



Contributed photo

Mary Morrissey-Ross, right, presents mosquito nets to Waranka Elder, left, and Mor Sakho, center, during one of her trips to Senegal. Morrissey-Ross' award-winning video of her health care work helped her get even more funding for future trips.

Making strides in Senegal

By Kirk Lang
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Fairfield resident Mary Morrissey-Ross is a mother of three who works full-time and also is a Ph.D. student in Public Health at Walden University. Put simply, she is a busy woman. Even so, Morrissey-Ross found time in her schedule to enter a university-sponsored contest in which applicants had to submit videos showing how Walden has helped them to make a positive change in their careers, their lives or the lives of others. The contest was launched as part of a multi-media campaign celebrating Walden's commitment to social change.

Morrissey-Ross' efforts did not go unappreciated. She was one of five students chosen as a grand prize winner in the Scholars of Change video contest, and received \$5,000 in prize money plus an additional \$2,500 was donated to the charity of her choice.

The \$2,500 has subsequently been earmarked for the Health Care Initiative of The Senegal-America Project. Senegal-America expanded its scope after making connections with staff at Roger Ludlowe Middle School (RLMS)

in 2006. It started as a musician exchange, but now includes improving the health of the Senegalese people. From raising money to help build and support a new school in Guinaw Rail, to donating 2,000 mosquito nets to help fight malaria, and offering free diabetes screening, students, teachers and parents from Roger Ludlowe Middle School are doing what they can to combat malaria, cataracts, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Morrissey-Ross' video, which was partially shot in West Africa, describes how she implemented community screenings to address emerging diabetes and hypertension concerns in Senegal. She credits the faculty at Walden for encouraging her to focus her doctoral research on studying the emergence of chronic diseases in Africa.

Morrissey-Ross knew there were problems with malaria and cataracts in Senegal, but "the diabetes surprised me a bit," she said.

She went on the first of three trips to Senegal when her son Brendan — now 16 — was an eighth grader at RLMS. She and other parents were

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