

Le

Saint-Louisien

Projects Abroad Senegal Newsletter



Letter from the Editor

Hi Everyone!

October has seen quite a few departures—most of the volunteers who spent the summer here with us have returned home, as has our Desk Officer, Emma Sharpe, who worked in our office here in Saint Louis for 10 months. Their presence is definitely missed! With Emma's departure, our office now has a new Desk Officer, Joke van Eylen from Belgium. Look for her introduction in the following pages!

The two summer projects that we were running, both a summer care center and English classes, came to an end on September 30, so you can read about their successes in this issue as well. The volunteer lounge in our office has had a bit of a facelift, with the addition of a calendar and a bulletin board which lists upcoming events in the city, information about excursions, and a map of Saint Louis.

A huge thanks to everyone who contributed to the newsletter this month! Special thanks go to:

- Cliff Lewis, a past volunteer, for sharing an article about his experience with us
- Emma Sharpe for her 10 months of hard and dedicated work as Desk Officer
- Joke van Eylen for her letter
- Junius Williams for his photo of the month submission!



I'd like to invite you to find our Official Facebook Group by searching *Projects Abroad Senegal – The Official Group*. Also if you would like, add me as a friend so we can be in touch before, during and after your trip to Senegal! My Facebook name is Erica Projects-Abroad. Or if you are a Twitter fan, you can also follow the latest news here; our name is *Proj_AbroadSN*.

Best wishes from Senegal!

Erica Frerking
Social Manager



Volunteer Story

Sensational Senegal

Cliff Lewis, Past Volunteer

I have a very productive and successful life but yet there seemed to be something lacking inside, some void. Projects Abroad appeared to offer a solution so I took a two week placement at St. Louis, Senegal, and had one of the most deeply personal experiences of my life; this led to another placement in Togo, a small West African country not far from Senegal. These placements have a profound affect upon our lives. As we become part of a local family, as we do volunteer work in their community, schools and orphanages, as we work to improve their quality of life, we find that it is we who have learned from them, that we have become the pupil and they the teacher, that it is we, not they, who have benefited the most. We go to give and leave enriched. We learn that there is actually only one world nation. The needs, wants and aspirations of everyone in the world are always the same, not changing according to skin color, geography or religion. We are the same everywhere, we and our brothers. This is the first and most important lesson that a volunteer learns from a Projects Abroad placement.

In St. Louis I lived with a black West African French speaking Muslim family that totally welcomed me into their family. I had never before felt such an excitement as I became more and more immersed into this vibrant culture. My two weeks there were an unbroken steady bombardment of the senses that was at times near overwhelming but always intense and wonderful and very personal. So many memories: the pain of such devastating poverty; the endless street children too young to have any understanding of the hopeless future that awaited; the hundreds of colorful fishing boats pulled up on the beach, nets bursting with fish; the steady pounding of the waves on a marvelously pure white beach that disappeared off into the far distance as strong Atlantic winds buffeted the crying sea birds above; the black clarity of the equatorial night sky set ablaze by the shimmering Milky Way; the bright tropical colors of the flowering robes and turbans worn by the trim black Senegalese women, their beautiful black skin made all the more striking as it contrasted against their robes; the mosques everywhere with their calls to worship chanted loudly above the noisy clatter of everyday life, these calls to Allah that I found so comforting as it turned my attention to my own faith; the crumbling of once grand French villas that recall those past times of French glory and harsh subjugation but that today have only a faded elegance that speaks sadly of a faltering economy; the wild goats everywhere, roaming around eating garbage, like unpaid street



cleaners, keeping the city of St. Louis as tidy as can be expected.

What indelible impressions! But today, what do I remember most, when alone and quiet. Now, four years later, I feel these emotions as intensely as if it were yesterday. I don't think about the dirt and decline but instead I remember the beauty of the people, their smiles and their welcome, as they worked so hard in their struggle of daily life. I remember beautiful bougainvilleas everywhere, a wonderful sprawling plant that seemed to be trying so hard to gloss over the dirt and pain. I remember these deeply religious people so proud and dignified as they faced their adversities. But, my most intense experience came one Sunday morning when, instead of the usual Muslim chants filling the air, I heard church bells. I followed these to find a wonderful old stone church built by the French 150 years prior. It was beautiful inside, with every corner colorfully tinted by a bright African sun streaming in through striking blue stained glass windows, giving a soft glow that fell upon crosses and elaborate woodwork and huge vases of tropical flowers. The service was conducted in the beautiful French language and the music was a chorus of striking soprano voices that contrasted wonderfully against the deep rich sounds of African drums. A congregation of a hundred Christians sang the hymns that I knew by heart. All this was so unexpected and seemed so out of place as to make it all the more beautiful, all the more moving, all the more my life's most unforgettable experience.

Project Update

Summer Care & Summer School Closings

During the summer vacation, Projects Abroad opened a free summer kindergarten where our volunteers worked during the mornings with the children who came. They did arts and crafts projects, sang songs, played music, took trips to the beach, and many other activities. Friday, September 30, was the last day of the kindergarten, and so to celebrate, we threw a little party.





