

# Man helps African AIDS victims

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON—Stephan Bekale left his home in Gabon with a teenager's dreams of an American college education and a career in the sport he loved, basketball.

But his personal game plan changed when his parents, back home in their country on Africa's west coast, died a few years later, just months apart. AIDS had stolen them both.

With grief as a coach, the 6-foot-9 forward went on the offensive to spare others a similar fate. Bekale (pronounced beh-CAH'-lay) set aside his dream of pro basketball stardom and created

Hoops4Africa, to use the star power of American hoopsters to spread the message of AIDS prevention to Africa's youth.

"You can touch kids through basketball," the 26-year-old Alexandria, Va., resident said in an interview.

Bekale should know.

Not long ago, he was a teenager in Africa, wishing he could "be like Mike"—Michael Jordan, the basketball superstar. Now he spends his days and nights networking and raising money to fly 10 athletes, five each from the National Basketball Association and Women's National Basketball

Association, to Kenya for a week in September to talk to schoolchildren of all ages about HIV/AIDS. Visits to AIDS orphanages also are on the schedule.

It won't all be sober talk, though. Basketball clinics are planned to teach the children how to shoot, dribble and maneuver on court for their own games, as well as sight-seeing trips.

"Our main focus is to get the information out on AIDS and how deadly the virus is and our means of doing that is through basketball," said Washington Wizards forward Michael Ruffin, one of the 10. "Hopefully by reaching the

children they'll go home and talk to their parents a little bit and tell their parents about it," added Ruffin, a father of four.

AIDS has had a devastating effect on sub-Saharan Africa, where more than half the world's HIV-infected people live. Millions in the region have died of the disease since the epidemic began, including 2.3 million last year, according to United Nations statistics.

Bekale was a lanky 15-year-old when he landed in New York in 1995 after scraping together enough money for the plane trip that would

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## Too much water could be dangerous

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TUCSON, Ariz. — Sometime in the middle of the night, Carol Tufts began to feel very strange. Dizzy, confused, disoriented.

By midmorning, she had collapsed into a chair, unable to walk, unaware of what day it was. She was, in fact, dying.

The reason? She drank too much water.

Too much water? In the Southern Arizona desert? Where the never-ending mantra drummed into our heads tells us to drink water constantly to ward off the perils of our extreme, dry heat?

Well, Tufts-always vigilant about her health-followed

that advice for years, drinking lots of water daily, to stay hydrated and healthy. And it almost killed her.

"This was a tremendous surprise to me. It's a fascinating phenomenon," said Tufts, 80, a longtime Tucsonan and mother of the late Randy Tufts, co-discoverer of Kartchner Caverns.

"I just think people really need to know there is such a thing as drinking too much water—even here—and that it can be very dangerous. I think there were warning signs this was happening to me, but I had no idea what they meant."

Her warning is timely, coming on the heels of a major medical study of endurance

athletes that found drinking too much water during heavy, prolonged exercise may be an even greater threat than drinking too little.

In fact, that phenomenon has unexpectedly developed

into one of the most common health threats to Grand Canyon hikers, where nearly a fifth were ending up as "water intoxication" emergencies until signs went up

Please see DRINKING/4B

## Books stir discussion on loss of friendship

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO—Friendships blow up and fade out all the time. Sometimes it's a fight. And life changes — a move, a marriage, a baby — can get in the way. Then there are those times when you just look at your friend and realize you don't really have much in common anymore.

Some believe losing a friendship is a particularly traumatic event for women — a theory explored in a couple of recent books that have inspired wider discussion of a topic sometimes seen as taboo.

Women "have an expectation that romantic love might not last. But the idea is that friendship is made of much stronger stuff — that you're friends forever," says Elissa Schappell, co-editor and contributor to the new book "The Friend Who Got Away," a collection of essays written by 20 women who lost friends for various reasons. "There's almost no vocabulary for talking about it when it falls apart. That's where the shame of it comes from."

As Schappell's co-editor, Jenny Offill puts it, "the giddiness and Golden Age of friendship" sometimes doesn't last.

"It's not always 'Ya-Ya Sisterhood' or 'Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants,'" Offill says, referring to gal-pal novels that have become popular movies. Nor is it usually the stereotypical "cat fight," she says.

Much more often, when women's friendships end, the experience is far more subtle — and without resolution.

Kimberly Eberl, a 27-year-old Chicagoan, still wonders why her college roommate disappeared after coming out as a lesbian — something Eberl says she accepted easily. "I've tried calling her a million times just to say hello and see if we can reconnect," Eberl says. "But she's never answered any of my calls."

Candace Talmadge continues to feel the tug of her childhood friend Linda, with whom she slowly lost touch after Talmadge moved to England at age 14.

"I don't think Linda ever forgave me for moving. I think she felt abandoned," says

Talmadge, now a 51-year-old author who now lives in Lancaster, Texas, and whose friend later died in an unrelated suicide. "She's still in my heart — very, very much so."

In some cases, the damage done when friendship ends is so severe that some compare it to the end of a marriage. That was the case for Karen Eng, who, five years ago, ended a relationship with a friend that she found too draining and dramatic. She wrote about it in another recent book of essays, which she edited, titled "Secrets and Confidences: The Complicated Truth About Women's Friendships."

"I had a dream the other night that I was wandering around with her," Eng, who now lives in England, says of her former friend. "I was terrified because I didn't know if she'd read the book."

Eng says her husband-whom she describes as "a supersensitive, New Age guy"—did not at all understand the importance she placed on this difficult friendship. It's not that he doesn't have close friends of his own, she says. In fact, he has a core group of male friends he's been close to for years.

"He loves those guys. He's always happy to talk to and see them," she says. "But nobody feels bad if one of them doesn't call for a couple of years."

Offill, co-editor of "The Friend Who Got Away," jokes that a book of essays written by men who've lost friends might be titled "Oh Yeah, I Used To Know That Guy." She and Schappell spoke with male writers, hoping some would write essays for their book. But, invariably, they found that men's breakups with friends was "very undramatic," Offill says, laughing.

Since then, they have come across a few men on their book tour who've wanted to share painful stories about a friend — a sign, some say, that men simply grieve their losses differently.

"On the surface, it seems like what you lost wasn't big — but it was," says Will Layman, a 44-year-old teacher who lives in

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