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ProjectsAbroad

> Hendrix College student travels to Senegal to help underprivileged children

Gretchen McCarthy wanted to volunteer in Senegal for her Odyssey project as she wanted to gain more experience with children and improve her French. She decided to volunteer through Projects Abroad at their Care Project for one month.

Gretchen's Care placement was at a centre that cares for the Talibés of Senegal, also known as street children. The first day she arrived at the centre she had a general introduction with Atou Kane Seck, the coordinator of the centre. When she arrived at the placement, Gretchen decided that she would like to focus on teaching the Talibés during her one month stay in Senegal.

The existence of the centre is really important for the locals and especially



for the Talibés, "The centre needs help from volunteers because they teach the community a variety of subjects as well as treating the wounds of the young Talibés," said Gretchen.

Her responsibilities at the centre were varied; from listening to the students read from their books, organizing the coloring materials and planning lessons, to preparing the "gouter" (snacks and drinks) and outdoor games for the children.

Being abroad and teaching in a different culture was sometimes a challenge to Gretchen, "I learned that teaching is very difficult and I must get out of my comfort zone to succeed. I think I have improved on my ability to talk in front of a group." By getting to know the students, Gretchen believes that she has made a difference, "I believe that teaching is easier when you know the student's level and how they like to learn."

Her most memorable experience was her first gouter, "I will never forget how excited the children were to receive their bread with chocolate."

Her recommendation to everyone that wishes to have a similar experience is, "Try not to get frustrated by vendors and people on the streets when they approach you. Try to laugh about the situation, it usually helps."

The coordinator of teaching at the centre said that he was glad to work with Gretchen because she was very serious and motivated in her daily tasks. "She always emphasized to the students that they must understand something and be able to explain rather than just copy. She's got the potential to be a great teacher. We wish her luck for her studies."

We hope great stories like these inspire others to help Projects Abroad continue to make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.

CARE PROJECT IN SENEGAL

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> www.projects-abroad.org