Annie Walsh Old Girls Association
Washington Metropolitan Branch

“Pressing Towards Our Goal”

AWOGA Newsletter
March 2017
2017

For AWOGA Washington, this year is significant because at no other time in the history of the Annie Walsh Memorial School or AWOGA, has there been a more defining moment to come together on a strategic journey for our alma mater. As we assemble in our white dresses, black shoes with matching stockings; white hats adorned with orange hat bands and the AWMS pin, that ubiquitous badge of honor resting squarely on the left hand of the uniform; ex-pupils of the Annie Walsh Memorial School will once again show their allegiance and love for their school by joining in a service of thanksgiving. Our theme is “Pressing Towards Our Goal”.

Last year, the newly formed choir, AWOGA Voices, that was the brainchild of Jeredine Williams and spearheaded by Marion Koso-Thomas, wowed the congregation at the Thanksgiving Service. A group of women from the Metro area gave up their time to practice hard for the occasion. They received rave reviews and the choir is now part of the association’s repertoire. Congratulations ladies!

The Editorial Team takes this opportunity to express deep gratitude to the outgoing president, Mrs. Mimie Williams and her executive. What an outstanding job they did during their time in office! We cannot thank them enough, especially the president on whom we prevailed to serve beyond the usual two term tenure. Only one other person, Mrs. Rita Johnson, has graciously relented to go beyond that call of duty.

Mimie, you successfully led us through difficult times such as the Ebola outbreak that impacted the school. You helped quell the doubts and uncertainties of the ‘Change of Status /Privatization’ initiative, and you demonstrated strength and tenacity always. Through it all you had the organization’s support.

A summary of these activities is outlined in the outgoing president’s message.

We welcome the new president, Dr. Marion Koso-Thomas with the assurance the association has her back and is ready to work with her. In her message, she articulates her agenda and pledges to uphold the association’s mandate. We look forward to a smooth transition.

The AWOGA Washington Fund for the Privatization of the AWMS was launched in June 2016. The immediate obligations for privatization are: 1) financial capacity, 2) rehabilitation of the school’s buildings, and 3) integration of the two shifts into a single system under one administration. The deadline for these priorities is 2019 and funding is key in graduating from the probationary status. We welcome any contribution to this initiative that is an ongoing commitment. For your convenience please refer to the pledge form at the back of the newsletter on page 19.

We are making progress. As always, we give kudos to the principals, teachers and students who continue to outdo themselves and excel in academic achievement. This makes us confident that our effort is not in vain.

The association cannot take full credit for the support it gives the school. It all comes down to members of the community who have partnered with us over the years. Thank you! You have been unstinting in your donations and steadfast in your support. AWOGA Members are blessed to have you on our side. Our relationship is the kind good partnerships are made of and we will keep it alive.

Please join us as we work to reach our aspirations.

Marion A. Richards
Public Relations Officer - AWOGA Washington

President’s Message

In-coming President

Mrs. Rita Johnson and Mrs. Mimie Williams must have seen something in me that I did not see in myself. For
the past 7 years, they cajoled, teased and at times flat out instructed me that I did not have an option when it came to the decision to serve as president of the Annie Walsh Old Girls Association of the Washington Metropolitan area.

To say I am flattered is an understatement. For as much as it seems daunting, the challenge is a worthy one. The oldest girls’ school in West Africa has produced many renowned and accomplished alumnae and I am proud to be among them.

My roles to date have ranged from serving on various committees including Thanksgiving, Annual Dinner Dance and Family Fun Day. I remember helping with the desk drive, some of the sponsored walks and serving as a liaison between the Together for Annie Walsh group and the main AWOGA Washington body. I was always curious why I was the only Vice-President that attended the AWOGA Presidents’ Council conference calls. I guess I should have clued into the fact that I was being mentored for leadership. So here I am, finally ready to take the helm of this amazing organization and to shoulder the responsibility!

One of my early thoughts that I presented to the executive many years ago when the late Rev. Leonora Nicol urged me to get involved with AWOGA Washington was to have a mentoring program for students in the senior school. I grew up with a mentor in the form of my mother. Not only was her example as a Christian meaningful to me, her drive and passion for education of girls and encouragement to excel in whatever I found myself doing, guided me through my teenage years and now as a career woman and mother of two.

“My Mentor, My Friend”, was designed to link alumnae from Washington DC with girls in the senior school (forms 3, 4 and 5 if you are using the old nomenclature). The objective was for these girls to have a positive influence from alumnae monthly with the goal of having the relationship encourage the students to stay focused on their school work, discourage drop outs and provide a sounding board when they had issues or challenges. Although, it never did take hold, I am hopeful that during my presidency, I can revive it together with Ms. Cleopatra Warrity (AWOGA Freetown) who is very keen to see it come to fruition.

With the single shift and privatization wheels turning, I know I will have to hit the ground running. Thankfully, I have been briefed by Mrs. Marcella Jones about the plans the school board, executive and development committee have, so I know what lies ahead.

In the AWOGA Washington area, I am looking forward to continue the exceptional growth we are experiencing and to continue to extend a hand to those on the sidelines – my mantra “Get involved!” We are stronger together and can do more than we already have.

The theme for this year’s Thanksgiving is "Press on toward the goal to win the prize of God’s heavenly calling in Christ Jesus": to reinforce our commitment and determination, as we continue working in support of our alma mater’s goal of pursuing excellence in education for girls in Sierra Leone.

I welcome your comments, feedback and most importantly your continued support. I have an open-door policy and look forward to hearing new ideas and suggestions on how we can improve. I am here to serve – Non Sibi Sed Omnibus!

