



2015 Degrees OF Success

The NACOEJ/Barney and Rachel Landau Gottstein
Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program (AAS)



You're Their Best Ambassador!

We're pleased to bring you the eighth issue of Degrees of Success, created just for you, our AAS Sponsors.

We're so proud of our students and all they've achieved – achievements only made possible because of your support. Without you, many could not complete their degrees. You share in all their successes.

If you have news about your own student/s, please call Karen Gens, our U.S. Director of High School and College Sponsorship Programs, at 212-233-5200, ext. 230, or email her at education@nacoelj.org.

And be sure to pass our material on to family and friends who might want to help a deserving Ethiopian college student in Israel. (If you would like more copies of Degrees of Success, just let Karen know.) You're the best ambassador for these young adults. Your endorsement goes a long way. Thank you.

Guest of Honor!

Charles Halasz of Norwalk, CT has been sponsoring Natan Alamo for three years. Just recently, when Natan got married to Paz, Charles was a special guest of honor at the wedding!

Natan studies at the Wingate Institute, a famous sports training facility located south of Netanya, Israel. It was established in 1957 and serves as the host facility for numerous Israeli national teams as well as a military training base.

Natan is majoring in physical education and by the time this newsletter reaches you, he will have graduated.

Charles and Natan have written back and forth extensively over the years and have become good friends. When Natan knew he was getting married, he immediately invited Charles to come to Israel and share this happy day with him.

Charles stayed at Natan's parents' home for Shabbat and the family party. The photo below from the wedding demonstrates better than words (as photos always do!) the close relationship that has been established between Charles and Natan.



AAS Sponsors Give Ethiopian-Israeli Students a Key to Success

Since 1987, the NACOEJ/Barney and Rachel Landau Gottstein College Sponsorship Program (originally the Vidal Sassoon program) has given Ethiopian-Israeli students the financial support they need to complete their degrees.

The Israeli government covers tuition for most Ethiopian college students, but all must pay for their living expenses, including rent, food, transportation, textbooks and much more.

Most Ethiopian-Israeli families can't help, so too often, financial burdens have forced Ethiopian students to drop out and take unskilled jobs with no future. An AAS sponsorship provides a modest living stipend, so your student can stay in school, earn a degree, enter a profession, and break out of poverty. It's a wonderful investment.

AAS and Limudiah – Together!

Vicki Trachten-Schwartz and her family sponsor four college students at the Seminar HaKibbutzim Teachers College. They also sponsor the Morris and Sylvia Trachten Family Foundation Limudiah Girls Empowerment Program in the Noam HaMeiri School in Lod.

The college students from the Seminar have been involved with the Limudiah on three occasions this year, two in the school, the third at a museum.

The interaction between the older girls and the younger ones benefits both. Recently Aliza Tadella, one of Vicki's AAS students, wrote to her:

"...the activity at the Limudiah is going great. Tomorrow



Vicki Trachten-Schwartz (4th from left) and some of her Limudiah and AAS students and staff at the Noam HaMeiri School.

we are meeting the sweet girls at the museum in Tel Aviv. There we will guide them and show them exhibits of the country of Israel. I am really looking forward to it.

"I want to thank you again from the bottom of my heart for your great help. Wishing you only to know of good news...Aliza Tadella".

Currently, there are 35 Ethiopian-Israeli girls in the Limudiah in the Noam

HaMeiri School, in grades one through six. Recently Vicki paid a visit to one of the classes. They had a wonderful time. Vicki began singing Am Yisrael Chai and dancing with the Limudiah girls. Vicki's AAS students joined in and they all danced joyfully together.

Where Are They Now?

In this issue of Degrees of Success we wish to begin a new tradition – bringing you up to date on where and what a former NACOEJ sponsored student is doing now.



Our first profile is of Azaunt Teka.

Azaunt Teka arrived in Israel in 1990 at age five. While in high school she participated in athletic competitions and her PE teacher, seeing her potential, suggested she begin a serious training program. So she joined a local athletic club.

After high school, she joined the IDF and served as a fitness coach. She trained for running with combat soldiers. When she became an officer, she didn't have as much time to train but still did so on weekends.

After the army, she began to study physical education at the Wingate Institute where as she put it, "...I took the training another step forward..." While still a student, she won a 1500 meter race and 5000 meter sprints and was named Israel's national champion!

She was then given the opportunity to train in Ethiopia which she described as "...absolutely amazing". She trained with a team, unlike in Israel where she normally trained alone. She was assisted by a coach every day which she found very important.

Describing the training in Ethiopia, Azaunt said, "...we would usually run in the surrounding fields and once a week at a stadium of 220 meters, and we trained at different heights [altitudes]".

She found the training in Ethiopia challenging but the terrain was magnificent which aided her training and her motivation.

Azaunt came back to Israel, finished school, and ran in an Israeli half-marathon which she won – "I decided to run with all my force and my opponents were unable to catch me," she said, "I left them all behind!"

She has since gone on to compete in Berlin.

Sponsored by Ita Markus during her critically important years of study at Wingate Institute, Azaunt is a champion runner in Israel. At some point in the future she hopes to teach as well, but right now she is concentrating on training and races.

Her NACOEJ sponsorship helped pave the way to her success as an international Israeli runner.



A Very, VERY Proud Father

Shoshana Ben-Dor, our NACOEJ Israel Director, recently received a letter from Ilan Leijashel whose two daughters have been beneficiaries of NACOEJ educational programs. Etti is currently sponsored in our AAS program by Bruce and Suzette Stringer and Barbara Meislin.

