

## Soccer, Of Course!

BY BRIAN DAVIS, SERVING IN SENEGAL

*West African youth are passionate about soccer; Alliance people are just as passionate about why the “world’s sport” is a platform for outreach. “If you can imagine the following generated by U.S. professional football, basketball, baseball, hockey, golf and NASCAR, with hunting thrown in for good measure, it would be summed up in one sport—soccer!” exclaims a marketplace ministries worker in West Africa.*

A young man in my church, Samba, senses God’s call on his life to reach the lost with the good news of Christ. I want to encourage and challenge him to go for it!

So when Samba showed interest in starting a kid’s club for elementary-aged boys and girls in our neighborhood, I was right there alongside him, playing games, singing songs, having fun. But after a few months without much growth (only the kids from our church were coming), we re-evaluated. It became clear to Samba that we needed to do something different.

Soccer, of course! Kids love soccer here!

### Success

From the first week we started the soccer outreach, we have never had a shortage of kids eager to participate. We run a skills clinic, scrimmage, and then discuss the skill we practiced—and hopefully used!—in the match and how it correlates to a life skill. (For instance, one week we focused on juggling—keeping the ball in the air, using only a prescribed part of the body, such as our head, foot, or thigh, etc.). We then talk

about how this skill is important to control the ball during a match.

Recently, I asked the group “What is the muscle in our bodies that is the most difficult to control?” We had all sorts of funny answers. For the record: your brain is not a muscle!

But one boy got it. “The tongue,” he said.

### Biblical Truth, Senegalese Wisdom

This is significant for Senegalese people, who recognize that there is real power in the words people speak. The tongue has the power to bless and to curse, build up or tear down.

Words are not just meaningless tools—they carry power, and we know it’s not easy to control that kind of power. Through this example, I was able to describe how, as a follower of Jesus, He has given me His Spirit, who lives in me, to help me control my tongue and use it for good.

By using basic soccer skills, we’re able to keep pointing to the love, truth, and power of Jesus so that one day they will choose to follow Him as well. By the grace of God, we are already seeing hopeful signs that these seeds will grow.

One of the boys, Bouba\*, has shown much interest. He has come to several church events, hangs out with the pastor’s sons, and has even opened the door for the pastor’s wife to begin a relationship with his mother.

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## Kentucky Santa Lands in Japan

More than 80 people in **Japan** heard the gospel, most for the very first time, during a Christmas outreach in a churchless mountain town. They sang Christmas carols, enjoyed a puppet show, and took home gifts of food and Christmas tracts. And they heard “Kentucky Santa” tell them about the real meaning of Christmas.

When Alliance worker Ken Young, who loosely resembles Kentucky Fried Chicken’s (KFC) Colonel Sanders, shared the gospel story, a youngster pointed at Ken, saying, “Kentucky Santa!” Japanese KFC franchises traditionally dress their life-size statues of Colonel Sanders in Santa suits during the Christmas season. This brilliant move has made Kentucky Fried Chicken almost synonymous with Christmas.

“Naturally, the little girl, who saw my resemblance to the Colonel and heard me talk about Christmas, declared me to be “Kentucky Santa,” says Ken, whose ministry is made possible because of generous giving to the GCF.

## From Prison to Praise

Friends of Isaan in **Thailand** is a GCF-supported Alliance church-planting initiative among the largely unreached

Isaan people of northeast Thailand. A prison ministry has introduced Jesus to many incarcerated people, who have evangelized their home villages upon their release. EQ, a former gang member, gave his life to Jesus through the prison ministry. Since his release, he has led his family and many friends to Christ. Also, he married Jang, another former prisoner who trusted Jesus through the Isaan ministry. Together, the couple is training other believers to evangelize their neighbors, as well as celebrating the birth of their daughter, Manna, in June.

## Being Light

An art gallery, Lego brunch, and two church plants combined as one church in Berlin, **Germany**, has resulted in many people coming to faith in Jesus through the Freischwimmer outreaches. Recently, a Christian preschool opened, providing biblically based education for the youngest generation of Berliners. Because the GCF supports dedicated Alliance workers, the light of Jesus shines brightly in Berlin, where God was all but erased from a post-WWII society.

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*Thank you for praying for Alliance workers and for the people with whom they share the gospel.*

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