May God bless us all!

Marion Koso-Thomas
President Elect - AWOGA Washington

Message from Immediate Past President

AWOGANS, AWMS Alumnae and Supporters; what an exhilarating, fulfilling, and memorable experience the six years of my leadership has been for me! I am grateful for the opportunity and privilege afforded me by our membership to lead our Association as its president over the past three terms. I thank all who served on the various Executives over the past six years of my tenure. Working together as a team we were successful in accomplishing many of the challenging goals established in concert with our vision for a premier alumnae association.

Among the various missions and initiatives undertaken, we can proudly count as our accomplishments:

- Broadened alumnae membership
- Prolific fundraising
➢ Accelerated and extraordinary contributions in providing resources for the AWMS
➢ Advanced and enhanced operating standards and information technology
➢ Heightened engagement in partnership networks with sister branches in the AWOGA franchise and other supporting AWMS alumnae groups
➢ Enhanced structures that promote transparency & accountability within our association and with our various partners at the AWMS
➢ Acknowledged distinguished leadership position within the AWOGA franchise
➢ Furthered and strengthened relationship with the managing staff of the AWMS
➢ Deepened relationship with local alumnae associations and organizations
➢ Widened community outreach

As the winds of change usher in a new team of leadership, we extend a warm welcome to my successor, the new “Madam President”, Dr. Marion Koso-Thomas, and her Executive with a strong pledge of support. In my new role as an Ex-Officio member of the new administration, I remain committed to building and preserving these accomplishments. The road ahead is promising with countless opportunities for us to give back in support of our much revered and beloved “Annie Walsh”. With “all hands-on deck”, and having firm commitment and dedication from all, the challenges will not be insurmountable. Let’s give Marion and her team our utmost in encouragement, engagement, and personal interest.

No doubt that “many hands made light work”. I once again acknowledge with the deepest of appreciation, the immeasurable support, and contributions of all our members and benefactors in the community, who made the past six years successful for our cause. Thank you for your support, encouragement, and friendship. Of special remembrance and commendation is our dearly departed former Executive Member, Mrs. Leyinde Pabs-Garnon, whose commitment and fundraising contributions were distinguished and exemplary. May we always remember her reverently and gratefully. She is sorely missed.

It has been my distinct privilege and pleasure to serve AWOGA Washington. I remain committed to working with our Association in supporting our alma mater’s goal of pursuing excellence in education for girls in Sierra Leone. Non Sibi Sed Omnibus indeed!

Mimie R. Williams
Immediate Past President & Ex-Officio
AWOGA Washington

Update on Privatisation

I am pleased to report that AWOGANS at home and in the diaspora are now geared up to drive the Privatisation process forward.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) gave us a three-year Provisional Privatisation status, effective January 2016. We are now in the second year, with one more year to go!

Members on the various sub-committees, namely, Administration and Management, Education and Curriculum, Estate, Finance and Legal are working tirelessly and selflessly to complete their Terms of Reference. The outcomes from these sub-committees feed into the Implementation Committee, chaired by the Lord Bishop Thomas Wilson, where key decisions are made. We are also working very closely with the Sierra Leone Grammar School and appreciate their invaluable guidance.

Below is the progress report from the main committees.

Administration and Management Committee
• The primary focus is on the integration of the school’s two shifts into a single system under one administration. The deadline for accomplishing this is the 3rd term of the 2016/17 school year.

Education and Curriculum Committee
• The Education and Curriculum Committee’s recommendation to reduce intake at JSS and SSS levels was duly implemented with approval from MEST.
• A draft prospectus has been submitted, and is awaiting approval by the Implementation Committee.

Estate Committee
• The Estate Committee’s role is pivotal towards the realisation of the school’s transition into a
single shift. All available building/space is being rehabilitated to accommodate classrooms. Work is going on in earnest.

- The conversion of the Boarding Home to 12 classrooms is completed.
- Work on the IDA Building is underway and will provide 5 specialty classrooms.
- Work on the refurbishing of individual classrooms is also ongoing.

Finance Committee

- The Finance Committee has drawn up a budget framework for the School’s new status and awaits input from other sub-committees.
- In respect of the ‘Fund a Classroom Project’, we thank all those who have generously donated to the project. These include individuals and the following AWOGA Chapters.
  - AWMS Development Committee - conversion of Boarding Home into 12 classrooms
  - UK Branch - 10 classrooms
  - Washington Branch IDA Building renovation - 5 specialty classrooms
  - Texas Branch - 3 classrooms
  - Carolina Branch - 2 classrooms
  - South Eastern Branch - 2 classrooms
  - Colvic Fund (USA) - 2 classrooms

Legal Committee

- The Legal Committee continues to provide legal advice to committees when necessary and reviews all legal documents.

Challenges

We come across challenges in meeting our goals either by the escalating costs of building materials, downsizing of the school population and in organizing more driven and successful fundraising activities.

Next Steps and Conclusion

Transitioning into a single shift school. Our plan to transition to one shift during the third term should be implemented without delay. This would enable us to confront challenges posed and find solutions before 2018, which is the year of “Privatisation”. Privatisation is no longer a dream but a defining agenda and a reality.

Thank you AWOGANS for your commitment, loyalty, moral and financial support, as together we continue to build our school on a firm foundation. Non Sibi Sed Omnibus.

May God Bless Us All.