The children, volunteers and "TaTa's" who work there decorated the room to give the party a festive atmosphere! The volunteers and the TaTa's also prepared gifts for the children which would be distributed later in the day. After hanging out with the kids for a bit while everyone arrived the festivities began; dancing, drumming and snacks! It was a wonderful morning, and a

fun end to a great summer!

Upstairs from the summer kindergarten, volunteers were hard at work giving English classes to students and eager adults. In the afternoon of Friday, September 30, the 105 out of 200 best young students and the 65 out of 80 best adults were recognized for their hard work during these summer classes and presented with certificates and presents.

To start off, a few students recited poems in English and then our Country Director, Moctar Ba, made a short speech in which he thanked the students for their hard work and dedication, and the volunteer teachers as well, for without their help and time the summer school would not have been possible.

Next our volunteer teachers were presented with gifts to thank them for their work. They also received a loud and warm appreciative applause from the audience. Then, the recognition began, and each class was called up to be awarded their certificates and be given notebooks, pens, pencils, and other school supplies.

I was then asked to come up and present awards to the oldest students, which was a surprise to me!! It was a bit of a challenge pronouncing some of the names, but these students who were preparing for their last year before taking the BAC readily came up to accept. After the young students were finished receiving their awards, the MC Malick brought up a





talented English student who also had a gift for art, to show off her work.

Next, the adults were called up to receive awards, class by class. One of our volunteer teachers, Laura was then called upon to present awards. Next it was Mr. Sall, the director of the summer school, who handed out awards. The adult classes continued to

be called up one by one. The next presenter was another volunteer teacher, Ryan who gave out awards to an adult class.

Now that all of the students had received their certificates, a final group of 5 were called up to receive special recognition for their hard work. Each were given an English/French dictionary.

The ceremony was now concluded and the audience enjoyed refreshments before returning home, awards and recognition in tow!

Office Update

Our office has received a little update, with a calendar of monthly events and a bulletin board with things going on in the city, a map of Saint Louis and of Senegal, and details about the various excursions we do. Check out the photos!



Staff Update

New Desk Officer

After 10 months, our Desk Officer, Emma Sharpe's, contract is up and she's left our staff in Senegal to join the team in Costa Rica. Emma's job is an important one, as she is the first point of contact for all of the arriving volunteers, answering questions which help prepare for their upcoming trip. Once in Senegal too, Emma was always there to answer questions and help when there was a problem. We'll miss her terribly! Our Assistant Director Fina accompanied Emma to the airport on Friday, and along the way they met Bala Gaye 2, famous



Senegalese wrestler! Only Emma could go out with such a bang!

With Emma leaving, the position of Desk Officer has been filled by Joke van Eylen:

Hi everybody !!

My name is Joke Van Eylen, I am the new Desk Officer for Projects Abroad in Saint-Louis, Senegal. I studied Clinical Psychology in Belgium and Spain, until I got my master's degree last June. Since then I have been in Senegal this – hot, hot - summer for about three months, before starting to work for Projects Abroad. During that time I did some volunteering, working in a garden in Sor as well as giving first aid to Talibé children. I love the food here in Senegal, the live concerts (Mama Sadio), going to the beach and swimming, going down the river and kayaking, just hanging out and drinking tea, etc.... I hope you are / will be enjoying Senegal as much as I do!

I will be sharing my enthusiasm while helping you getting prepared for your trip, since I will be your main point of contact regarding any questions and will assist you in any way that I can with any hints, tips or advice, so please don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting all of you, and I hope you will have an amazing experience while here!!

See you soon!!



Recipe of the Month

Thiou Viande

Ingredients:

- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1 tbs. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 tsp. thyme
- 1/4 tsp. coriander
- 1/4 cup oil
- 2 lbs. beef, ½ inch cubes
- 1 cup tomato paste
- 3 cups water
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 lb. white potatoes, 2-inch cubes
- 1/2 lb. white turnips, 2-inch cubes
- 1/2 lb. sweet potatoes, 2-inch cubes
- 8 cabbage wedges
- 1/2 lb. carrot, chopped
- 1 lb. cooked rice



Instructions:

- Sauté onions in oil with salt, pepper, thyme and coriander until onions are soft.
- Add cubed beef, sauté for 5 minutes.



- Add tomato paste, water and vinegar. Simmer until beef is tender (about 1 hr).
- Add vegetables and simmer until cooked through (about 20 mins).
- Serve stew over rice.
Enjoy!



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Projects Abroad Senegal – The Official Group

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/projectsabroad.senegal>



Projects Abroad Blog – Senegal

http://www.mytripblog.org/mod/blog/group_blogs.php?gl=true&group_guid=2985



Read our monthly newsletter

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/senegal/newsletters-from-senegal/>



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Picture of the Month



This photo was taken of Junius Williams while he was here doing renovation work during the summer.

Want to contribute in our newsletter?

Each month we will be featuring a photo from Senegal in the newsletter, elected by our Senegal Office Staff. If you are a former volunteer your photos are also welcome. Show off your best shots!!

Send your pictures to:
ericافرerking@projects-abroad.org

