Name of organization & website URL: Starfish International (www.starfishinternational.org)

Contact person
- David D. Fox
- 315-313-4191
- davidfox@starfishinternational.org
- starfish.international

Location of Organization:
- U.S. mailing address: 9599 Clarecastle Path, Brewerton, New York 13029, United States
- Gambian mailing address: PO Box 1109, Banjul, The Gambia
- Project location: Lamin Village, The Gambia

Description of organization (history, mission, focus):
To help our girls set a strong foundation for academic and economic success, Starfish encourages international volunteers to design a class on a subject they are passionate about. Collaborating with Gambians, international volunteers will design and implement projects that are culturally appropriate and can help the girls advance in their academic and small business pursuits. We are open to exploring any areas volunteers have a passion and a clear vision for, however, Starfish suggests that volunteers strongly consider coming to:

- Teach basic computer skills and/or computer repair skills
- Help develop a video and film program
- Help start a performing arts troupe specializing in drumming, dancing, drama and storytelling
- Help establish a wellness class with a focus on yoga, meditation, nutrition, and mental and emotional health
- Help develop English conversation skills, especially pronunciation and public speaking
- Help us develop our career counseling program by teaching resume writing and interviewing skills
- Help develop our maternal health and nutrition program by doing community workshops with girls and women
- Join our small business and agricultural development program by teaching a class in marketing, gardening, candle and soap-making, bee-keeping, or lotion making
- Help us develop a Model U.N. and debating team
- Come help us get, install, and effectively use solar power [Imagine how much more enhanced each of these programs would be if we had access to electricity by harnessing the abundant sunshine The Gambia enjoys!]

Starfish International was founded in 2008 by Mam-Yassin Sarr (a Gambian) and her husband David D. Fox (an American). Starfish International is registered in New York State as a Non-Profit Corporation and in The Gambia, West Africa as a Community-Based Organization. Their mission is to “to empower Gambian girls by providing them with an advanced education that focuses on service to humanity, while at the same time providing international service-learning opportunities for our volunteers.” Starting in 2009, international volunteers have worked as teachers for Starfish International’s summer academy hosted by a local Gambian school. During that summer, they also built one of the country’s first children’s libraries in Lamin Village. Since 2009, Starfish International has continued to run their summer program as well as their year-round village
library. They are currently raising funds to build an Academy of Excellence for Girls. The academy will offer year-round education for the girls and a multitude of service-learning opportunities.

**How many interns can you accommodate?**
We can accommodate up to 9 interns simultaneously.

**Please Answer the Following Questions for EACH Available Job:**

1. **Job Description:** Interns will be active in every aspect of running the summer program including developing lesson plans and conducting classes, grading, conducting service-learning projects, facilitating workshops, and having fun.

2. **Is there any compensation associated with the internship?**
   There is no monetary compensation associated with this internship. However, past volunteers have indicated that their experiences were life-changing for the better, and several have returned to volunteer again.

3. **What helpful talents and/or skills should the student intern possess, if any, including major (business, engineering, etc.)?**
   Interns should have a love for service and be culturally sensitive, open-minded, flexible, and able to share their passion.

4. **What would a typical day be like?**
   Here is a basic outline of a typical day: Breakfast; Free-Time until 11am; Reading and Character Development Lessons (K through 6-grade students) at the library from 11am to 1pm; Lunch; Academic Lessons, Personal Development Workshops, and English Conversation from 3pm to 6pm (middle and high school students); Debriefing, Dinner, and Free-Time.
   *The subject matter of the Academic Lessons and Personal Development Workshops is determined by the expertise and passion of our volunteers and interns.*

5. **Any other special requirements?**
   Interns should have a love for service and be culturally sensitive, open-minded, flexible, and able to share their passion. Interns must also be comfortable being accompanied by Starfish staff during their service at Starfish. This is because being accompanied by someone from within the culture affords our visitors, and the Gambians they encounter, the types of authentic exchanges we aim to inspire between the different cultures.

**What is your preference for dates?**
(Fellows are expected to spend 5 to 7 weeks working with an organization.) Fellows are welcomed to arrive as early as the beginning of June and depart as late as the end of August. We strongly encourage each volunteer to be present during the entire month of July.

**What is appropriate attire for internship (office) and within your region?**
Light clothes (linen, thin cotton) are recommended. As a foreigner, one can dress however they want, but it is more proper to wear pants or long skirts. At night, it is good to have long sleeves and pants to mitigate...
mosquito bites. Sunglasses and a hat are also good ideas. The terrain varies and you may find yourself walking through deep sand on the side roads. It is most important that your shoes are comfortable for walking, light in the heat, and are washable. During the rainy season (August), you may find yourself with no choice but to walk through a puddle.

Do you regularly have interns working with you?
Yes

If there is a mandatory language requirement, what language and how fluent must the fellow be?
Fellows must be highly fluent in English.
LOGISTICS

What is the nearest airport (with airport code)?
Banjul International Airport (BJL)

What are housing options and costs?
Volunteers reside in dorms that are within walking distance from the Starfish Library and the school where the volunteers teach. Each dorm room has electricity, indoor plumbing, and access to a bathroom. Single, double, and triple occupancy rooms are available. Housing costs are included in the program fee of $350/week.

Please provide an estimate of other costs/week that the interns will need to pay for themselves (Example: Food, lodging, local transportation, etc)
The program fee is $350.00 per week ($50 per day) and is due one month prior to your departure to The Gambia. This fee covers food, lodging, program-related transportation, and weekly excursions. Cell phones are available for rent. Rates for calling cards to the U.S. are currently about 25¢/minute.

What is the weather like between late June and early September?
The weather between late June and early September is hot (~95º F) and becomes more humid during August.

What are some possible weekend excursions/activities for young people?
All volunteers participate in a traditional naming ceremony where they are formally given Gambian names and are adopted into a Gambian family. Volunteers also have the opportunity to attend traditional christenings, weddings, and other ceremonies within the village. Other possible weekend excursion/activities include:

- The Lamin Lodge Boat Trip: enjoy the Gambian River on a guided boat tour
- The Katchically Museum and Crocodile Pool: walk among and touch sacred crocodiles
- The Bijilo Forest Monkey Park: walk through the natural habitat of the Green Velvet and Red Colobus Monkeys
- The Reptile Preserve: observe and interact with a variety of reptiles found in The Gambia
- The Njogu Experience: Meet and see the gallery of one of Gambia’s most renown artists
- The Brikama Craft Market: observe the making of and purchase locally hand-made carvings, paintings, and instruments
- Weekly daytime or nighttime visits to a variety of Gambian beaches

Any other helpful descriptions and comments:
Given that Starfish International does not receive government or corporate funding, we request that volunteers and interns engage in a self-directed fundraiser of their choice if they can. Our hope is that this engagement will raise awareness, additional funds, and the participants’ sense of ownership of this much needed work Starfish is engaged in.