

# *Beyond Borders* Documenting the translation of learning into action

*We believe in the power and promise of young people to create positive change.*



## *Issue highlights*

- Introducing the West Island College International Foundation
- 2007 West Africa Initiative update
- Partnerships and future plans

## **West Island College International**

For more than two decades Class Afloat has been a platform for leadership, international partnership and community development. The programme's incredible success hinges on its emphasis not only on individual academic success but also responsibility, personal development and community.

Class Afloat's genesis in 1984 marked a celebration of the United Nations "International Youth Year". The Youth Year themes of peace, participation and development, have been a driving force for the programme's vision since day one.

This year, Class Afloat's clear commitment to the themes of international youth year will be demonstrated by the inauguration of the West Africa Initiative, a service learning experience that will allow students to put their knowledge and ideas to practice in a global context. In Dakar, Senegal, Class Afloat students will develop and participate in a humanitarian project designed to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of a local African community and expand the awareness and responsiveness of the students involved.

***"Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."***

***Margaret Mead***

## **Senegal 2007 Community Development Project**

In December 2007 Concordia will arrive in Dakar in order to realize an urban health and sanitation initiative. Class Afloat students will be paired with local Senegalese first year university students, as well as health centre specialists in order to focus on the creation, implementation and evaluation of awareness workshops. The youth will partake in pre-project planning, cultural sensitivity training, workshop collaboration with their Senegalese partners and workshop execution in village communities in the Dakar region. The themes of these workshops will include basic hygiene, waste management and disease prevention.

The students will spend the week-long sail from Las Palmas to Dakar in preparation for the project, and will work on the

project evaluation, debrief and documentation for several days after the ship departs Dakar. All of these components will give the students the opportunity to identify, discuss and debate the mechanisms underlying the development process and will focus on International development as both an individual commitment and a collective action.

Should the participants successfully contribute to all aspects of the program, their work will be officially recognized by Class Afloat's partner, Cegep Marie Victorin. In acknowledgment of their contributions, students will receive a Certificate in Community Development.

## Class Afloat Partnerships



Class Afloat is thrilled to join long time partner school Cégep Marie-Victorin, and new partners, Ryan's Well Foundation and SYTO Senegal in pursuit of changes that will improve the quality of life for communities in the Dakar region.

Since 1990, the Cégep Marie-Victorin has collaborated with Class Afloat in order to provide junior college level courses for Class Afloat students. This year Marie-Victorin has been working on a CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) supported health initiative in Dakar Senegal. The college has recently opened a health training institute with the aim of improving the effectiveness of health care in Senegal. Class Afloat will partner with this project in order to build awareness and sensitivity towards issues of health and sanitation in village communities in the Dakar region.

While in Senegal, Class Afloat students will be paired with local Senegalese university students thanks to a new partnership with SYTO Senegal. This partnership will highlight one of Class Afloat's aspirations of building enduring intercultural partnerships among youth and will also maintain the projects emphasis on providing culturally appropriate support.

Although our focus is currently on the 2007 project, plans are already in the works for 2008. Class Afloat has also engaged in a partnership with the Ryan's Well Foundation. This organization's mission is to "inspire, motivate, and empower children and adults to share the vision of a world where everyone has clean water." With this in mind, we intend to assist the Ryan's Well Foundation with their water and sanitation initiatives taking place in Senegal. We anticipate that in 2008, Class Afloat will expand the West Africa initiative to one that includes rural community water projects, sanitation awareness initiatives and community development plans in smaller regional communities.

## Country Profile: Senegal

- Senegal is on the western-most part of Africa and includes desert in the north and a moist, tropical south.
- Slaves, ivory and gold were exported from the coast during the 17th and 18th centuries. The current economy is mainly agriculture based.
- Senegal became an independent Republic in 1960. It had previously been a colony of France.
- Senegal is a democratic Islamic nation. The republic is known for its population's profound sense of religious and political tolerance.

### FAST FACTS

**Language:** French (official), Wolof

**Major Religion:** Islam

**Life expectancy:** 54 years (men), 57 years (women)

**Monetary unit:** 1 CAD\$ = 451 CFA francs

**Population per physician=** 13,333 people

**Literacy Rate=** total 42.1% (female 32.6 %, male 51.7%)

**Number of years of compulsory schooling=** 6 years

**Number of students per teacher (primary) =** 49

**Number of telephones per 1000 people=** 23

**Number of internet hosts per 10,000 people=** 0.65

**Number of motor vehicles per 1000 people=** 14

(CIA) *World Factbook*





**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.**

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**Or via email at:  
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## Evening stars

Although the 2007 West Africa Initiative will focus on the implementation of the community health initiatives, the experience will also include activities that will allow students the opportunity to learn, in some depth, about local customs and culture. Participants will be involved in evening activities such as drumming and dance workshops, lectures by prominent local professors, and a round table discussion with local Senegalese youth on development issues led by a local development organization. We have also arranged for Wolof language lessons and help from local youth in learning negotiating strategies that will prove useful at the local artisans' market.

## A Family Affair

Although it is the grade 12, and GAP year students who will be implementing the in-country aspects of the West Africa Initiative, the Grade 11 students have become a driving force behind preparations for the project. These students have recently become actively involved in offering project support from their land based platform. They are learning the skills and attitudes upon which they will build the foundation necessary to be full participants in the project during their senior year or GAP year at Class Afloat.

In Sociology class, four teams came up with proposals for how the land-based group can assist in the initiative and can begin preparations for tailoring their own port visits in second semester. The winning team comprised of Karl Jensen, Gabrielle Whilms, Nadeem Khorshid and Clare Buchanan. Although all of the groups did a fantastic job of coming up with creative ways to be involved in the ports of call Concordia visits, this group will now become the project leaders for the

realization of the class's plans. Over the next few months the class will help organize the health kits to be distributed over the course of the West Africa Initiative as well as planning for activities for their semester at sea. The group has decided to focus on planning visits to local youth centres and schools located along the second semester route with the intention of spending a morning in several ports with local children. The students will organize games and activities that focus on sanitation and environmental management in the hopes of sharing cultural experiences and linking local issues to the global context.

You can keep an eye on the Grade 11's West Africa project work in the newsletter *Au Courant* and in upcoming issues of *Beyond Borders*.

***Do you want to get involved?***

***Stay tuned....we have a matching gift plan that will be launched later this year, more information in upcoming issues of Beyond Borders.***

# West Island College International Foundation

## Our Mission:

West Island College International is dedicated to improving quality of life, at home and abroad, one community at a time.

## Our Vision:

West Island College International promotes positive community transformation through collective participation of youth. The West Island College Foundation goal is to mobilize local and international youth in collaborative ventures and to enhance the capacity of communities to develop social, education, and health infrastructure.

Through sustainable initiatives focused on clean water, disease prevention, waste management, hygiene and human impact on the environment, our initiatives target the development of community leadership and the support of community defined development projects.

## Objectives for our students:

- To foster engaged citizenship, personal responsibility and increased awareness of global issues.
- To assist in the strengthening of sustainable community initiatives at home and abroad.
- To promote personal responsibility, integrity and leadership.
- To encourage and empower youth to better their communities through informed and compassionate action.
- To prepare and deliver workshops focused on clean water, disease prevention, waste management, hygiene and human impact on the environment host communities.