

Trek to Senegal

When does poverty cross the line?

"Is it when you are forced to a single meal every two days, and to eat dirt?" asks Shonta Collins, RN, BSN, MPA, founder and president of Explorers Sans Frontières (ESF), a nonprofit that supports college students in the Philadelphia area in developing independent research initiatives, humanitarian efforts abroad, and participating in cultural exchanges with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

A grassroots organization, ESF accepts applications from college students of all majors and disciplines, supporting students with interests in international and global initiatives who are willing to travel abroad, have strong leadership potential, and who are underrepresented economically, socially, religiously and/or ethnically.

East Fallers Christina Spino and Lara Lechtenberg are members of this organization that seeks to support both local and global communities. Christina, a senior at LaSalle University, and Lara, a recent graduate of George Washington University, will be traveling with Shonta and other ESF Student Leaders Chiara de Leon and Tri Huynh to Senegal for two weeks.

ESF is part of the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition and focuses on local and global community development. Members part in a number of local initiatives throughout Philadelphia, such as hosting health fairs at local community churches, screening for hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease, and participating in International Classroom events sponsored through the University of Pennsylvania. ESF Student Leaders and members organize humanitarian trips around the world, raising money both for the humanitarian initiatives as well as to offset travel costs for student members. One of ESF's most important missions is to make these humanitarian trips available to students who normally wouldn't be able to pay

for expensive airfare and accommodations. The huge cost of travel automatically eliminates a large percentage of Philadelphia's student population from having invaluable experiences working to help some of the poorest of the world's poor.

Shonta, a Registered Nurse, plans a healthcare focus for the trip, seeks donations of basic medical equipment such as manual and automatic blood pressure cuffs of all sizes, Accu Check (Glucose) monitoring devices, stethoscopes, thermometers, otoscopes, ophthalmoscopes, scissors, gloves, masks, and light colored scrubs for upcoming visits to Senegalese hospitals and health centers.

Donations and sponsorship have helped control costs for the students' trip and pay for medical equipment as well, but they still seek funding for future humanitarian trips to Asia, elsewhere in Africa, and Israel.

For more information and to make a tax-deductible donation, visit ESF's website at www.ExplorersSF.org. ESF is supported by local and global organizations as well as individuals in our community. Two fundraisers are planned for April 3rd, 5:30-9:30pm, at Cascamorto, at 20th and Arch Streets. 3000 BC Boutique and Spa will be providing free chair massages, and the first 50 people to donate to ESF will receive a free Jolly Rancher Cascatini. The second fundraiser will be held on April 19th, 4-7 pm at Gallagher's on the Parkway, 2201 Pennsylvania Ave. (22nd and Spring Garden Streets). Tickets are \$20 per ticket for all you can eat! Both events offer raffle prizes, including Gift Certificates from Philadelphia Brewing Company, California Pizza Kitchen, massages or gifts from 3000 BC Boutique and Spa, Terme Di Aroma Holistic Day Spa, Sanyo Digital Camera, and so much more! Visit ESF's events section for a complete listing.

Christina and Lara will share their experiences with Fallser readers when they return.