



2014 Bridges

The NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program



Be an Ambassador

It's our pleasure to bring you the ninth issue of Bridges, a newsletter created just for you. If you have news to share about your own sponsored students, we'd love to hear from you.

Please also become an Ambassador for our Ethiopian-Israeli high school students by passing this newsletter on to friends and family who might want to support our students. Your endorsement is vital to help more deserving Ethiopian teens get the education that will lead to their successful futures.

Questions? Comments? Call Karen Gens at 212-233-5200. Ext. 230 or email her at Education@nacoej.org. She'll answer your questions, contact potential sponsors you suggest, and chat with you about the joys of high school sponsorship.

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Glowing Words...

These glowing words below come from Dina Tanners of Seattle who has been involved with the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program for many years. They are powerful testimony to the benefits of this unique program.

"Through the high school partnership program, I have seen Ethiopian teens grow, gain leadership skills, and blossom as adults, all of which has given me much 'nachat'."

But Dina's involvement with NACOEJ and Ethiopian Jews goes back much further than sponsorships. She first became interested in the early 1990's when she heard about Operations Moses and Solomon and called a friend to learn more.

Then, friends in Israel told her they had "adopted" an Ethiopian soldier who had no family there. (Although he is now married with children, he still keeps in touch with his adoptive "parents".)

Dina's curiosity was piqued.

When her son Nadav was Bar Mitzvah (he's now 34!), she arranged for him to be "twinned" through NACOEJ with Ethiopian immigrant Danny Melesse, who came to Israel during Operation Moses.

The two boys met in Israel and, in his Bar Mitzvah speech, Nadav talked about Danny and about Ethiopian Jews – their history and their needs in Israel -- encouraging his friends and family to become involved.

Dina became a high school sponsor after

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Nadav Tanners at his Bar Mitzvah with a photo of his Ethiopian-Israeli twin, Danny Melesse, in the background.

What Do High School Sponsorships Do?

Since 1997, the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program has changed the lives of many Ethiopian-Israeli teenagers. It enables them to attend high-quality, local high schools rather than leave home for lower-level, state-subsidized boarding schools.

Basic tuition is covered by the government, but Israeli schools charge many fees, often beyond the means of Ethiopian families. Sponsorships from caring people like you allow Ethiopian students to get the essentials they need and take advantage of all their school's educational opportunities.

As one student says, her sponsorship lets her be "...just like the other kids". Your partnership gives these teens an education that increases their chances of getting into, and succeeding in, college, their chances for self-sufficiency, and the chance to help their struggling families.

To My Sponsor...

From Sapir Mengistu

“ I want to thank you for giving me the sponsorship that will help me continue with my studies. The sponsorship will enable me to graduate with a complete matriculation certificate...I hope to fulfill myself in the future in the best manner and also do something for someone else as a token for your generous contribution... I hope that I too will be able to contribute to the community and others. ”



From Hagit Adisso

“ I am looking forward to being a soldier in the Israeli army, all my brothers and sisters before me have been in the army, and I am very proud to do so too...I want to thank you very much for all you have done for me. It has helped me very much. I hope that my education will help me be a contributing citizen. ”



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From Workitu Tamarat:

I want to thank you for the sponsorship, for your care, and for the way in which you help people. I think that a person who gives to another person is definitely a most amazing person, and with a heart of gold. It is the greatest privilege thanking people like you. All I have left to say is thank you. ”



From Mulunot Ishete

“ I want to thank you again for the help. I want to say that I am very grateful. What you did came from a lot of

compassion, love, care, and generosity. Thank you very much for everything. I will always remember it and I will be grateful for the rest of my life. I want to wish you many good years filled with grace and acts of kindness...Thank you for investing many hours only for the goal of giving and helping others. ”

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From Michal Alame

I don't have the words to thank you. My family's situation is tough, but we learn to slowly manage. Your sponsorship provides some room to breathe. We don't take your help for granted. This reflects your greatness, a strong desire to help. And this will be rewarded. ”



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From Yafit Ferede:

...it is important that I say thank you for your sponsorship which helped me a lot over the past three years. It motivated me to study, do well and write matriculation exams in a number of subjects. This is all thanks to you. I wasn't worried by debts and family financial matters. Thank you!!! ”

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Sibling Sponsorships

Both Asubelu Gebeye and his sister Desalo have high school sponsors through the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program, and it has changed their lives.

Asubelu was originally sponsored by Fred and Sally Ulman, but when Fred passed away, Ms. C. Eisenberg generously volunteered to take over his sponsorship.



Asubelu is an energetic young man who attends the ORT Spanien High School in Jerusalem where he is a very good student, while also training with the Beitar Jerusalem Soccer Team.

As to his interest in soccer, Asubelu says: "I think that as a teenager, passing my free time playing soccer is better than hanging around outside...I enjoy it very much."



