



## African Dinner to Commemorate 25 Years of Nova Scotia-Gambia History and Set Stage for Next 25

The tradition of gathering Canadians and Gambians together around an authentic West African meal actually precedes the official creation of the Nova Scotia-Gambia Association.

2010's African Dinner event will be a nod to 25 years of tradition and the very roots of the organization.

Our guest speaker, Stephanie Nolen, will share her impressions of Africa and the impact of NGOs, based on her experience as Globe and Mail correspondent in Africa on HIV-AIDS. She has reported from more than 40 countries around the world for Canada's national newspaper. A four-time winner of the National Newspaper Award for her coverage, she has traveled from war zones to AIDS clinics to camel races.

Ms Nolen is also a three-time winner of the Amnesty International Media Award. In 2008, she ended a six-year assignment based in Johannesburg, during which she had a particular mandate to cover the impact of the HIV-AIDS pandemic across Africa – one of only two reporters in the world media with that assignment. Her best-selling book *28 Stories of AIDS in Africa* has been published in 14 countries and six languages. It won the 2007 PEN Courage' Award and was nominated for the 2007 Governor-General's Award for Non-Fiction.

With live music as a backdrop, guests will have an opportunity to browse through a great silent auction with both local and African items while meeting old and new friends during the reception hour. Given last year's success we will also offer a live auction and, of course a fantastic meal. The three-course "Banjul feast" dinner will be held at the Lord Nelson Hotel, Thursday, May 13 at 6:00 p.m. We look forward to seeing you there!

Tickets are \$100 each/\$1,000 for a table of ten. Members and students ticket price is \$75 each. Tickets are going fast – we would be delighted to reserve a table for you! **Please contact June Boswell, NSGA office, 423-1360 by April 30 to purchase your tickets or e-mail [info@novascotiagambia.ca](mailto:info@novascotiagambia.ca)**

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The Nova Scotia - Gambia Association is a non-profit development organization based in Canada that works in partnership with West Africans to pursue initiatives for equitable and sustainable futures for youth.

### Staff Appointment in The Gambia

NSGA is very excited to announce the appointment of its new Country Director in The Gambia, Mr. Nyakassi Jarju.

Nyakassi's background is in education development, economics and management science. He holds a Master of Science (Economics) Degree in Development Policy and Planning from the University of Wales, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education with majors in Economics from the University of Sierra Leone, an International Diploma in Educational Planning and Management from the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning in Paris, a Higher Teachers Certificate (Secondary) in Economics and History from the Milton Margai Teachers College in Sierra Leone, and a Primary Teachers Certificate from Gambia College.

Nyakassi's 15 years experience working with government and international NGOs position him as the ideal candidate for the position, in particular his work as manager of the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), a donor-funded project that targeted civil society organisations and education coalitions.

Nyakassi will begin the position on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 and we look forward to his leadership and direction in The Gambia.



# NSGA Today

## Channeling Hope Campaign

NSGA Board Member Kristin Roe is embarking on an incredible adventure! Kristin is attempting to become the first Nova Scotian to swim the English Channel in July 2010! Her campaign, entitled "Channeling Hope", is focused on raising awareness about the innovative and enormously effective projects in Africa that are working so hard in their communities ravaged and affected by HIV/AIDS. But she's not stopping at awareness; she has committed to raising \$100 000 for The Nova Scotia-Gambia Association and the Stephen Lewis Foundation!

The Channeling Hope Campaign has been chosen as part of Aeroplan's Charitable Pooling Program. For the entire month of May 2010, community members are encouraged to donate their unused Aeroplan Miles to contribute to the flights needed to the UK for Kristin's English Channel swim.

