

The Senegal Experience

*Books, School Supplies, and Medical Supplies to Africa.
Health and Vision for Saint-Louis, Senegal, West Africa*

In February of 1999, a group of educators and concerned citizens from St. Louis, Missouri, Detroit, Michigan, North Carolina, Saint Louis Public School, the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Saint Louis Center for International Relations, and The Senegal Sister Cities Committee made a trip to our Sister City Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa. They were lead by Dr. John Wright, who is a Board Member on the Center for International Relation, Yvonne Days, Art Education Facilitator, Renee Franklin, Community OutReach Coordinator for the St. Louis Art Museum and CAT Fellows, and Clayvon Ambrose Wesley, who is a local artist, CAT Fellows, and curator of Art Happens. The focus of this trip was to exchange artwork completed by students from the St. Louis Public Schools, other schools in metropolitan area, and students of Ahmett Falls School from Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa. Since then over eighteen artists from the metropolitan area have contributed over twenty-seven works of art to the National Museum of Records and Documents in Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa. Notable artists included Robert Ketchens, Adelia Parker, Mike Marshall, Edna Patterson, Ambrose Wesley and the late Sandra Nickeson.

On our visit to Saint Louis University in Saint – Louis, Senegal, the group had the opportunity to visit their library, found a beautiful library, but no books. As a result of their findings, upon returning to St. Louis, Missouri, the group began to research possible organizations that would assist in the collection and shipping of educational books to the museum and the University in Saint – Louis, Senegal. In December 2006, 11,000 plus books were shipped to Saint – Louis, Senegal. Those contributing to the shipping of books to Senegal have been Mike Marshall of University of Hawaii, John Rozell, who works at the Chicago Art Institute, Floyd C. Wesley, Eta Mu Sigma Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri and members of Archway Chapter Phylaxis Society, Saint Louis, Missouri. Also participating in this project are some African-American males, who belong to a group called Goal Oriented African-American Male Excel (GAME) on the campus of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville (SIUE). They collected, stored and insured the books were ready for transportation to Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa. These books were donated by

Student Services on the campus of SIUE. Monique Armstrong, Export Manager/Coordinator with Panther International Inc., the container company for this project, provided a high level of support during the years the books were being prepared for shipment.

The Archway Chapter Phylaxis Society continued their commitment to the well being of children, their parents, and family members in Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa through the World Trade Center and its Africa Sister City Committee. An additional need was identified on a recent trip to Saint Louis, Missouri by Abdoukarim Gueye is Abdou Karim Gueye, Professeur d'Anglais, Lycee Ameth Fall School. He told the committee one of their needs were eye glasses, both reading and regular for adults and children, because people in his country cannot afford to purchase eye glasses due to their high expense. The Archway Chapter agreed to **“Walk by Faith”** in securing not only eye glasses, but diabetic equipment for the people of Saint – Louis, Senegal, our Sister City.

As of November 1, 2007, over four hundred pairs of eye glasses have been shipped to Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa. Karim reported children, their family members, and teachers have received these eye glasses. He further stated this effort has made it possible for teachers, who had difficulty seeing, do a better job in the teaching of their students. He stated that now some of the students who have received these eye glasses have gone on to high school and college.

Karim said the information received about the control of diabetes has been a huge success in his country. He has tested over twenty to thirty people including everyone in his family and they have tested negative for diabetes. He stated he is now able to keep track of his own diabetes through regular testing three times a week. Furthermore, the literature that was obtained from Walgreens Lake St. Louis Pharmacy Department on Nutrition and control of diabetics is being translated into French for everyone and given to doctors there as part of their medical services. Karim said, “When I spoke with my doctor he always complains that people know very little about diabetes in our country. Most people are diagnosed with the diseases during Ramadan when they fast. For many more it is often too late when they find out

they have Type II diabetes. The information and equipment we sent will be put to very good use.” He further stated he has so many people coming to his home; he had to convert his home into a “Little Clinic.”

There are many sponsors and supporters for this program. Most notable for commitment to this program were the following: John Francisco, Vision Center Manager at the Wal-Mart Vision Center, who contributed eye glasses, reading glasses, and eye glass repair kits; Dr. Pastor Alfred D. Harvey Jr., Pastor of Saint Louis Christian Center, Saint Louis, Missouri for their contribution of over thirty-six pairs of eye glasses; Pamela Jackson, Coordinator of Memory Loss at Washington University School of Medicine, who contributed eye glasses and stethoscopes; Sabrena Hamilton, Vice President Global Human Resources Novus International, Inc. and their employees; Walgreen Lake Saint Louis for their resources on Diabetics; The Saint Louis City Fire Department provided additional eye glasses for this project; The Archway Chapter Phylaxis Society of Saint Louis, Missouri, the Phyliss Chapter of Saint Louis, Missouri, Harmony Grand Chapter of Order of the Eastern Star PHA, Halbert Sullivan CEO and his staff at Fathers Support Center in Saint Louis, Missouri; Margie D. Oliver, Owner of MDO Services "Photography", member of Hopewell MB Church who contributed eyeglasses and reading glasses; and the National Phylaxis Society for providing capacity and resources for logistic support. And, lastly, the Senegal Sister City Committee, who is the umbrella agency for the entire project, Co-chaired by Renee Franklin and Clayvon A. Wesley under the leadership of Dr. John Wright.

The plans of the Saint Louis Sister City Committee is to return to Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa with additional eye glasses, medical supplies, art work and **Good Will** for those families who live in Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa. Our hope is to be **“Good Ambassadors”** and a blessing through our service to our neighbors bringing joy to the children and families of Saint – Louis, Senegal, West Africa. If you would like to contribute to this project, please contact Ron Wilson at 1-314-868-0178 and/or pmwlsn@swbell.net