



# 2012 Bridges

The NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program

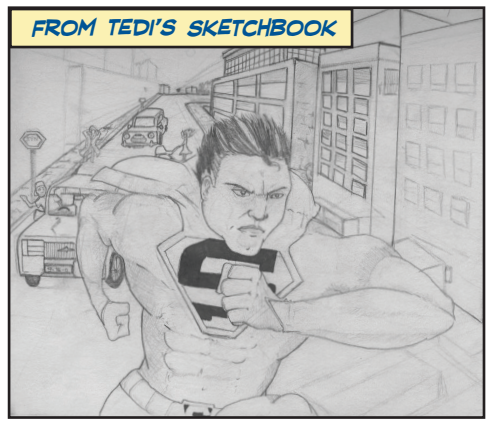


## Be an Ambassador

We are happy to bring you the seventh issue of *Bridges*, written by Judy Dick, Director of Educational Programs, NACOEJ-NY, with the help of Leah Barkai, the Israel Coordinator of the High School Program. Let us know if you have news about your own students to share, and please pass this newsletter on to friends and family who might also want to support Ethiopian-Israeli high school students. You are an ambassador for these boys and girls and your endorsement will go a long way toward helping more Ethiopian teens get the education they need. Thank you! Please feel free to call Judy Dick at 212-233-5200, ext. 230 or e-mail [highschool@nacoiej.org](mailto:highschool@nacoiej.org).

## Our Students are Superheroes

When you read the troubling statistics about poverty, unemployment, and drop-out rates found in the Ethiopian community in Israel, it's hard not to worry about the future of its youth. But the accomplishments of students in the NACOEJ High School Program like Tedi Negusse, artist and musician, dispel these worries, proving that a good education encourages Ethiopian teens to overcome hardship and look to the future. These bright young students are literally superheroes.



### Ethiopian Teen Sings a Message of Hope

It may seem as if Ethiopian-Israeli teens need to be superheroes with special powers in order to succeed. But if you listen to the lyrics written by a gifted NACOEJ-sponsored high school student, Tedi Negusse, it's all about perspective:

*Get out there in the world from the top  
to the bottom  
And if you decide and look, you'll see that  
this universe is beautiful  
Space with endless content*



*continued on page 2*

North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry  
255 West 36th St. Suite 701  
NY, NY 10018  
212-233-5200 x 230  
Fax: 212-233-5243  
[highschool@nacoiej.org](mailto:highschool@nacoiej.org)  
[www.nacoiej.org](http://www.nacoiej.org)

### High School Sponsorships Help Students Attend Good Local Schools

Founded in 1997, the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program has enabled countless Ethiopian-Israeli teenagers to attend high-quality local schools in their communities instead of leaving home for lower-level, state-subsidized boarding schools. While basic high school tuition is covered by the Israeli government, schools charge additional fees that are often beyond the means of Ethiopian immigrant families. NACOEJ sponsorships cover these fees, so that Ethiopian students can take advantage of all educational opportunities in their schools. With this help, they earn an education that increases their chances of getting into college, ultimately becoming self-supporting professionals able to help their families break out of poverty.

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

Students in our high school program benefit greatly from sponsorships. In some cases, the connection becomes more personal when sponsors and students meet each other in person.

## Bonding with Students

Roberta Nusim, an experienced professional in education and marketing, and a former junior high school teacher, knows

donation for twelve students enabled NACOEJ to accept a new high school into the program, the De Shalit High

School in Rehovot. So when she was planning a trip to Israel last winter, she made sure to set up a meeting with her students.



a lot about connecting with students. The personalized nature of the NACOEJ high school program caught her attention, and her generous

adventure, Nusim traveled to Rehovot with Leah Barkai, our NACOEJ-Israel High School Program Coordinator. Roberta described how she entered

the room where nine of her twelve sponsored students sat, initially shy, until she mentioned to the translator that she had been a teacher. The students then began to talk and she discovered that they spoke English well. The conversation soon took off and they quickly bonded.

**A sponsor's message to her students: "As a former teacher, I can tell you for sure that getting a good education is a stepping stone to whatever you decide to do."**

She learned about their tightly-knit families, responsibilities at home, how some had to hold part-time jobs to help out their families, and their career plans for the future. Nusim says, "A common theme was how much they looked forward to their army service. The day I visited was the Israel Defense Forces' Pilots' Day, when new Israeli pilots get their wings. They were excited because for

the first time five girls earned their wings."

Nusim was greatly impressed by her students. She noted that attending the school required extra dedication by the students and their families, who chose to get bussed to the school (many are from the Kiryat Moshe

neighborhood in Rehovot) so that they could get a better education. The De Shalit High School has a student population of 800 but only 37 are Ethiopian. So this small group is at the vanguard of integration for Ethiopians. Greatly inspired by meeting her sponsored students, Roberta exclaimed, "It was the highlight of my trip- and I always have a good trip in Israel!"