Elfrieda Scott
Deputy Chair - AWMS Implementation Committee
AWOGA Freetown

The AWMS Combined Scholarship Awards Programme

In 2014 Mimie Williams, President of AWOGA Washington, conceived the idea of having the branches in the diaspora work together to award scholarships, as a way of making the decision process easier for the Scholarship Committee in Freetown. This would also simplify Reporting and Monitoring. She sold the idea to the Presidents Council, the forum of AWOGA branch leaders. Guidelines for operations of the committees were discussed and approved.

Scholarship Committee in Freetown
Chair: Ayodele Cream Wright
Co-Chair: Andrina Coker
Committee Members: Easterline Palmer, Marvel Spring, Pamela Moses,
In Attendance: Ophelia Morrison - Senior School Principal, Michael Sandy -Senior School Teacher, Antoinette Horton - Junior School Teacher, Fatmata Kainyek -Junior School Teacher, Chaplain & Guidance Counsellor.

Participating AWOGA Branches in Combined Scholarship Programme:

Due to the Ebola outbreak and closing of schools in 2014, there were changes in the school year between 2015 and 2016/17.

The Committee started meeting in 2015 but the first set of 20 scholarships were offered in 2016. Many of the branches were interested in supporting Ebola impacted pupils, but because of the stigma associated with Ebola it was difficult to identify such pupils. Finally, scholarships were given as follows:
1 Ebola survivor who had missed a whole year because of stigmatization
1 student whose father, a medical doctor, had died of Ebola
8 students who previously received scholarships from the branches in 2013/2014
10 new students

For the 2016/2017 awards we instituted the following process which we will use going forward:

i. Scholarship programme announced in school.
ii. Pupils submit letters & complete application forms.
iii. School does first short listing based on criteria agreed with Scholarship Committee (SC) – i.e. academic performance & behaviour. 1 member evaluates information received from the school and applicants and presents the summary in tabular form for discussion at a meeting. (The form includes information on year/form, academic performance, reason for applying for scholarship, occupation of parent/guardian and future plans.)
iv. The SC interviews each child Although performance is important, sometimes we acknowledge a pupil may not do well in school because she is disadvantaged socially and economically. However, that student is likely to improve if given the right support.
v. The SC reaches the final decision on the awardees based on their performance at the interview and supporting information.

Thirty-six scholarships were awarded for the 2016/2017 academic year. Three of the recipients were awaiting results of the BECE (Basic Education Certificate Examination) exams at the time of the awards.

Award ceremonies are held and attended by both awardees and parents. We give television and radio coverage of the ceremony, followed by interviews of members of SC and some of the recipients with their parents.

Group photographs are taken and sent with thank you letters from the girls. Each participating AWOGA branch gets copies.

Challenges:

- Most of the pupils receiving scholarships need to be mentored but most of them live in remote parts of town so it is difficult to reach them. Guidance counseling services in school is limited.
- Not enough time or resources to do background checks to confirm authenticity of information given by applicants.
- No records are available so the committee was not able to confirm some of the specific requests/criteria from branches.
- The School has difficulty meeting deadlines.

Andrina Coker
Co-Chair Scholarships Committee - AWOGA Freetown

Letters and Pictures from Scholarship Awards Participants

Aminata Konneh and father receive scholarship award from Mrs. Marvel Spring and Mrs. Ophelia Morrison (SSS principal, left)

Thank you letter from Aminata Konneh
Acknowledgement from Guidance Counsellor.

AWMS Success Stories

1. Mrs. Ophelia Morrison, principal of the senior school, received a Certificate of Recognition from the West African Examinations Council for “Meritorious and Excellent Service” to the Council.

2. Three students, two presently in the JSS and one who transitioned to the SSS, received awards from WAEC on February 22, 2017.

Congratulations to the Principal and staff of the JSS!

The Sierra Leone Grammar School Alumni Association of North America Washington, DC, Metro Area Chapter

“Life can only be lived forward and the future is our collective destination”

As we welcome another year, we celebrate our accomplishments and move forward into the future with optimism. It is often valuable and gratifying to review what has happened in the past. When Old boys of the Sierra Leone Grammar School and Old girls of the Annie Walsh Memorial School gather, memories are inevitably shared and comparisons are often made between now and “the old days”. Yet, life can only be lived forward and the future is our collective destination.

The Sierra Leone Grammar Alumni Association of North America Washington Metro Chapter often functions as a bridge between the past and the future. Our events and activities are geared towards continuing the legacy of our alma mater, as well as celebrate the special moments from our history that make our school what it is.

In 2016, our association took an audacious leap into the future by launching an Endowment (Restricted) Fund to provide immediate support for capital projects, infrastructure, and academic priorities. While we have achieved a great deal in the past there is much more still to do as we move ahead into the future. When fully funded the Endowment (Restricted) Fund will firmly establish The Sierra Leone Grammar School among the pantheon of world class secondary schools. We also uphold our tradition of providing scholarships and stipends to alleviate the financial burden of tuition on students and inspire teachers to become more involved. Our association remitted the sum of $26,725 to the school. Obviously, these efforts require money. All tax-deductible contributions small or large are most welcome.
Considering the questionable state of educational standards in Sierra Leone, our school continues to be a beacon of light to young boys who want to make something out of life. During the last several years our performance both nationally and within the sub-region remains undoubtedly one of the best. To protect our student’s safety and our alma mater’s interests against vandals and trespassers, our school is in the process of erecting a nine-foot perimeter fence, starting from the main gate at Macaulay Street and ending at Sir Samuel Lewis Drive. Construction started a few months ago; we will be updated as the project nears completion. Meanwhile, construction of a modern cafeteria will soon start to replace the old “market” which has been in existence since the 1960’s and plans are also in the process of constructing an ultra-modern stadium befitting the status of the Grammar School.

