

2010 Kaolack Regional Girls Leadership Camp

Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) from the Kaolack region of Senegal partnered with UDEN to organize a week long girls' leadership camp at a lodge outside of Sokone. The camp brought together 27 girls at the 5^{ème} level in school (who are approximately 15 years old) for a weeklong camp at the end of June. The girls were from towns across the regions of Kaffrine, Kaolack, and Fatick. The goal of the camp were to instill self confidence in the girls and provide them with an opportunity to gain knowledge, learn new skills, and be exposed to new ideas to help them become leaders in their communities. Each day of the camp had a theme, which the daily activities, consisting of a morning information session, arts and crafts, sports and swimming, group discussion time, and fund evening activities, were centered around. The daily themes were identity, health and fitness, environmental awareness, gender, and communications. Throughout the week the girls worked in groups to create skits to help them internalize what they had learned and at the end of the camp each group performed its skit for the rest of the camp.



The five girls from the Sokone area who attended the camp were selected from the "Sisters to School" program. Awa Thiam, Ndèye Fatou Diame, Madeleine Sene, Sadio Gueye, and Fatou Ndiaye were invited due to their academic performance, leadership potential, and motivation. All of the girls exceeded all expectations. Throughout the week they were motivated and participative and asked excellent questions. They were often pushed outside of their comfort zone but they met every challenge and learned a lot.

Awa Thiam helps make mosquito repellent

Although the majority of the camp was organized and run by PCVs, three teachers from the Passy and Sokone schools who are members of UDEN served as counselors and group leaders. They were responsible for leading the group discussions to help the girls reflect on what they had learned for the day as well as working with the girls to develop the skits. Although they were there as mentors for the girls, they were motivated individuals who used the camp as an opportunity to learn new teaching methods and took away ideas to use in their classrooms in the upcoming school year.

Adji Senghor, the local director of the program, also took part in the camp and spoke to the girls about her work and how she has succeeded. She encouraged them to set goals for themselves and aim high. All of the girls were very receptive to what she had to say and encouraged by her story.

Due to the success of the camp, Peace Corps Senegal plans to hold and hopefully expand the camp next summer as well. The girls greatly enjoyed themselves and learned a lot. The teachers who were involved already expressed interest in participating next year and taking an even bigger role in planning and running the camp. Hopefully with their support, this will become an annual camp that will inspire numerous girls to strive to reach their full potential.



From top left: Taking a boat to the Ile de Coquillages; session on the nutritional value of moringa; water balloon toss team building game; end of camp skit; Adji's presentation; learning to swing dance.