For details on Kristin's Campaign and to donate Aeroplan Miles, visit the Channeling for Hope Campaign website at <http://www.channelinghope.com/>

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## Your Membership is Important to Us

Through your annual membership we are able to continue serving and working with our partners in West Africa. If you have not already renewed your membership for the calendar year 2010, please consider it today. Please refer to the membership renewal form on our website: [http://www.novascotiagambia.ca/files/13/DonationMembership\\_form\\_2010.pdf](http://www.novascotiagambia.ca/files/13/DonationMembership_form_2010.pdf)

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## Something to Smile About

The Nova Scotia Sierra Leone Program (NSSLP) has facilitated Voluntary Confidential HIV Counselling & Testing (VCCT) clinics in Sierra Leone for three consecutive years. This CIDA-funded project partners Canadians with Sierra Leoneans to create sustainable programs and healthy communities. The Canadian team, in partnership with country and regional coordinators, Peer Health Educators (PHEs), NSSLP staff, and the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health, completed our final six-week program this March.

During the final mass HIV testing exercise approximately 4,600 people were tested. In total, close to 9,000 people across Sierra Leone have undergone individual HIV counselling and testing through the three-year project. Countless more were educated through the mobilization practices, PHE and pre-counselling sessions in the markets and communities and through referrals.

Positive responses to VCCT lead us to believe that the program has sustainable potential and has the capacity to reduce the rate of HIV transmission, eliminate myths about the virus and help individuals who are HIV positive to live healthy and happy lives.

The Canadian team's role involved supporting each community in their work detecting HIV status, counselling and encouraging people to follow up with the free ARV treatment offered by the Sierra Leone government.

While much information was shared and taught by the Canadian team, it pales in comparison to the amount we learned while participating in the project and the lessons taught to us by the Sierra Leone VCCT team.

The dedication of volunteers and the various VCCT teams is to be commended. Members and volunteers are well recognized within their communities and will continue to be a huge asset and serve as models in their communities for years to come.

Canadian Volunteer Team  
Deborah Hart, MN NP  
Sarah Follett, Health Promotion  
Louise Lalonde, PHN



**Your donations help promote healthy lifestyle living, stronger communities and access to a brighter future.**



**Building families and communities, one step at a time, volunteers make the difference!**





# NSGA Today

## Art for Tomorrow

On February 10, 2010, Saint Mary's University student Kristen Herrington hosted a fundraising event, Art for Tomorrow, on behalf of the Nova Scotia-Gambia Association at Halifax's Paragon Theatre. After months of accumulating postcard-sized paintings from Canadian artists, Kristen sold corresponding tickets indicating only the number of the painting buyers would go home with. It was not until the night of the event that ticket holders would discover which painting they had purchased. Partnered with talented local musicians, Barrett MacKay, Budreski, Carmel Mikol and Marc-Antoine and the Soho Ghetto, the evening proved to be a great success raising \$928 for the NSGA.

Art for Tomorrow was designed not only to draw awareness to a local not-for-profit organization, but also to promote community involvement and artistic participation. Many students volunteered their time, energy and support to make the event possible. With co-operation from Paragon owners Craig Mercer and Peter Farmer and NSGA representatives June Boswell and Amber Germain, Kristen was able to follow through on her original goals creating a high-energy atmosphere in honour of marginalized West African children.

## NSGA's Red Ribbon Campaign: World AIDS Day

Every year during the week leading up to World AIDS Day, December 1, the Nova Scotia-Gambia Association (NSGA) holds Red Ribbon Campaigns at different locations throughout Halifax. This campaign creates awareness about HIV/AIDS and raises funds to support the NSGA's work in preventing and demystifying HIV/AIDS in West Africa. Specifically, donations obtained go toward Peer Health Education projects, voluntary HIV/AIDS testing and counselling projects.

This year's campaigns created awareness at several different sites including Dalhousie University, Saint Mary's University, Spring Garden Road, Halifax Farmer's Market, Prince Andrew High School, Lockview High School and Auburn Drive High School. Overall, the 2009 Red Ribbon campaign was a great success. Despite the bad weather for some of our major fundraising efforts, we were able to raise in excess of \$700 in support of HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness.

The public responded extremely well. Several individuals approached us having heard of the NSGA or The Gambia and all were happy to support the cause. There were also some stories told by supporters of people close to them who had been affected by HIV/AIDS. Their stories made a profound impact on us as volunteers and reaffirmed why we take our time to support this cause. The volunteers also learned more about the organization and were all enthusiastic in their support of the NSGA.