Furthermore, The Reverend Leonard Ken Davies our “Principal Designate” arrived safely in Freetown from the United Kingdom to start the transition process of succeeding our revered principal, Mr. Akiwande Lasite who has been at the helm of the school for the last thirty-one years. This process has been in the works for the last several years, but was stymied by the outbreak of the Ebola pandemic. We wish the Reverend Ken Davies well and thank profusely Mr. Lasite for his dedicated and selfless service to our alma mater.

Finally, this year marks our alma mater’s tenth anniversary as a private institution; it seems just yesterday when we embarked on this lofty goal, the experience has not been easy, but with God on our side, our resolve, collective and persistent efforts we continue to press on. We applaud your decision and determination to go private and hope that our experience can serve as a paradigm as you move forward.

Floreat Regentonia - God Bless our Grammar School

Frank Hume-Dawson
President - Sierra Leone Grammar School Alumni Association
Washington D.C. Metro Area Chapter

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How The Annie Walsh Helped Shape my World View

It is with humble gratitude that I accept this invitation from Mrs. Marion Richards to share my story with AWOGA. My name is Joan Elsie Williams and I attended the Annie Walsh Memorial School in the seventies under the leadership of Mrs. Lati Hyde-Foster and Mrs. Europa Agwu (Principals). I started the Annie Walsh in Form One, with Ms. Lawrence (a British Exchange Teacher) as my homeroom teacher and ended my school years in Lower Six under Ms. Annie Dove-Edwin. Four years later, I graduated from Fourah Bay College with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. I arrived in the United States in 1985 as a graduate student of Howard University, Washington DC. I am currently a Fifth-Grade teacher in DeKalb County Public Schools, Stone Mountain, Georgia.

During my student years at the Annie Walsh, I was a very active member of the school’s Scripture Union Association. It was there I learned many valuable lessons that would guide me through some tumultuous periods in my life. It was at Scripture Union that I learned what it means to serve God and one’s local community. As a student, I also learned the value of an excellent education and to pursue all that I do with a spirit of excellence. I clearly remember Mrs. Forster encouraging us during chapel to strive for excellence not just in education but also in character. I learned the amazing impact a great school can have on the souls, minds, and future of young people. The Annie Walsh has impacted the lives of thousands of African girls who are now doing extraordinary work in their field.
I visited Freetown in 1996, during the civil war. Another Annie Walsh Old Girl took me on a tour of the refugee camps in and around Freetown. I was horrified at what I saw. There were children everywhere with no schooling, no food, no clothing, sleeping on dirt floors, scurrying around begging for anything and everything. I came back to the States, determined to do something to alleviate the suffering I had witnessed. As I prayed, seeking guidance from God, I sensed the heaviness on God’s heart for these children. This led me to incorporate Joshua International Ministries as a non-profit corporation in 1998. After many obstacles, I was finally able to directly serve these children in August 2000. The first feeding center was established in central Freetown (Akibo Betts Municipal School). Subsequently, six other centers were established throughout Freetown.

As the years progressed, my focus changed to providing formal education for underprivileged children. I wanted to assist the many child laborers visible in Freetown. With God’s help, I raised the funds to construct a modern facility in Grafton Village. My memories at the Annie Walsh helped guide me as I started this school. I wanted poor children to benefit from an excellent education. I wanted children that would otherwise not attend school, have a chance to attend a school where they are nurtured to become productive citizens. Above all, I wanted to give a community hope for the future.

On September 20, 2010, Joshua International Primary School opened its doors to 350 underprivileged children. In 2013, we started Joshua International Secondary School (JSS). Both schools are housed on the same campus. We now serve 614 students from Kindergarten to Junior Secondary 3 (JSS3) with a well-qualified staff.

Our children in the primary school do not pay school fees or buy text books. These are all supplied to the children by the organization. We only ask families to pay a Development Fund of Le20,000 (about $3.00) per family for the entire year. This means that if a family has more than one child, they only pay Le20,000 (about $3.00). I came up with this strategy because I wanted to ensure that the many “men pikin” in the community can also attend school. Grafton Village has a lot of children living with relatives or grandparents. These children generally do not attend school as families can only afford to send their biological children to school. By eliminating school fees and making the Development Fund per family, every child in any household can now have quality education. Secondary school students pay Development Fund dues of Le20,000 per term. In addition, they are required to purchase their own text books. However, our children are so poor, that we end up waiving the development fund for many and supply the neediest with uniforms and text books. The Development Fund is used to maintain our facility.

In addition, we provide subsidized hot lunches daily for the entire student population. Students pay a subsidized amount of Le4,000.00 (about $0.67) weekly for hot lunches. The school uses this money to purchase condiments and greens. The organization provides bulk items such as rice, palm oil, cooking oil, onions, tomatoes, beans, fish, meat etc. For many of our children this is their only meal for the day.

Since our inception, we have had many, many successes. For three years in a row, our school scored first place in NPSE (National Primary School Exam) for the Western Rural District. This is our first year to take BECE (2016) in JSS3 and all our students passed. The student with first position had an aggregate of 12 and is now attending SOS International School. The two
second place students (boy & girl) had aggregate 15 and are now attending Sierra Leone Grammar School and the Annie Walsh. The student attending Grammar School is an orphan and we awarded him full scholarship. He has big dreams to do something significant for Sierra Leone.

We have one student attending Methodist Girls High School and several boys attending Prince of Wales. This is incredibly remarkable for our students when you consider their background. It also shows the extraordinary work our teachers are doing as we continue to strive for excellence.

