 23 Update

The FOM Executive Committee (ExCom) had an exciting and productive quarter, collaborating with new partners and engaging with hundreds of students for the scholarship programs. If you are eager to discuss any of topics in this newsletter, or want to discuss new ideas, please feel free to contact us.

Education: FOM received hundreds of scholarship applications for our three scholarship programs (Matthew Girvin, Mongolia 21|21, Leadership). Screening, interviewing, and selecting the students required the majority of the FOM team's time and attention in August. Upon selection, new recipients received an informal period of instruction about FOM and our mission. In September we held the Scholarship Award Ceremony at the American Corner in Ulaanbaatar.

Community Development: The recipient for our most recent small grants program is the Smiling Sun, based in Khovd. They are running a three-month program engaging with youth on law, domestic violence, physiology, and reproductive health. Over 100 students are attending the after-school sessions led by psychologists, teachers, and law enforcement. Additionally, FOM officers supported the Rotary Club of Oakdale, California's wheelchair initiative. We look forward to partnering with more Peace Corps Volunteers in the coming quarters, as they design their projects.

Community Outreach: FOM kicked off a new initiative of trying to establish cohort-coordinators within Returned Peace Corps Volunteer cohorts. We want to connect with all 32 cohorts in order to sponsor projects or students, or support FOM more generally. This will take years to fully mature, but we need to start somewhere. We are also sending a survey out to the greater FOM community to see what types of events the community wants to get involved in. We really want to hear from the FOM community about events or opportunities you want to participate in.



Peace Corps Experiences

Daniel Lang



English teachers, students and scholars from both throughout Mongolia and around the globe gathered the week before Teachers' Day to share research and best practices. The English Language Teachers' Association of Mongolia (ELTAM) holds this conference annually during the last weekend of September. Participants gathered for this 16th National TEFL and 12th Mongolia TESOL International Conference at the Mongolian National University of Education in Ulaanbaatar.

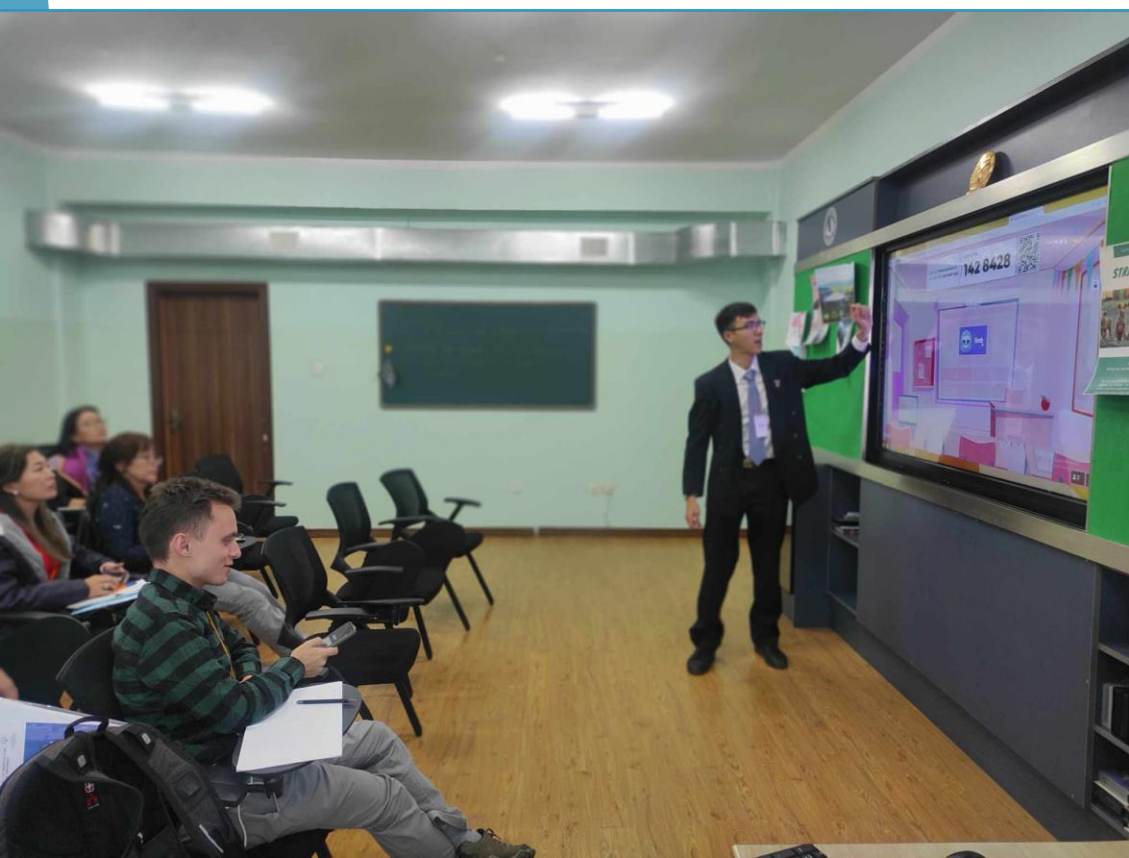
This year during the opening ceremony I felt quite surprised! From the U.S. Department of State's Regional English Language Office of Beijing, Han Fei mentioned having last come to UB for ELTAM 2019. Indeed, I too had participated that year. I approached after his talk to find that he and his colleague Wang Ping recognized me! They even commended the practical experiences I shared in an article I published this fall in ELTAM's newsletter.



