

Beyond Borders *Documenting the translation of learning into action*

Explore, Engage, Empower.



Jeremy getting to know an S.O.S village child

Issue highlights

- The West Africa Initiative
- Plans and projects for the continuation of the initiative
- Second semester C.A.R.E.
- Looking ahead at Lunenburg

West Africa Initiative

This December the Class Afloat students chose to spend the holiday season away from home in order to share their enthusiasm and skills with others. They questioned, discussed, read and participated in awareness sessions focused on the issues and skills they would need for the health and sanitation workshops in Dakar, Senegal. Some of these sessions included learning about international development practices, sanitation and hygiene, and the culture and practices of the Senegalese people. Upon arrival in Senegal the youth joined forces with the university students involved with the SYTO (Student and Youth Travel Organization) program in order to prepare for the on-site activities that

took place at Ouakam Health Centre, Colobane Health Centre, and the S.O.S. Children's Village. During their visits to these sites Senegalese and Class Afloat students discussed health and hygiene issues in village homes or led instructional games on hand washing and germs with children. Success took shape in the form of incredible effort and dedication on the part of the Class Afloat Students, impressive sharing of knowledge and information between all involved, extraordinary friendships with the local university students and the adoption of significant hygiene practices. It was agreed by all that it is only the beginning of what is sure to be a bright future for the students, the project and the community.

“When we are dreaming alone, it is only a dream. When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality.”

Don Helder Camara

A Bright Future on the Horizon

On the last day of program for the West Africa Initiative the group of Class Afloat and SYTO Senegal students spent the morning working on evaluating the program successes and challenges. These youth came up with ideas and suggestions for future activities for the West Island College Foundation. In small group discussions similar ideas and thoughts began to emerge. The three most important aspect of the program for all participants was the learning and growth that took place, the partnerships and friendships developed between the Class Afloat students and the SYTO students and the need to continue with the project through raising awareness and continuing to help the Senegalese that we met during our stay.

The future directions brainstormed by the youth include:

- *Development of a Website that highlights the journalism, climate change, micro-finance and health projects that we participated in and learned about.*
- *Development of a web based forum that connects youth from all over the world and allows them to focus on pertinent social justice and sustainability issues.*
- *Supporting Senegalese youth driven projects for next year's West Africa initiative and raising funds that will allow these groups to continue their work.*
- *Sharing what we have learned with others.*

Sanitation in action



Hand washing at the S.O.S Children's Village

2008 Year of Sanitation

2008 has been named the UN year of sanitation as a result of the awareness that without proper sanitation and hygiene, other development goals become exceedingly difficult to attain. An estimated 2.6 billion people world wide remain without proper sanitation and thereby lack protection against preventable diseases, which claim the lives of thousands daily, primarily children under the age of five.

Rates of hand washing with soap in the developing world are very low, and in Senegal range from between 25%-35%. If practiced widely, the simple habit of washing hands with soap could save millions of lives each year.

In order to promote the cause of sanitation and hygiene, interventions in the form of games and activities for youth at the S.O.S Village and health home visits with health kit distribution were chosen as the methods of action for the West African Initiative.

- Lack of proper sanitation is killing approximately 6000 children a day.

- Washing hands at critical times can reduce the number of childhood death by up to 35%.

- 1/2 of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from preventable diseases.

- In developing countries, about 80% of illnesses are linked to poor water and sanitation conditions

S.O.S. Children's Village

SOS Children's Village Dakar was built in the suburbs of the capital of Senegal and is about ten kilometers from the centre of town. There are 15 family houses, which can accommodate up to 150 children. The goal of the S.O.S village is to provide loving families and life skills support for neglected, abandoned children and orphans.

In preparation for the Senegal project, Class Afloat students learned about the affects poor sanitation and hygiene play in the health of children. As a result the S.O.S team decided to play instructional games with the children that concentrated on hand washing, sanitation and hygiene.

Highlights included Danny's face washing seminar, Matt's charged big group game, and Lucas's tooth brushing demonstration.

District Health Centres

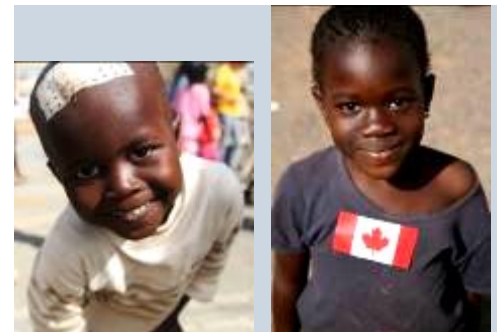
In Senegal access to health care and medical assistance is both limited by the number of health professionals and the financial barriers of the health system. The annual Per Capita Income in Senegal is 483\$ and as result, the cost of basic consultation and prescription medication often fall outside of the families' financial means.