A success story that is very dear to me is about one of our students, Yarie. Yarie was brought to Freetown by her uncle who is a subsistence farmer in Grafton. When the school started, Yarie was selling fruits outside the school’s gate. She badly wanted to attend school and envied the students as they purchased fruits from her. She felt that she will never have that opportunity as her uncle is so poor. Then one day, she overheard someone saying that children do not pay fees at this new school. She ran all the way home to let her uncle know. He came to investigate and found out it was true. She was admitted and started school without even owning a uniform. Due to her age, she was placed in a class reserved for older students. By the end of the school year, she had progressed so well that she was mainstreamed into class two (2). At the end of classes two, three and four, she was consistently first in class. We decided to double promote her to class six. With lots of extra help and love from the staff, she did very well on the NPSE. She is now in JSS1. Her long-term goal is to become an attorney and advocate for children like her. Yarie is our shining STAR! There are many others like her in our school and we are behind them one hundred percent, wanting all of them to succeed.

On December 19th, 2016, our schools received the prestigious “Gold Star” School award from the Sierra Leone Ministry of Education.

I would like to thank AWOGA for allowing me to share my vision and work in Sierra Leone. As our motto states, “Not for self, but for all.” I am truly grateful for the years I spent at the Annie Walsh. Those years shaped my world view and made me who I am today. Now, I can look at a child in Sierra Leone and know that with just a little bit of help and encouragement, they can transform their lives and that of their community.

If you would like to know more about our program, please visit us at www.joshuainternational.org or https://www.facebook.com/joshua.international.1998

Joan Elsie Williams
Alumna
Executive Director
Joshua International Ministries, Inc.
Lithonia, Georgia

Giving Back to the Community: the Well Woman Clinic, Freetown, Sierra Leone

The Well Woman Clinic, a non-profit agency, is part of the legacy of Ms. Melvine Edith Patricia Stuart, who survived breast cancer for many years but finally succumbed to the disease in 1981. She bequeathed part of her estate to her nieces and nephews with a request that they set up a foundation to benefit the community in a meaningful way. It is worth noting that though Melvine Stuart was a proud product of the Freetown Secondary School for Girls (FSSG), all her nieces are alumnae of the Annie Walsh Memorial school.

For several years, no concrete action was taken to fulfill Melvine Stuart’s wish until 2006 when one of her nieces, my sister, Valerie Nicol (née Bankole-Jones) also succumbed to breast cancer. Having witnessed what both these beloved women went through before the end, how to fulfill Melvine Stuart’s wish became abundantly clear. Women in Sierra Leone needed to
become more aware of the threat of breast cancer, and the difference early detection could make.

Starting a business can be challenging in the Sierra Leone environment but the initial administrative hurdles were overcome and the Well Woman Clinic opened in a building at Congo Cross once owned by Melvine Stuart. It provided an ideal location, but that was all; other aspects of running the facility had to be catered for. We were fortunate to receive financial support from various quarters; commitment from not only the family but also members of the public, some of whom have volunteered their time and talent for the last ten years serving the organization as members of the management committee.

Although our initial focus was breast cancer, the Clinic has grown organically, responding to other issues affecting women’s health. Our services now include screening for diabetes, hypertension, obesity, sexually transmitted infections and cervical cancer, as well as providing general health education, maternal health care, and raising prostate cancer awareness. We also undertake some technical training and promote relevant research. The level of cancer awareness in Sierra Leone has been researched and the results published. Another paper has published the results of an introspective study to identify the prevalent risk factors for breast cancer among women at the Clinic. These studies have helped us formulate intervention strategies, and we hope health workers in the field will also find them useful.

I believe that health care is a fundamental right and, as a woman, I am particularly concerned that the women in Sierra Leone should learn to take better care of themselves. Our strategy is therefore to reach out to all Sierra Leonean women and raise their awareness of health issues through free outreach activities for those who would find it difficult to attend the Clinic.

These activities are carried out in collaboration with organizations such as the Zonta Club of Freetown, UN agencies, embassies, churches and, most recently, through the Krio Descendants Union (KDU). Health talks and discussions are regularly broadcast on radio and television; we also visit local commercial enterprises such as banks, insurance companies and hotels. Because of these initiatives, before the 2014 Ebola crisis our client database had grown from 1000 women to over 6000 women per year. Over the years, we have crossed regional and city borders to enable underprivileged women in Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Waterloo and Sussex to access our maternal health services. Eleven professionals, mainly nurses, were trained in ultrasonography, a skill hitherto limited to medical doctors. As a result, 6,698 pregnant women have been screened at least once by ultrasound to detect and, if possible, treat any fetal abnormalities.

Last year the Well Woman Clinic celebrated its tenth anniversary with a series of activities whose aim was not only to continue to raise awareness of breast cancer and the services offered by the Clinic, but also to raise funds for our work. One such activity was our annual sponsored “Walk for life”, which took place on Saturday, 22nd October, 2016. As director of the Melvine Edith Patricia Stuart (MEPS) Trust, I take pride in organizing this event which is similar to the Susan J. Komen Initiative in the United States, but on a smaller scale.

Every year, what has become the Clinic’s signature fundraiser and awareness campaign, sees sponsors, cancer survivors, their friends and family members, international agencies, government officials and other local NGOs converge at Lumley Beach to walk the three mile stretch of sand. In 2016, over 1,000 people from all demographics took on the challenge, starting at the Quincy Restaurant and Bar, Aberdeen, all the way to the Freetown Gulf Club where they networked and listened to a talk on breast cancer. They reflected the sense of urgency needed in our society and it was gratifying to hear Mr. Abu Bangura, managing director of the Sierra Leone Ports Authority, a great supporter of the Clinic,
acknowledge in his impromptu speech that the women have indeed succeeded in their quest and it was time for the men to take a similar stand on Prostrate Cancer Awareness.