I'm especially fond of the community present at the conference. I connected with teachers from throughout Mongolia, visitors from Malaysia, the U.S., China and Korea, and both local Mongol undergraduates and professors. Over half a dozen English Language Fellows and fellow Peace Corps Volunteers participated this year, too.

Coincidentally, the keynote speaker Dr. Greg Kessler came from the same Ohio University where my parents had met! From a conversation over dinner, I learned that Dr. Kessler even knew of my brother who still works in that city. Although I couldn't attend his presentation because mine and that of my counterpart occurred at the same time, I felt grateful that he generously shared his work.

Finally, during this year's ELTAM conference, I got to help tape a short clip encouraging more English teachers from throughout Mongolia to attend next year. 2024 will be my last ELTAM too for the foreseeable future. I look forward to presenting again for my third and final time.



Peace Corps Experiences

Sareena Khanal

This summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to help my friend and fellow PCV Rowan with a summer camp. The camp consisted of students from her school, and, alongside my other friend and PCV Pader, the three of us taught English, played games, learned Mongolian, and helped cultivate meaningful friendships.

The kids were split into three groups—sheeps, camels, and cows—and alternated taking charge for the day, including serving others and cleaning up. Every day had a specific theme with two English lessons and a Mongolian cultural component, such as a traditional dance lesson or how dairy products are made. Since we stayed in the countryside with a herder family, the beautiful nature and serenity we were surrounded by was an ideal atmosphere for learning and bonding (despite the few rainy days)!

Even though there was an age disparity (7-15), it was incredibly heartwarming to not only see the kids become more comfortable in their skin and be better friends, but also see the older kids be amazing role models, always kind and helping.

I will forever cherish my memories from this summer camp, especially of teaching the kids a few karate moves and how to play the card game Slap Jack! Go camels!



Peace Corps Experiences

Christopher Wizda

The opening ceremony of the new school year was marked by a vibrant and electrifying opening to set good vibes and energy to promote a fantastic year at school. Students unveiled their creativity and talents through engaging skits, captivating concerts, and impressive foreign language presentations, making it an unforgettable event.

The school administration added to the excitement by hosting an "after party" for the staff, featuring a renowned musical guest, B. Bayart/Harsh (Б.Баярт /Харш). The highlight of the evening was his rendition of the hit song "Yellow Flower" ("Шар Цэцэг"), a song played often at weddings, karaoke nights, and any other event; it got everyone on their feet and dancing!

This year, I'm determined to become more actively involved in the school. The advantage of being here at the beginning of the school year is that I can initiate and coordinate various activities and clubs without the constraints of a predefined schedule. My plans include organizing youth business workshops, collaborating with the student media team, and establishing a club dedicated to swift translation practice between three different languages to equip students with invaluable career skills in the field of translation services. I'm excited to see what this new school year has in store!



