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THE TRI-CITY NEWS

Fundraiser reaches out to Senegalese women

By Sarah Payne - The Tri-City News

Published: October 21, 2008 6:00 PM

It was when Madeleine Mulaire reached into her cupboard and pulled out a sack of flour that she knew what to do for a village of women on the other side of the globe.

Mulaire is calling the women-helping-women project Yaakaar — it means "hope" in the Senegalese French dialect — and aims to raise \$6,000 to purchase a millet grinder in the village of Ndoundokh, Senegal. The inspiration came after a trip to Mbour, Senegal in March with her husband, Raymond Lemoine, the principal of École des Pionniers de Maillardville, to plan the school's Global Perspectives course and a return trip in March 2009.

"It was overwhelming sometimes," Mulaire said of the two-week trip. "They have so many needs... what can I contribute?"

Once she was back in her Port Moody home Mulaire kept in touch with an NGO worker and asked how she could help. The women of Mbour, Mathilde explained, were already well supported by a Winnipeg organization but Ndoundokh's women desperately needed their own grinder.

So Mulaire gathered a group of 24 women in the Tri-Cities — some friends, co-workers, even her hairdresser — for monthly meetings to plan fundraising activities. She started out by reading through a list of 48 names of Ndoundokh women and the number of children under their care.

Faye Ayou has 10, as does Diouf Mayé Angèle and three others. Diop Fatou, a widow, is on her own with eight, as is Faye Mame Siga, who has nine. Only a quarter of the women have three kids or less.

"There was silence among the women," Mulaire said, shaking her head. "We couldn't believe how many kids they have to look after."

Life isn't easy for women in Ndoundokh, a village of about 1,600 a few hours away from the capital of Dakar. They get up at 4 a.m. and don't put their heads on a pillow again until late at night. Instead of opening the pantry to grab a loaf of bread they work the fields, do the harvest and have to walk to a neighbouring village to grind millet into flour.

Having a grinder of their own in Ndoundokh would make things a lot easier.

Instead of helping their mothers with daily chores, the girls could go to school, and the women would have time to attend classes of their own. They could learn how to read and write, and how to run their own small businesses. It's Mulaire's way of reaching her hand around the world to give the Ndoundokh

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Madeline Mulaire shares a quiet moment with a Senegalese woman in a village near Mbour during a trip to the West African country in March. The Port Moody woman has engaged her friends in a fundraising effort to raise money for a millet grinder for the nearby village of Ndoundokh.

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women a hand up.

• The Tri-City women are hosting their first Yaakaar 2009 fundraiser, a garage and bake sale, this Saturday, Oct. 25 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at École des Pionniers (3550 Wellington St., Port Coquitlam). Call 604-552-7915 for more information or to donate email raymond\_lemoine@csf.bc.ca.

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