We are pleased with our achievements so far and continue to work hard towards achieving our vision of a one-stop health facility for women. It is also gratifying that our achievements have been recognized. In 2011, I was awarded NOSLINA’s humanitarian leadership award in recognition of my work with the Clinic, in 2013, UNFPA awarded us a trophy for best implementer of the GoSL/UNFPA health programme. At the Clinic’s 10th Anniversary fundraising jazz-nite, the Minister of Health and Sanitation commended our efforts. Melvine Stuart made her bequest because she was determined to give something back to her community even after her death. I am sure you will agree that the work we are doing as a result of her generosity puts into practice not only the FSSGian credo: ‘Play the Game’, but also the Annie Walsh motto: ‘Not for Self, but for All’. International organizations such as UNFPA, UN Women, Heineken Africa Foundation, Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW), the Sierra Leone Society in Switzerland and France, Rokel Commercial bank, Sierra Leone Commercial Bank, National Petroleum, First International Bank, Ecobank, family, friends have contributed hugely towards helping us fulfill her wish and realize our vision. If this level of support continues, as I hope it will, everyone will be a winner.

I thank AWOGA Washington for inviting me to submit this article for the newsletter. It has given me an opportunity to share information about our work and through this example, encourage other alumnae of the Annie Walsh to give back to the community in whatever way they can.

Jennifer Renner-Thomas
Alumna
Programme Director
MEPS Trust Well Woman Clinic

AWOGA Voices

About a year ago, I came across a message on social media garnering interest in a choir for AWOGA, Washington, DC Chapter. I responded quickly with enthusiasm as I thought it was a brilliant idea and a wonderful way to celebrate the chapter’s milestone anniversary. After all, few things can bring folks together like good music. The initial invitation drew a few, but dedicated, alumnae and AWOGA Voices was born. Although the group was diverse in age, music experience and talent, we had a common goal - to sing to the glory of God as we celebrated our esteemed alma mater.

Our Saturday mornings were spent rehearsing under the tutelage of our director, Mr. Cole and his able organist, Mr. Johnson, both sharing their talent and time voluntarily. Thank you for this and for the wonderful experience we had.

I must say our dedication was sometimes tested by Mother Nature as we braved the snow, ice and freezing temperatures to get to rehearsal. It was well worth it. Our time together included not only musical instruction but moments of bonding, laughter and pride, and I gained some new ‘aunties’. With patience, humor and gentle persistence, Mr. Cole, groomed a group of mostly novices into the wonderful chorale, which wowed the audience with “I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes” during last year’s Thanksgiving Service.

That inaugural performance remains embedded in our memories as a major accomplishment that will be difficult to beat. Each member of AWOGA Voices had a unique experience – for me, it was an opportunity to overcome my fear of a solo vocal performance. I was inspired to give it my all because the group had such confidence in me. What an honor!

I would be remiss if I failed to thank our alma mater for developing my love for music. The great philosopher, Plato, has been quoted as saying “music is a more potent instrument than any other for education”. This
was evident in my experience at the Annie Walsh. Structured music instruction was a required part of the curriculum and extracurricular activities included the school choir and the marching band. I have vivid memories of rehearsing with the school choir in the hall. At the time, I expressed myself musically by playing the French horn in the school band. My timid nature caused me to shy away from anything requiring the use of my voice, including singing.

Once, however, when the school choir was being conducted by my dad, I had no choice but to participate. Mr. Jones, as I addressed him at school, was very strict and thorough in his instruction as we rehearsed to perfect “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring” for that year’s thanksgiving service.

Two decades have passed since then and I am proud and truly honored to be a part of our alumnae choir. AWOGA Voices is in its second year.

Its membership has grown from the founding choir of 13 to now 16 members, including the following committed AWOGANS: Idowoo Boss-Cole, Moira Coleridge-Taylor, Clarina Dakin-Davies, Olabisi Daramy, Juliet Jenkins-Johnson, Marian Johnson, Hasanatu Kamara, Marion Koso-Thomas, Marcellina Leigh, Hilda Macauley, Daphne Marke, Melrose Paris, Lina Rashid, Waltina Spencer, Mimie Williams, and me.

As a choir, we aspire to be better and greater and appreciate your support. New members are always welcome - all you need is a willingness to learn and a passion for staying true to our motto: non sibi sed omnibus.

_**Yasmin Jones**_
_Alumna - AWOGA Washington_

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**LEYINDE ROSA BAANA HANNAH SUSAN PABS-GARNON SRN; SCM**

For close to five decades, Leyinde Rosa Baana Hannah Susan Pabs-Garnon (nee Thomas) SRN, SCM, was the Founder & Proprietress of Baana Nursery and Preparatory School, situated at 20 Campbell Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone. She was born in Freetown, on Sunday, February 28, 1926 to Rev. Benjamin Layard Thomas & Mrs. Mary Rosa Thomas, with an older sister, Mrs. Ayodele Joko Coker, and an older brother, Mr. Benjamin Layard Thomas [former Chief Fire Force Officer] eagerly expecting her arrival. Her entire nuclear family predeceased her.