Smiling Sun Small Grants Recipient

On September 15th, 2023, the Smiling Sun project was launched in the Khovd province funded by Friends of Mongolia. The opening ceremony was graced by the presence of N.Narantul, a specialist from the Department of Family, Children, and Youth Development, psychologist S.Khishigtogtokh from the Equal Opportunity Development Support NGO, and Bolormaa, the Head of the Operational department of the Police department. They organized a training discussion covering crucial topics including legal matters, child safeguarding policies, and emotional intelligence. The project was joined by a total of 87 primary school students and 25 youths who are registered at the Family Child and Youth Development Department. This project will continue for about 3 months.



On September 20th, the Police Department of Khovd Province organized an event that discussed potential dangers and shared legal knowledge with teenagers. 50 students from the 7th to 11th grades of the Smiling Sun club of the Jargalant Soum Secondary School participated in the event. During the event, the participants were privileged to hear from B. Bolormaa, the head of the police department, Police Major Y. Damdin, who represented the investigative department, and Police Lieutenant Colonel Ts. Bulganbaatar, the head of the criminal police department. The speakers discussed the law and methods of preventing crime and protecting oneself. In addition, they presented information about police protection equipment and dozens of questions.



July



In July, the FOM American Team participated in the Naadam Festival in Washington D.C. It was a wonderful opportunity to engage with Mongolians and Americans interested in Mongolia.



We also had one of our members organize a 24 hour Row-A-Thon to raise money to send wheelchairs from Australia to Mongolia



FOM and some of the PCVs helped the Rotary Club of Oakdale with their wheelchair distribution in Ulaanbaatar!



August

In August, FOM officers were incredibly busy screening, interviewing, and selecting scholarship recipients for our three scholarship programs. The team spent many long hours making very tough decisions.



Some of our officers were also invited to the M32 Swearing-In Ceremony for the new Peace Corps Volunteer Cohort. It was a wonderful celebration of service. We are excited to partner with these young servant-leaders in their communities.



September



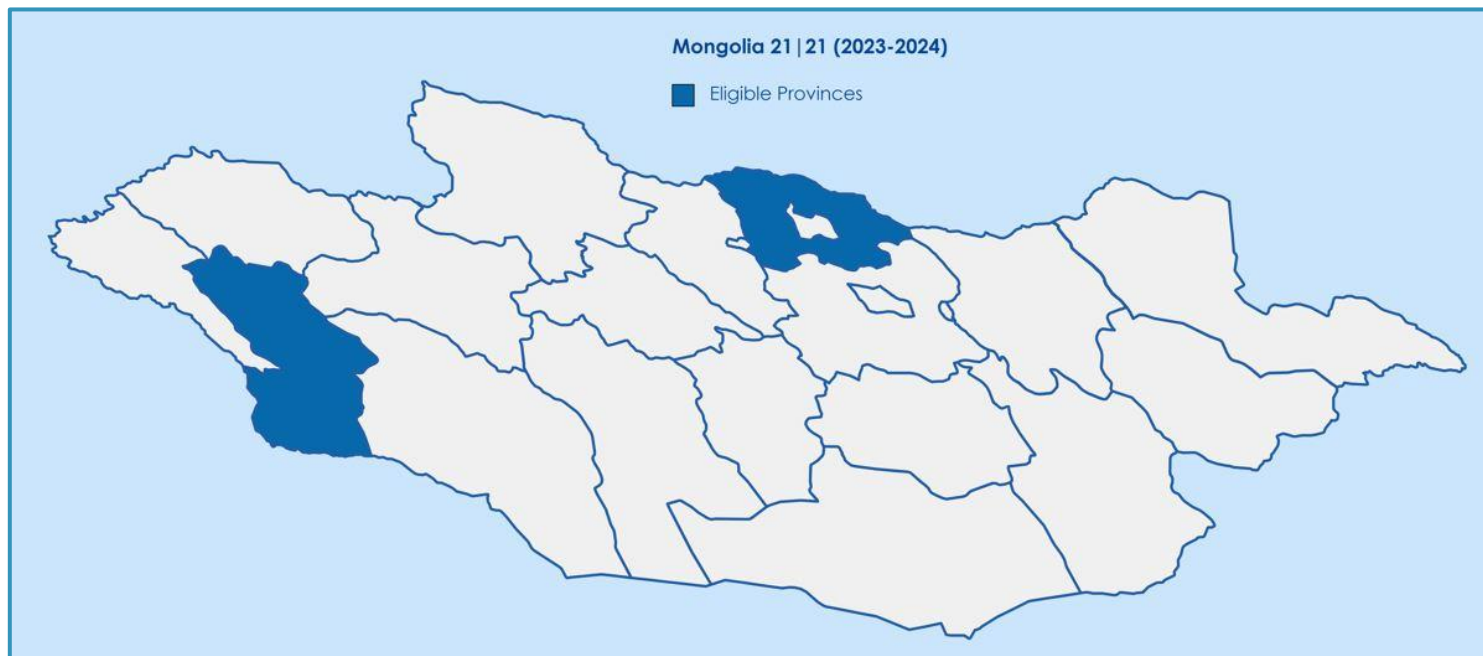
With the departure of summer, FOM officers and scholarship recipients returned to the craziness of the fall semester. FOM hosted an informal introductory session for the new scholarship recipients and an award ceremony at the American Corner. We had partners, past recipients, Peace Corps Volunteers, University representatives, and family members in attendance.