*'Superheroes' continued from cover*

*So just try to make the best of difficult moments  
It's not a lot.*

This song won him first place in the annual Rap Competition held in Lod in 2011. Tedi bursts with creative energy, and in addition to his schoolwork, draws comics, and writes, composes and performs his own songs. An eleventh-grader

at the Amal 1 School in Lod and sponsored by **Jack and Judith Stern of Rye, NY**, he likes his English, literature, and history classes best and hopes to do well in his matriculation exams. The school's staff has noted his talents and focus and comment that he is a very special person. Eyes on the future, Tedi says he would like to be a draftsman or musician. He already knows

the value of hard work, as he puts it in his song:

*Everything has to do with  
creation and a little  
tranquility  
Once I thought that a lack of  
knowledge meant a lack  
of creativity  
But that's just an artist's  
excuse for a bad text in  
the drawer*

Tedi makes no excuses for himself. His perseverance and talent will be sure to take him far. He notes that he has become a role model for Ethiopian youth, and his message is: "It's a matter of approach; give love and you'll get it back. Then you'll feel the 'drug' in your veins. It's called life!"



## A Family Paves the Way

From Tseganesh Melaku, the first Ethiopian to be the director of Channel One, Israel Radio, to her sons, who attend schools in which Ethiopians are a small minority, the members of the Melaku family are breaking new ground for Ethiopian-Israelis. The key to their success is a passionate commitment to education and hard work, and NACOEJ sponsorships make the road easier for them. Tseganesh represents the first generation of Ethiopians who immigrated to Israel and had to build a life in a new home, while her sons represent the second generation, born in Israel, who are embracing Israeli society and all it has to offer while advancing the roles of their community within it.

The Melaku family: Immanuel, Tseganesh, and Yonatan.

### Tseganesh Melaku

NACOEJ AAS Alumnus ('96-'98)  
Bar Ilan University '98

Former Director of Channel One, Israel Radio.

Sponsored by: Devorah Brooks, Cong. Tifereth Israel.

*...I would like to offer my deepest gratitude for your assistance to me and my sons.*

### Immanuel Melaku

NACOEJ HS Program Graduate ('06-'12)  
Hebrew University Secondary School '12

High-achieving student in the Science and Mathematics track at the Alberto after-school program for gifted students.

Sponsored by: Richard Adelman, Loren Greenberg, Hannah Klein and Ruth Fox.

*Mother raises us by herself. She makes enormous efforts, so that we can succeed. My brother and I are doing very well in life and in school, because of our*

*mother's efforts. Your help is very much appreciated by my mother and by me.*

*I have high hopes. I want to be a doctor. To realize my dream, I have invested a lot of time and energy. Last year I took the university admission exam... I scored 714 [out of 800] which is a great accomplishment since I did it while I was still in high school.*

*... the hardest thing of all is my illness. I suffer from scoliosis and over the past few years I have had to get along with medical devices and physiotherapy. About a year and a half ago I had an operation. The doctor says it was successful, but the healing process takes around two years. I am coping and trying to get stronger. In school I managed to learn all the material I missed.*

*Your sponsorship ... brings me another step closer to studying medicine.*

**The Future: Plans on studying medicine, biology, or physics in university.**

### Yonatan Melaku

NACOEJ HS Program Student ('09-present)  
Ninth Grade, Keshet School

Talented basketball player for Hapoel Jerusalem Youth Team.

Sponsored by: Lois Levy.

*My mom works hard to give my brother Immanuel and me a good education. She always talks about how important school is.*

*I would like to thank you and tell you that your help last year enabled me to participate in my basketball program. For the past three years I have been playing basketball in the "Hapoel Jerusalem" Youth team. I love my team and I love basketball.*

**The Future: Plans on studying computer science and playing basketball.**

# SOME WORDS FROM OUR SUPERHEROES

THESE BRIGHT YOUNG STUDENTS HAVE OVERCOME MANY CHALLENGES AND ARE EXCELLING ACADEMICALLY. THEY ALSO FIND TIME TO HELP OTHERS. SOME OF THIS YEAR'S GRADUATING SENIORS WROTE TO THEIR SPONSORS ABOUT LOOKING FORWARD TO SERVING THEIR COUNTRY, STUDYING IN COLLEGE, AND HAVING CAREERS THAT WILL MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. THEIR WORDS INSPIRE US ALL.

