



Tuesday, February 20, 2007

## **Black History Month: Second Annual Basketball Tournament**

For the second edition, the Embassy of the United States celebrates the Black History Month, in February, by organizing a high school basketball tournament focused on HIV/AIDS and Malaria youth awareness. This year, the tournament takes place in Mahajanga, between 10 private and public high schools, in partnership with the Circonscription Scolaire (CISCO) of Mahajanga I, and the Inter-Regional Office of Sports of Mahajanga. The finals, taking place at the Gymnasium of Mahajanga on February 28 at 2:00 p.m., will occur within the celebration of the American Week of Mahajanga, and will be honored by the presence of U.S. and Malagasy authorities.

The tournament started on January 10, 2007, with 10 female teams and 10 male teams, and the matches have taken place over eight consecutive Wednesday afternoons. This year's tournament is also an opportunity to sensitize youth on HIV/AIDS and Malaria; PSI/Top Réseau and Ankoay will conduct awareness sessions prior to and during breaks of the matches.

The slogan for this year is:

**Stop Malaria  
Together, let's fight against AIDS**

Basket-ball, collective sport originating from the United States, has been chosen because of its popularity and for the sake of helping young people build team spirit. It was in December 1891 that a sports professor at Springfield College, in Massachusetts, has invented basket-ball to keep his students busy during long winter months.

This initiative of the U.S. Embassy is made possible thanks to the contribution of different partners, namely: the Regional Office of National Education /CISCO Mahajanga, the Regional Office of Sports, the Mayor's Office of Mahajanga, the National Police of Mahajanga, the Red Cross in Mahajanga, Top Réseau / PSI and Ankoay.

2007 marks the 81<sup>st</sup> annual celebration since Carter G. Woodson, a noted scholar and historian, instituted Negro History Week in 1926. He chose the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. The first official Black History Month was announced in 1976 by President Gerald R. Ford, who urged Americans to seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of African-Americans in every area of endeavour throughout U.S. history. . .

To commemorate the celebration of Black History Month, the U.S. Embassy is organizing, in addition to the basket-ball tournament, different cultural events such as book or film discussions, or conferences, focused on the Black Americans' contribution to the development of the United States.