She was always happy to let you know that she entered her beloved Annie Walsh Memorial School at 8 years old with her older sister Ayodele, [the school then had a primary section], and stayed till she completed 5th form in December 1944. She worked at the Princess Christian Maternity Hospital [PCMH] as a trainee nurse until her departure to the United Kingdom for professional training from 1947 – 1953; becoming a State Registered Nurse-SRN- in 1951; a State Certified Midwife-SCM- in 1952, and completing her training as a Theatre Nurse in 1953. On her return home, she worked for several years in the health system as a nursing sister at the Out-Patient Department of Connaught Hospital Freetown, and later for The Planned Parenthood Association, as a nurse supervising and monitoring patient visits to the clinic at Pultney Street, Freetown.

On December 1, 1967, she started Baana Nursery in the living room of her home at 20 Campbell Street in Freetown with 4 children. This child care center has grown to accommodate a pre-school and primary section and can boast of 100% success rate every year at the National Public School Exams [NPSE] for entrance into secondary school!

Leyinde’s passion has always been about women and children. She believed that women, as mothers, need not forgo the benefits of an active career outside the home. She however recognized that a support system that provided a caring and nurturing environment for
children was necessary for mothers to focus on their professional lives, assured that their children’s best interests were being met while they were at work. She believed an independent woman made a better wife and mother. She will be remembered by the many children who started their education at Baana Nursery School, and the many parents, mothers especially, to whom her services and advice were warmly received.

She was active in many social welfare, religious, and cultural organizations like the Sierra Leone Children’s Home that provided housing for orphaned children, the Mothers’ Union, the Annie Walsh Old Girls Association (AWOGA) and the Krio Descendants Union (KDU). In 2012 she was named Mother of the Year at the 4th Annual Sweet Mother Dinner & Awards Cruise; in 2013, the Mothers’ Union in the USA honored her for her longevity of membership and dedicated service to the organization; in 2014 she was presented with the National Entrepreneurial Award by the National Organization of Sierra Leoneans in North America [NOSLINA].

An active puzzler, she enjoyed no better gift than a book of word puzzles to keep herself mentally active. Even as her eyes failed she could be found working on one or more puzzles with what little light was available and any visual aid she could lay her hands on. She tried to keep physically active by dancing at any opportunity she had. AWOGA’s annual dinner and dance was a treat for her, as she would dance as much as her legs could carry her and say “make ar dance yah. Sontem dis go be me las dance.”

Leyinde Pabs-Garnon had an extensive work history in the field of health and early childhood education. Her areas of expertise included the healthy well-being and developmental learning of young children ranging in age from birth to 5 years of age, and on-the-job training of early-childhood educators. In anticipation of Baana’s 50th Golden Anniversary on December 1, 2017, extensive renovations to the original structure are underway, and 10 schools all over the country have been identified to start “Mama En Pikin” libraries for children 0-5 years old.

She peacefully passed away on Wednesday, December 14, 2016 leaving behind her children to carry on her legacy. To this end, they have decided to re-name the libraries “Leyinde’s Mama En Pikin Library.” Plans are underway to launch a Baana Alumni Association as well as having a 3-day Golden Anniversary Celebration in Freetown: Friday December 1, 2017 – Annual Founder’s Day, Awujoh & Birthday Party; Saturday December 2, 2017 – Children’s Play Day with 50 Activities; Sunday December 3, 2017 - 50th Annual Thanksgiving Service. Please join us during these activities if you can, to celebrate Leyinde’s lifetime achievements and keep her legacy going!!!

For further information please send a message of inquiry to verapg@comcast.net

Thank you.

Audrey Pabs-Garnon
Vice-President - AWOGA Washington

Social Secretary’s Report

Greetings to all our ardent well-wishers, supporters, alumnae and members of AWOGA Washington Metropolitan Area. I would like to congratulate our alma mater for celebrating one hundred and sixty eight years of existence, and AWOGA Washington Metropolitan Area for celebrating thirty-one years of upholding the Annie Walsh dream.

The year 2016 was an important year for our association, as we celebrated 30 years of existence. The kick off for the celebration was in 2015, with the theme “Prelude, Diamonds and Pearls.” Thus, the theme for the 2016 celebration was “Diamonds and Pearls” and that for the Thanksgiving Service, “God’s Faithfulness, Yesterday, Today and Forever.” The preacher was our chaplain, Rev. Canon Dr. William B. Lewis.

The year 2016 was an important year for our association, as we celebrated 30 years of existence. The kick off for the celebration was in 2015, with the theme “Prelude, Diamonds and Pearls.” Thus, the theme for the 2016 celebration was “Diamonds and Pearls” and that for the Thanksgiving Service, “God’s Faithfulness, Yesterday, Today and Forever.” The preacher was our chaplain, Rev. Canon Dr. William B. Lewis.

To commemorate the milestone, all past presidents joined the executive in planning the celebration. Mrs. Sylvia Porter chaired the Annual Thanksgiving Service; Mrs. Mimie Williams chaired the Brunch, which launched the AWOGA Washington Fund for
the Privatization of the AWMS; and Mrs. Rita Johnson chaired our Annual Fundraising Dinner and Dance. We also had a Picnic/Family Fun Day, organized by our vice president, Ms. Audrey Pabs-Garnon and Ms. Marcelina Leigh.

Each of these events was a great success. Each was a memorable occasion, as we reminisced and displayed our support morally and financially for our school, the students, and our association’s goals. I just hope and pray that the energy displayed at these events would continue, and those who pledged would send in their contributions, and continue to support the association and our alma-mater.

We look forward to seeing more AWOGANs participate in our annual Thanksgiving Service and fundraising dinner and dance this year. Our theme for this Thanksgiving Service is “Pressing Towards Our Goal”, Philippians 3:14... We pray and beseech the Lord to be with us as we pursue our goals in accomplishing the reconstruction and privatization of our school. Your financial contribution is greatly appreciated.