**EDEN TESEME, 10TH GRADE  
DE SHALIT HIGH SCHOOL, REHOVOT  
ANONYMOUS SPONSOR**

"WHEN I GROW UP, I WANT TO BE A SOCIAL WORKER OR PSYCHOLOGIST BECAUSE I LIKE LISTENING TO PEOPLE AND GIVING ADVICE. I AM ALSO LEARNING THESE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL...I AM SOCIALLY ACTIVE AND VOLUNTEER FOR FIREFIGHTERS. I ALSO HELP LITTLE KIDS WITH THEIR HOMEWORK AT A YOUTH CENTER NEAR MY HOUSE."



**TAMAR BERHANO, 11TH GRADE  
PISGA ORT RELIGIOUS HIGH, RAMLE-LOD  
SPONSORED BY RUTHIE COHEN**

"IN MY SPARE TIME, I VOLUNTEER WITH THE POLICE BECAUSE I LIVE IN A NOT-SO-GREAT CITY AND IT IS GOOD FOR ME TO HELP MY CITY. I ALSO STUDY TWICE A WEEK AT THE WEIZMANN INSTITUTE'S SHOHAM PROGRAM [ADVANCED SCIENCE AND MATH AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM]."



**MAAYAN YIGEZAI, 10TH GRADE  
ORT LOD  
SPONSORED BY RUTH GREY**

"IN MY SPARE TIME, I VOLUNTEER AT MAGEN DAVID ADOM IN LOD BECAUSE I LIKE HELPING PEOPLE AND KNOWING THAT MY HELP ENABLES THEM TO FEEL GOOD... IN THE WORLD, I AM JUST ONE PERSON, BUT FOR ONE PERSON I AM THE ENTIRE WORLD. ...WHEN I GROW UP, I WANT TO BE A PHYSICIAN. EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I HAVE WANTED TO BE A SUCCESS AND REALIZE MY DREAM OF HELPING THOSE IN NEED. I HOPE I WILL."



**DANIEL LAKAU, 12TH GRADE  
WIZO REHOVOT  
SPONSORED BY MURRAY  
AND MARCIA SCHECHTER**

"I WANT TO SERVE IN AN ELITE COMBAT UNIT [THE PARATROOPERS UNIT IN THE ISRAELI ARMY]. ... EVER SINCE I WAS A TEENAGER, I'VE WANTED TO ENLIST IN THAT UNIT. IT IS GREAT IN EVERYTHING IT DOES AND I ALSO WANT TO HAVE A SERIOUS JOB DURING MY MILITARY SERVICE. ... AFTER MY IDF SERVICE, I WANT TO BE A COMMISSIONED OFFICER IN THE ARMY."



**ESTHER BITCHA, 12TH  
GRADE, ORT LOD  
SPONSORED BY  
HANNAH KLEIN**

"WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I ALWAYS DREAMED OF BECOMING A JUDGE BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE TO SEE INJUSTICE."



**DANIEL TIGIST, 12TH GRADE  
ORT REHOVOT  
ANONYMOUS SPONSOR**

"...I WANT TO STUDY AND SUCCEED IN ISRAEL SO THAT THEY [MY PARENTS] WILL BE HAPPY AND PROUD OF ME. IT IS ALSO GOOD TO REALIZE YOUR POTENTIAL. I WANT TO BE A DOCTOR BECAUSE THIS IS MY DREAM AND BECAUSE IT HAS INTERESTED ME SINCE I WAS LITTLE. I THINK THAT SAVING A LIFE IS THE REALIZATION OF A DREAM FOR ME... I WILL GRADUATE THIS YEAR AND I PLAN TO POSTPONE MY ARMY SERVICE TO STUDY MEDICINE. AFTER I FINISH, I WILL SERVE AS A PHYSICIAN IN THE MILITARY."



**UVENE MEBRETI, 12TH GRADE  
ORT LOD  
SPONSORED BY ELAINE SCHWARTZ**

"MY DREAM IS TO BE A PSYCHOLOGIST. I REALLY LIKE TO LISTEN AND GIVE ADVICE. I AM AWARE THAT KIDS MY AGE FIND THEMSELVES IN SITUATIONS THAT ARE HARD TO DEAL WITH. BECAUSE I ALSO WENT THROUGH THIS, I KNOW HOW HARD IT IS. SOMETIMES A WORD CAN BE VERY ENCOURAGING. I REALLY HOPE TO REALIZE THIS DREAM."



## Just the Facts

Did you know that in the 2011-2012 school year...

- NACOEJ has been sponsoring Ethiopian-Israeli high school students for **16** years.
- **248** sponsors participated in the program.
- **1,116** students were sponsored in the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program.
- **57** schools in Israel participated in the program in **20** cities in Israel.
- **181** of our students graduated high school!



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NACOEJ is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1982, and is the only major American organization committed exclusively to the welfare of Ethiopian Jews.