We want to share his letter because his words bring together everything that is so important and essential about our programs, keys to successful futures for Ethiopian Israelis. He wrote:



"I was happy to meet you yesterday at the seminar day.

"Enclosed are pictures from my daughter Etti's graduation... she completed her degree with honors and she is now a doctoral (MD) student.

"You are the head of an organization that supported my daughters ever since they got accepted to the school of arts, from elementary school and until today.

"I have no words to describe the appreciation and thanks that I owe you and your organization.

"You have a significant part in my daughters' achievements. Etti is a proven fact to it and Tzlil who placed the goal of studying architecture at the Technion provides the second proof.

"With great appreciation to you and the wonderful staff of your organization, which is contributing greatly to the Ethiopian community."

Ilan Leijashel

Sponsors change the lives of Ethiopian-Israeli young people like Etti and Tzlil, and their families. We are all so very grateful!

"Success is in Her Future"

This is how Rennie Sherman describes Ruth Gizat Abayneh, 20, whom Rennie sponsors in the NACOEJ AAS program. Ruth is studying at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya of the Lauder School of Government. Rennie also described Ruth as "going places".

This past March, Rennie went to Israel to see her son who is serving in the Israel Defense Forces, and together they met Ruth at a café in Tel Aviv.

Ruth came to have a NACOEJ sponsor when she found the NACOEJ web site, contacted the New York and Jerusalem offices, and asked to be accepted into the college sponsorship program.

Ruth, who lives in Lod, arrived in Israel from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on August 16, 2012 with her single mother.

Ruth wanted to complete her last year of high school as soon as possible, but because her Hebrew was not good, she searched for an appropriate school in Israel.



She was accepted to the prestigious Jerusalem American International School following exams and interviews, and received a full scholarship for the entire year.

Then she applied to college - and to NACOEJ for assistance.

The meeting between Ruth and Rennie was rewarding. In writing to NACOEJ, Rennie said: "She is an impressive young woman; quite mature and grounded. Thank you for your help..."

When Ruth wrote to Rennie, she said: "I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It is these kinds of deeds that keep people going each day.

I am beyond grateful that you and NACOEJ are standing with me through my journey."

Rennie has been a sponsor for a number of years and was thrilled at the opportunity to meet Ruth in person. This kind of delightful visit is possible for you too. Contact Karen and she'll happily set it up for you.

“If someone...on the other side of the world believes in you, why shouldn't you believe in yourself?”

Editor's Note: Yoni Reuven, who is in medical school at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, was sponsored by Samuel Halperin for several years through the NACOEJ AAS college sponsorship program. When Mr. Halperin passed away recently, Yoni wrote this touching letter to his family. It expresses so well the beautiful relationship that can be established between sponsors and their students.

4/20/2015: My name is Yonatan (Yoni) Reuven and I'm in my 6th year of medical school in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev [medical school in Israel includes two years of undergraduate work].

I've been in contact with Samuel Halperin for the last few years via email and I was very sad to hear about his death... His emails were always filled with hope for a better future for us. He would always encourage me to work hard...I wish I had the opportunity to meet him in person.

I am touched that you decided to continue his project with NACOEJ and want to introduce myself.

I was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and came to Israel at the age of one. After a short period in an absorption center for new immigrants in Atlit, my family settled in Jerusalem where I grew up.

After graduation, I spent a year in northern Israel in a "Mechina," volunteering and studying about leadership and Zionism. I went on to serve as a combat soldier in the elite unit Sayeret Matkal for five years.*

After...the army, I decided to pursue a career in medicine...studying medicine isn't an easy task, especially when you need to worry about supporting yourself at the same time.

Samuel's support over the years has given me a sense of security – not just financial security, although that has been an enormous help, but also in the sense that he always gave me the feeling that I had someone "rooting" for me.

I am the only Ethiopian student in my year and one of only a handful across the country, and sometimes it can feel very lonely...but if someone who lives on the other side of the world believes in you, why shouldn't you believe in yourself?

It's important to me that you understand how much this program means to me and to the other students, and how much of an impact Samuel's involvement had on our self-esteem. I would be happy to send you emails I received from him. If you come to Israel, I would be honored to meet you. Sincerely, Yoni

*The IDF's most elite unit.

You also provide your own student with encouragement and support like this. If you have family or friends you think would like to have a meaningful experience like this, please tell them to call Karen Gens at 212-233-5200, ext. 230 or email to: Education@nacoej.org. There are many students waiting for sponsors. Their futures depend on it.

Just the Facts

In the 2014-2015 school year...

- **120** AAS sponsors helped support **369** students in **6** universities and **39** academic colleges, including **16** nursing schools and **7** engineering schools.
- **37** sponsored students finished their coursework during this year and graduated in their fields of study and about **90** students will finish their studies soon.
- **28** sponsored students were studying for advanced degrees.
- **8** sponsored students received Master's degrees and **7** more students will finish their Master's degrees soon.

Their Smiles Tell the Story!

On a recent visit to Israel, Gene Schneyer, who sponsors Almaz Ayanaw at Hebrew University, arranged with Yehudit Abramson, Israel Coordinator of the College Sponsorship Program, to meet Almaz.

After some back and forth on available times at both ends, Gene and Yehudit, who acted as translator, met Almaz at the Aroma coffee shop near the university.

Almaz, who is majoring in psychology, and Gene, had a wonderful visit together. Their smiles in this photo tell the whole story.



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Since 1982, the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ) has been providing humanitarian and educational aid to the Ethiopian-Jewish community in Ethiopia and Israel. NACOEJ is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

A special thank you to the
UJA-Federation of New York

UJA Federation
of New York

for sponsoring 14 students
this year.

North American Conference
on Ethiopian Jewry

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