Asubelu's sister, Desalo, is sponsored by NACOEJ Advisory Board member and long-time supporter, Marsha Croland, whose family has been deeply involved in assisting Ethiopian Jews for many years.

In a joint letter from Asubelu and Desalo to their sponsors, they write:

"We want to thank you and NACOEJ very much for granting our request and giving us a scholarship. We want to say that it was very helpful for us and significantly contributive.

"It was uncomfortable for us going to school knowing that our parents cannot pay our tuition. Thanks to you we had a wonderful year in school...We and our parents appreciate your help, your work, and mostly, taking us into your consideration....We really thank you from the bottom of our hearts for helping us."

From these two siblings, we learn yet an additional advantage to the high school sponsorship program. It makes the kids feel they are on an equal footing with their peers. They don't have to be embarrassed by not having the essentials that the other kids have. And they can go on the field trips just like everyone else.

Their self-esteem is given a great boost, and when they feel good about themselves, they can do their best!

'Glowing Words...' continued from cover

becoming a participant in a partnership between the Seattle Jewish Federation and the town of Kiryat Malachi in Israel, which has a significant Ethiopian population.

At that time, already familiar with NACOEJ, she jumped at the opportunity to sponsor a teen in Kiryat Malachi, and has been deeply committed to this program ever since.

In fact, just this past June, while she was in Israel, she went to visit her current student, Nava Bruke, who is a senior at Amal 1 High School in Kiryat Malachi. It turned out that Nava was not there, but her sister, Hagit, was. Hagit is in 10th grade, and is sponsored by Ann Bardake. Dina had her visit with Hagit and the school's principal.

Dina has been a NACOEJ sponsor for Ethiopian students for many years and continues to be one today. Her story of personal involvement is one of continuity that spans generations, oceans, and continents.



Dina Tanners (right) and Hagit Bruke, sister of Dina's sponsored student, Nava.

“I will continue to do my best and even better.”



These words are from Yitzhak Adhenan – an Ethiopian-Israeli teenager who attends the Oren Ginsburg High School

in Yavne – in a letter to his NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program sponsors, Eliot Abramson and the Lattman Foundation.

He wrote that his favorite classes are biology, P.E., and English, and that he

was doing extra credits in electronics and physics.

Along with a friend of his, Yitzhak was accepted into the prestigious Sparks of Science Program. Sparks students go to the world-famous Weizmann Institute in Rehovot on Mondays and Wednesdays, and study until 8:00 pm. Yitzhak completed his first year there with distinction, and received a certificate of excellence at an end-of-the-year ceremony for exceptional students.

With his outstanding record, Sparks of Science sent him on to a special Young Researchers Program to study human biology, physics, and more.

And he was chosen to demonstrate

scientific experiments at the Festival of Science that takes place each year at Weizmann.

This exceptional young man, whose high school successes have been supported by his NACOEJ sponsors, used to play on a soccer team as well but gave it up because “I didn’t have a free day so I decided to give up soccer so I could focus more on school.”

Yitzhak closed his letter: “I will do my best at everything. I really appreciate everything you are doing for me.”

This young man is clearly headed for great things, and his NACOEJ sponsors have helped make his trajectory toward the stars possible.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart...”

Ester Zeleke is the mother of two Ethiopian-Israeli teenagers, Maayan and Adi. Their family lives in Beit Shemesh.

Both siblings have high school sponsorships from Terry Grant through the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program.

Ester, their mother, recently wrote to the NACOEJ Jerusalem office explaining what these wonderful sponsorships mean to their family. Hearing the parents’ perspective sheds yet another light on the impact and importance of this special program.

Ester’s letter was addressed to NACOEJ and to Leah Barkai, the NACOEJ Israel Coordinator of our High School Program:

“We are a working couple with four children but the financial situation makes it difficult for us to give our children the education and the daily necessities that they require and need. Therefore we need your help.”

“The word thanks is a six letter word (in Hebrew it is a four letter word) but with a broad meaning. Thank you for the support you are giving us.”

“On this opportunity I want to thank Leah very much for the support and patience that she had every time I called.”

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart, be strong and courageous for this lifework.”

NACOEJ High School sponsors are changing the lives of Ethiopian-Israeli families, giving teens and their parents the support, friendship, encouragement, and help they need to carve out successful futures in their new homeland.

Just the Facts

Did you know that in the NACOEJ High School Sponsorship Program in the 2013-2014 school year...

- **245** sponsors participated in the program
- **915** students were sponsored
- **52** schools in **16** Israeli cities participated
- **171** of our students graduated high school

With your dedicated partnership, NACOEJ has been sponsoring Ethiopian-Israeli high school students for 18 years! There are always more students waiting to be sponsored. We need more sponsors!



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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.