Many thanks to the countless volunteers and donors who helped make the 2009 Red Ribbon Campaign a success. We could not have done it without your support!

By Naomie Coulombe



## First E-Newsletter

This, our first official electronic newsletter, is being sent to all those who have a valid e-mail address with NSGA. Unfortunately, we have lost contact with many of the 700 who have volunteered with NSGA over the years. Many have moved away, married, changed addresses and names, or have not left a current e-mail address with us. Please consider sending this letter along to your friends and family. We warmly invite them to send us their current electronic address so we can keep them aware of developments in West Africa and social affairs in Canada. (P.S. There may be a reunion of participants of past NSGA projects! Help us find our NSGA family of friends.)

## Thank you! Thank you!

To our many supporters who responded to our fall and winter financial campaigns, we send a hearty "thank you" to each of you. Although we have not yet reached our annual goal of \$65,000, we have received \$24,000 through your kind consideration. Donors have used cheques, transfers of stocks and payment through CanadaHelps to support our on-going programs in West Africa. Each donation is truly appreciated.

Through your support we continue to promote healthy living styles among the youth of The Gambia and Sierra Leone. More malaria bed nets are now being used. More youth understand how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, fewer child maternity cases are reported by school officials, and more vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone are receiving valuable knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. Your dollars do count! Thank you from NSGA and our friends in The Gambia and Sierra Leone.



# NSGA Today

## Board Members

Ashley M. Pinsent  
Tobin, *Chair*

Erin E. Callaghan

Seana M. Clowe

Audrey A. Conroy

Harriet (Hiya) Field

Amber E. Germain

Donald F. Grant

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Dr. Richard A.  
MacLachlan

Katie D. Orr

Kristin I. Roe

Philip J. Rosson

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## International Volunteer Opportunity

Position: Summer School Health Facilitator  
Location: The Gambia  
Time frame: July/August 2010 (Approx 5 weeks)  
Cost: \$5,000 (inclusive of all expenses)

The Nova Scotia-Gambia Association (NSGA) is looking for volunteers to help run our annual summer school in The Gambia. The summer school is part of a larger CIDA-funded project called *Advancing Gender Equity and Youth Leadership through Health and human Rights Education*. The three-year project uses the Peer Health Education model to raise the knowledge level of youth and the local communities on sexual reproductive health, healthy relationships, leadership skills, and environment and gender related issues.

Each year of the project, NSGA and our partners work in 25 schools. In each school 20 students will be identified and trained as Peer Health Educators. The annual summer school will have Canadian volunteers and Gambian professionals working hand-in-hand to offer in-depth knowledge and the tools for teaching to selected Peer Health Educators. The four-week summer school will also build on the capacity of local professionals to continue the summer school in years to come.

Chosen Canadian volunteers will have a background in health professions (nursing; medicine; health promotion) and experience working with diverse communities. The summer school takes place in July/August of 2010 with a pre-departure orientation in Halifax and a debriefing session upon your return to Canada.

Please submit a cover letter highlighting your background and why you are interested in the position as well as a CV to [amacdonald@novascotiagambia.ca](mailto:amacdonald@novascotiagambia.ca) by April 30 2010. For more information on NSGA go to [www.novascotiagambia.ca](http://www.novascotiagambia.ca)



## Privacy statement

The Nova Scotia-Gambia Association respects your privacy. We protect your personal information and adhere to all legislative requirements with regard to protecting privacy. We will use the information you have provided to keep you informed and up-to-date on the activities of the Association. If at any time you decide you do not want to be contacted, please call us at (902) 423-1360 or email us at [june.boswell@novascotiagambia.ca](mailto:june.boswell@novascotiagambia.ca) and we will gladly accommodate your request.

**Ways to give, visit us online at:**

Charitable tax #137152385

[www.novascotiagambia.ca/waystogive.html](http://www.novascotiagambia.ca/waystogive.html)