

## WFWP Westchester NY Celebrates 12 Years of Making a Difference in Africa

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The Westchester County (New York) chapter of Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) held its 12th annual benefit for the Schools of Africa Project on Saturday, December 5, 2015. This project includes already eight schools in various African countries which are receiving funds from WFWP.

This year’s fundraiser was held in Irvington, New York, one of the Hudson Valley’s famous “River Towns,” at the beautiful, modern Eileen Fisher Hall overlooking the Hudson River. From the wall-to-wall windows in the spacious hall it was stunning to see the glistening river right outside. We are grateful for the generosity of Eileen Fisher for allowing us the use of this venue. Eileen Fisher, a resident of Irvington, is a very distinguished fashion designer with a Fortune 500 company, and she is well-known for her support of charitable organizations.

Susan Bouachri as emcee opened the program, introducing the very talented singer Raoul Joseph who warmed the atmosphere by singing “If We Hold on Together.” Next Mrs. Alexa Ward-Fish, the deputy director of the UN Office of WFWP International, gave a very informative presentation on the United Nations’ recent establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at solving the world’s most troubling problems. We were proud to hear that WFWP International had received the highest NGO ranking at the UN, or “ECOSOC General Status,” and that it has been working actively for many years to help find solutions to some of the world’s problems through both our educational and service work, such as our Schools of Africa Project.

Next it was time for lunch—which our two excellent cooks, Kanae Holt and her sister Chiharu Kellar, prepared. There was an amazing display of California rolls, shrimp cocktail, sandwiches, chicken, vegetables, cheese and crackers, fruits and desserts. Everything was not only delicious but also professionally presented.

After lunch, Lily Shapiro, a young adult WFWP member from the community near the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), enthusiastically presented the pictorial report of the successes of the School of Africa project. The many photos of happy African children at our schools certainly made us realize how much our dollars substantially are changing the lives of these beautiful, deserving children. This presentation was followed by a second stirring song sung by Raoul Joseph, “Can You Feel the Love Tonight.”

Our keynote speaker, Mame Kani Diop from Senegal, brightened the atmosphere in her gorgeous native costume and headdress. Ms. Diop is doing graduate studies on the family and has done extensive research on traditional African customs that are harmful to women. Her talk, “The Gift of Education,” provided much detail on some of the improvements in education of African children, but also the unfortunate failure to reach many children and the very low percentage that actually can reach college. From her presentation it was so clear how critical education is to lift children out of poverty. Ms. Diop told her own story of growing up in Senegal and having to persevere through many obstacles. With much gratitude she announced that she soon will receive her doctorate.

The event not only raised funds to promote the education of African youth but raised our hope and determination as women dedicated to the peace and well-being of others.

WFWP wishes to thank all who attended and helped to make our benefit a great success. This was truly a community event, as our Westchester “Up and Coming” Youth Ministry and CARP members helped to set up. Gratitude also goes to the members of the Bridgeport (Connecticut) WFWP chapter who came out to lend their support.

We came very close to our goal of raising \$6,000 for the schools of Africa. And as we keep on hoping for a few more checks, we just might get there.