My sincere thanks go to all the association members who entrusted me with the position of social secretary. For me, it was not a stressful task, since everyone chipped in to make each event a success. I really appreciated your cooperation, support, and help. My special thanks go to our president Mrs. Mimie Williams. She was always ready to help. Her favorite words are, “Okay, don’t worry, I’ll do it”. I’d like to also thank our two former experienced social secretaries Mrs. Rita Johnson and Mrs. Sylvia Porter, Mrs. Daphne Marke our current secretary, and last but not least, Mrs. Ada Rahim, my assistant. I believe in teamwork and the delegation of duties. I always remember that, “The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side.” (Margaret Carty)

I would also like to congratulate our new executive. As we pass the baton to you, I hope and pray that God will be with you all during the tenure of your service. At times, it may seem overwhelming and stressful, but never forget, “teamwork.” Through teamwork everything is possible. Always choose “teamwork over personal ambition.

I could not conclude without making mention of our dearest, Mrs. Leyinde Pabs-Garnon, who was called home on December 14, 2016. Leyinde, Mama Pabs-Garnon, Age Group, AWOGA granny as some of us fondly and lovingly called her, was one of the scaffolds in the association. For many years, she served diligently as the association’s Membership Relations Officer. She was one of the members who sold the greatest number of dance tickets, and gave out the most thanksgiving service envelopes. She was a mother, friend, confidant, and mentor to all of us. She is really missed. May her soul rest in perfect peace.

Thanks, and may the good Lord continue to bless us all.

Mabel A. Macaulay
Social Secretary - AWOGA Washington
HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?

The Travelling AWOGA Tote Bag

Do you remember those geography classes, when you had to imagine what a glacier was or what the Great Barrier Reef was all about? They were so remote and you never once thought you would ever see those sites. Well, the AWOGA Tote Bag has been travelling and it would be fun to see how far it goes. When next you travel take your bag along and send us some photos. Here are some for starters!

Virginia Beach, USA

Glaciers in Alaska

4,365 miles

10,897 miles

10,415 miles

10,918 miles

Sydney Harbour / Opera House AND Great Barrier Reef, Cairns. Australia
## In Memoriam - March 2017

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<td>Ms. Maude Susan Hancilles</td>
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<td>AWMS TEACHER</td>
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<td>Ms. Jeanne John</td>
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Annual Dinner & Dance
October 7, 2017
8:00 pm – 2:00 am

La Fontaine Bleue
7963 Annapolis Rd
Lanham, MD 20706
MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2017 - 2019

President                     Marion Koso-Thomas
Vice-President                Audrey Pabs-Garnon
Secretary                    Daphne Marke
Assistant Secretary          Ebun Taylor
Social Secretary              Monica Boyle Robinson
Asst, Social Secretary (1)   Ada Rahim
Asst. Social Secretary (2)   Oreh Robinson
Treasurer                    Jacqueline Jones-Dove
Asst, Treasurer               Marcellina Leigh
Auditor                      Boi Betty Udom
Public Relations Officer      Marion Richards
Asst. Public Relations Officer Jeredine Williams
Member Relations Officer (1)  Waltina Spencer
Member Relations Officer (2)  Emerica Williams
Ex-Officio                   Sylvia Porter
                               Hilda Macauley
                               Rita Johnson
                               Mimie Williams
Donation/Pledge Form

AWOGA Washington

The Fund for Privatization of The AWMS

Purpose of the Fund is to generate financial resources to support the school’s privatization initiative, as it seeks to restore quality education and standards of excellence for which the school had been renowned.

AWOGA Washington is a Section 501(c)3 nonprofit and your contribution to the “Fund” may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes.

Donor Information (please print or type)

Name
Billing address
City, ST, Zip Code
Phone 1 / Phone 2
Fax / Email

Pledge Information
I (we) pledge a total of $________________ to be paid: ☐ now ☐ monthly ☐ quarterly ☐ yearly.

I (we) plan to make this contribution in the form of: ☐ cash ☐ check ☐ credit card ☐ other.

Via PayPal on AWOGA WASHINGTON’S website anniewalsh.org

Credit Card
Gift will be matched by (company/family/foundation) __

☐ form enclosed ☐ form will be forwarded

Acknowledgement Information
Please use the following name(s) in all acknowledgements: __________

☐ I (we) wish to have our gift remain anonymous.

Signature(s) Date

Please make checks, corporate matches, or other gifts payable to:

AWOGA Washington
P O BOX 1864
SILVER SPRING, MD 20902
30th Anniversary Celebrations - 2016

Thanksgiving Service March 13th
Brunch and Awards Ceremony July 31st
Diamonds & Pearls Anniversary Dinner and Dance

October 8th
Membership and Annual Dues

All Ex-Pupils are eligible and invited to become members of the AWMS Old Girls Association (AWOGA). The primary objective of this association is to provide financial support and assistance in promoting the academic, social and cultural goals of The Annie Walsh Memorial School.

Meetings are currently held at:

Riderwood Village Square
Clubhouse Building
3140 Gracefield Road,

Silver Spring MD 20904

on the first Saturday of the month, January through April, and August through December starting at 5:00 p.m. (prompt).

**Online registration and subscription available at [http://anniewalsh.org/Membership.html](http://anniewalsh.org/Membership.html)**

**Membership Dues:** $60.00 per year.

**Seniors 70 and over $30.00 per year.**

Payment may also be made by check and mailed to:

Jacqueline Jones-Dove
AWOGA Treasurer
P O Box 1864
Silver Spring, MD 20902