



The Wisconsin Medical Project

Spring 2020

NEWSLETTER

Mauritania collaboration

It's been several months since we all got together at the warehouse at El Centro Hispano and listened to, and perhaps danced to, the music of the great Tony Castaneda and his swinging band, but our volunteers have remained hard at work

In the intervening months, we've sent containers of medical supplies and equipment to Ivory Coast and Mauritania. In the past, we've sent containers to Ivory Coast and Senegal, Africa being a new focus for us, expanding from our formerly exclusive focus on Cuba. Mauritania? An interesting story. Connections in the Ivorian Association got us in contact the Mauritanian humanitarian group, Wagadu Jikke, a group composed of ex-pat Mauritians living in the U.S. and Canada. Wagadu Jikke then got hold of a Mauritanian humanitarian group, ONG Actions, located in the capital city, Nouakchott. Wagadu Jikke is not a political group, but one that seeks to bolster the common good of the people of Mauritania.

The story of Mauritania is a complicated one, one involving light-skinned Arabs in the northern part of the country, dark skinned people in the south, and the legacy of colonialism, the French this time, in making these borders which put these two groups in the same country. And then there's slavery. Or their version of it.

When Americans contemplate our Original Sin of slavery, we conjure up images of humans being sold on the block. In Mauritania, it's not quite that way. There, it's more of a caste system, one that results in bonded laborers, domestic servants, child brides, but still not pretty, a situation driven by centuries-old social rifts. Of the ethnic groups in that country, it is the Haratine, an Afro-Mauritanian group that suffers, the country's largest ethnic group a group that makes up 40% of the population. They are known as Black Moors. Arab-Berbers, the White Moors, from North Africa, took control of the region in the 17th century, enslaving the Haratine since then. Groups more associated with Sub-Saharan Africa, the Wolof, Bambara, the Soninke are left alone.



Audience at a ceremony marking the reception of the shipment at the Kaedi hospital

This is the first issue of our newsletter — an occasional publication to let you know more about what WMP is doing and to introduce you to our partners in reaching communities here and abroad that need the medical supplies.

We hope to see you all in the fall at our next warehouse party— September 11th. Until then, have a wonderful spring and summer.

- Bernie Micke, President

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Mauritania Contd.

Since the dark skinned Mauritians tend to live in the southern part of the country, how to aid them? It was ONG Actions that saw to it that the container was not opened at the port of Nouakchott, where the goods would have been dispersed, and mostly to the lighter-skinned Arab population. They saw to it that it was trucked to the southern city of Kaedi, on the Senegal River. The hospital at Kaedi is a regional one, one that also serves the Senegalese, if they make the boat trip across the river.

So, here is a big thank you to our colleagues with the Ivorian Association, Wagadu Jikke, and ONG Actions. That is an amazing story.

Helping our Wisconsin Neighbors

Closer to home, we have been helping many local organizations, one is the Allied Wellness Center. They serve low income people in the neighborhood between the West Beltline Highway and Verona Road, the Allied neighborhood in Madison. Most of the residents are persons of color, and earn less than \$25,000 a year. 40% do not have high school diplomas, and 95% of the children receive free lunches.

The Allied Wellness Center provides AIDS testing, job training, wellness clinics, a community nurse, and as their Mission Statement says, they function as a "bridge for the residents to take an important step toward a healthier life style."



Another group we've been helping is the Community Connections Free Clinic in Dodgeville. This clinic serves the uninsured and those who cannot afford to pay for medical services in Iowa County and surround-

ing communities. This organization has a big impact. Says one patient:

"This is the second time I have gotten sick and have gotten such good care here at the clinic. I can't tell you how much my husband and I appreciate the care that you are giving us. It would not be possible for me to get medical care otherwise, and the fact that you care enough to have interpreters here to help us is something we never expected. I am so grateful."

A non-English speaking female patient, as told to her clinic volunteer interpreter.

WMP is on TV in Sierra Leone

We collaborated with the Project MedHope Salone to ship medical supplies to Sierra Leone that were distributed to the Kambia District Government Hospital which was in desperate need. See the video on our website <http://wismedproject.org/>