Mongolia 21 | 21



Objective: Locate 21 Rotary clubs in the US to partner with FOM in providing a full-tuition scholarship to a student from every province in Mongolia by the 2025-2026 academic year.



Updates

FOM is officially partnering with the Allentown West Rotary Club (AWRC) in Pennsylvania and the Rotary Club of Oakdale in California to lay the foundation for this initiative. We recently selected and sponsored 3 students from Khovd Province, and 2 from Selenge. These students will be the first generation of this program and will help us set the tempo and standard for the expectations.

The students are expected to participate in at least one Rotaract or Rotary-led service project each semester in order to receive exposure to the mission of Rotary. Additionally, FOM intends to establish relationships between the students and their sponsoring Rotary Club, to hopefully build long-lasting relationships.

If we extrapolate the mission of Mongolia 21|21, and expand it beyond the scholarship component, we can see more meaningful collaborations between FOM, Peace Corps, and Rotary. The Rotary Club of Oakdale, California visited Ulaanbaatar in July with over 200 wheelchairs. FOM and Peace Corps Volunteers assisted in translating, assembling, and distributing of the wheelchairs to hundreds of adults and children. These are the types of projects we want to be involved in!

Please feel free to contact codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org for more details about how to get involved.



Upcoming Opportunities

Friends of Mongolia was designed to only be limited by the capacity and resources of its members. We are eager to collaborate with individuals, organizations, and businesses to expand our impact, both in depth and breadth. Feel free to contact us with ideas!

Opportunities to Serve or Connect

-FOM operates solely on donations. We appreciate any amount you can spare. This money goes to our three core programs (nothing to the volunteers). Please share our organization with friends and family, or anyone who has an interest in Mongolia. We want to serve as a centralizing hub for community relations.

-We are looking for potential partners (individuals, cohorts, Rotary Clubs, etc) to help us with the Mongolia 21|21 Program. In the coming years we are hoping to provide full tuition scholarships for a student from each province. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Nick at codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org

-We are interested in supporting formalized and informal/nascent Sister-City relationships, especially in Denver, Fairbanks, Bellingham (Washington), Irving (Texas), and St. Louis. If you are in or around these cities and interested in learning more, please contact Nick at codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org. If you aren't in these cities but still want to participate in events, let us know and we could potentially help you arrange something local.

-We are looking to build a new initiative closely linked to Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Cohorts. We want to establish a relationship with each of the 32 Mongolian cohorts and provide a scholarship per cohort, or have a cohort support a Peace Corps Volunteer's development project. If you are interested in helping us connect with your cohort and design a project/scholarship. Please contact Nick at codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org.

-We will soon be advertising for positions within the FOM team. We are eager to bring on a Membership Coordinator (US), Treasurers (US and Mongolia), and a Social Media Manager (US or Mongolia). If you have some time to spare and want to get involved in our growing organization, look out for our announcements via email and Facebook or contact Nick at codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org.