While in Dakar, students had the opportunity to visit the Ouakam and Coloban health centres. Student's witnessed youth vaccination days, newborn babies and toured the health centre micro-garden. The planned workshops took place not in the health centre itself but in the surrounding village where students questioned families about their hygiene practices, discussed ways to prevent disease and distributed health kits. Connecting with people and getting to know the Senegalese in their own homes was a valuable learning experience.

SYTO Senegal

SYTO Senegal's objective is to promote educational, cultural and social partnerships among young people. This organization coordinates educational work and exchange as well as cultural immersion programs and, through hard work and effective partnerships hopes to increase tolerance, international understanding and peace.

The partnership with this group was one of the highlights for most of the Class Afloat students. We not only learned a great deal about Senegalese culture and people but were also inspired by the commitment and determination of these youth. They shared with us their dreams for a more sustainable and just world as well as the explained projects and work that these youth have been doing to ensure that these dreams become a reality. We learned of their work in the field of climate change, journalism for human rights, micro-financing, and poverty reduction. We look forward to continued partnerships with the SYTO students and plan to assist these youth in their work in the future.



Children living at the S.O.S Children's Village



Geoff and Emma F. preparing for a home health visit in Ouakam



Curtis and his friends from SYTO Senegal after a morning of home health visits in Colobane



Hannah, Erin and Brittany with the S.O.S village children.



If you are interested in this project and would like more information, please feel free to contact Project Coordinator Andrea Cleland at West Island College International, Class Afloat.

**She may be reached at
(902) 634-1895
1-800-301-SAIL**

Or via email at:

acleland@classaflaot.com



Evening stars

Although the 2007 West Africa Initiative focused on the implementation of the community health initiatives, it was the cultural experiences and the evening events that got the students moving. One of the first evenings we hosted an open house on the ship which was attended by the Canadian Ambassador Mr. J. P. Bolduc and his guests as well as the representatives from SYTO Senegal and the SYTO students involved in the program. A few nights later the crew was invited to a Sabar Wolof Drumming

session. Despite their initial shyness towards this explosive rhythmical dancing and drumming the Class Afloat crew gave it their all and danced the night away. On one of the last evenings in Dakar the crew invited the SYTO Senegal students and their leaders back to the ship to participate in evening seminars led by OSIWA a Senegalese NGO. We not only discussed the importance of youth in development and the challenges of the development process but also danced, sang, laughed and drummed with our new friends. They truly were nights to remember.

C.A.R.E underway

It was the Grade 12 and University/GAP students who took the reins on the implementation of the West Africa Initiative; the Grade 11 Students are no stranger to project planning. This semester the sociology class has been working on a project they have named C.A.R.E.

The project title stands for **C**lass **A**float **R**ipple **E**ffect and represents the belief that Class Afloat students are affected by the individuals they encounter likewise believe that they can have a lasting positive impact on those they meet.

The students have been working in teams on a variety of objectives including making contact with local people in ports of call, documenting the development of the project, securing

funding for the activities the group has planned and working on activities and games that the group will put into action upon arrival in ports of call

The students have planned to facilitate games and activities focused on environment and health with local youth in Buenos Aires, and young orphans in Walvis Bay.

The group also plans on meeting a high school in St. Helena where they will share culture and culturally representative foods with the home economics class and be the guests of a school assembly focused on the lessons and memories the students have acquired.

Stay tuned to hear about these activities and other projects that the group will work on while away at sea.

Looking forward to Lunenburg

Lunenburg will be sad to see its first class of grade 11's head off in just a few short weeks. In anticipation of their return, the older folks at both of the volunteering placements of Harbour view Haven and the Fisherman's hospital have already set the date for the ship's arrival in June. Despite the loss, the community is eagerly awaiting the arrival of its first class of Grade 12's. After some brainstorming sessions with the grade 12's while in Senegal, we have started to plan the extracurricular activities and clubs that will be part of the Class Afloat experience while on land. The list that follows are the clubs we are looking forward to start upon the arrival of second semester. Look out for updates in the Au Courant Newsletter.

Plans and activities in the works:

- Social Justice action club
- Track and field team
- Community garden
- *Cinema Politica* documentary film series
- Elementary school partnerships, including tutoring and chess club
- Small boat sailing course, small boat racing and navigation course
- Philosophy café and discussion club
- Photography club
- Winter wilderness activities, Winter retreat and Spring camping
- *Saturday session activities including cooking, dance, art, politics, history, community volunteering, music...*