



# 2016 Degrees OF Success

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



## You're Their Greatest Ambassador!

We're delighted to bring you the 9th issue of "Degrees of Success", for you, our AAS sponsors.

We're so proud of all that our students have achieved – achievements you have made possible through your wonderful support. Without you, many could not complete their degrees, so you have a great share in their successes.

If you have news to share 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 to [education@nacoelj.org](mailto:education@nacoelj.org). We'd love to hear your stories.

And please pass our material to family and friends who might want to help a deserving Ethiopian-Israeli college student. (If you'd like more copies of Degrees, please let us know.) You're the greatest ambassadors for these young adults. Your endorsement can make all the difference. Thank you.

## From Ethiopia to the Olympics: Agaza's Story

Agaza Guade came to Israel from Ethiopia with other family members as a pre-teen. From the moment he arrived, he recognized the vital importance of learning Hebrew and integrating into Israeli society as quickly as possible. He worked hard and accomplished this goal.

All along his journey, Agaza has displayed athletic ability. After high school, he joined the Israel Defense Forces where he demonstrated a real talent for running, which the army supported and encouraged.

Today, he is a student of physical education and teaching at the prestigious Wingate Institute, where he is sponsored by NACOEJ sponsor Ita Markus.

Agaza has represented Israel in competition. He was the Israeli champion in 2008-2009 in the long distance 1500 to 10,000 meter runs.

We are thrilled and proud to tell you that Agaza, after qualifying in Rotterdam, represented Israel in the marathon in the Rio Olympics!

This is an extraordinary achievement, especially as he also is continuing his education at the same time.

Well done Agaza!

And well done Ita as his sponsor!



Courtesy of Photographer:  
Liliane Bitton – Internet site:  
[www.LilianePhoto.com](http://www.LilianePhoto.com)

### AAS Sponsors = The Keys to Success

Since 1987, the NACOEJ/Barney and Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program (AAS) (originally named for the late Vidal Sassoon) has given thousands of Ethiopian-Israeli students the financial support needed so they can complete their degrees.

The Israeli government covers tuition, but students must pay for living expenses including rent, food, transport, textbooks and more.

Most of their families can't help. Too often students have had to drop out of school and take low-paying, unskilled jobs to help their families. Through your AAS sponsorship, you enable your student to stay in school, earn a degree, enter a profession and break out of poverty. You're making a wonderful, lifetime investment.

# From Sponsored Student to Published Author

Yehudit Abramson, Israel Director of the NACOEJ/Barney and Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program (AAS) often accompanies students to story hours involving the Barney's Books program. She recently wrote to the Gottsteins:

*I would like to share with you a wonderful story. Among the many books that I provide to the children for Barney's Books, I found one written by Dr. Wovite Worku Mengisto. The book is called: "Almaz Walks in the Path of Her Childhood".*

*The name of the author was familiar to me and a short search in our computerized system found a student by the same name. She was sponsored by you 15 years ago!*

*The book tells the story of the Ethiopian community in a way that every child can find his family story in it. I bought many copies of that book and I take them with me to "Story Hour" which I provide for the Barney's Books Project.*

*With best wishes, Yehudit*

Here's Wovite's story. Because of the Gottsteins in the early 2000's, she reached her dreams.

Wovite was born in Ethiopia. When she was 10, she, her mother, and her seven siblings walked on foot to Sudan



**Dr. Wovite Worku Mengisto (left) and Yehudit Abramson**

to make aliyah on Operation Moses in 1984. Shortly after they arrived in Israel, tragedy struck. Wovite's mother died. She was then cared for by her older siblings.

After spending high school in the Yemin Orde Boarding School, Wovite did national service, serving as a teaching assistant in Safed. She received a B.A. at Bar-Ilan University, followed by a Teacher's Certificate and an M.A. in Educational Administration. All through this time, she also worked in her field.

Wovite was chosen to participate in the prestigious Mandel Leadership course and then went on to do a PhD. at Hebrew University.

For the past 13 years, Wovite has been the national supervisor for new immigrant, at-risk youth in the Ministry of Education. She also teaches at the David Yellin College of Education, is a mentor to two gifted Ethiopian students, and volunteers on the Parents' Patrol in Ness Ziona. That is where she lives with her husband, Yossi, also an educator who came in Operation Moses, and their daughters, Linoy and Tehila.

With all of this on her plate, Wovite found the time to write a delightful children's book for Ethiopian children to enjoy and other children to learn from. And the NACOEJ AAS program helped her reach this wonderful achievement.

## Barney's Books: A Second Generation...

***On another Barney's Books excursion, this one to Yaffo, where three NACOEJ-sponsored students were reading stories to the children, a young woman came up to Yehudit to say hello. Her name is Esther Baruch (at right with her children) and she is an AAS graduate who was sponsored by Rachel and Barney Gottstein. She graduated from Tel Aviv University in 2003.***

***She was there with her own children and was so excited that two generations of her family were part of NACOEJ programs. We are excited too!***



## To Their Sponsors with Love

*From Aviva: ...Thank you for continuing to accompany me during my studies. Knowing that you are there to support, encourage and invest from your time and money, allows me to grow and makes me feel that I have the ability and possibility to improve my life...your sponsorship makes me stronger and gives me the strength to continue and learn despite difficulties along the way. With appreciation and gratitude...*

*From Ruth: ...By receiving this sponsorship I get a lot of strength, in addition to the faith that I will succeed despite everything, and against all odds. I see your aid as the opportunity of a "life time". I would like to send you my wishes for your great giving, care and concerns which give me great joy...*

# The Strength to Fulfill My Dream



**Etti (at left) with two of her children.**

Many of our AAS students write beautiful letters to their sponsors. This one from Etti Tadla to her sponsors Mark and Analee Reutlinger really stands out. We thought you would enjoy it since it reflects so well the relationship that sponsors can have with their students.

*Dear Sponsors,  
How are you?*

*Every time that I write  
you a letter I get to think  
That there are such  
good people who only*

*want to give and help,*

*While all I do is write a thank you letter.*

*At such a time I think how grateful I am to you,*

*The least I can do is thank you*

*For helping me advance, study and succeed in society*

*For being there with me, pushing me toward success*

*For giving me the strength to fulfill my dream.*

*Thank you for each and every month*

*For proving that there is such a thing*

*As people who help, sponsor and see the goodness in  
mankind.*

*Thank you for finding the time to be part of my life.*

*Thank you for allowing me to get to know you, and seeing  
you as people*

*Who I can trust, also at a time of need.*

*I simply want to thank you!*

*From me, Etti Tadla*

## A Silver Anniversary

In a recent Lifeline we told you about the Traditional Congregation of Creve Coeur in St. Louis, Missouri. They've been supporting Ethiopian-Israeli college students through the NACOEJ AAS program for 25 years straight.

We want to take this opportunity in "Degrees" to wish them once again a hearty Mazel Tov on this historic achievement and on their commitment to continuing their sponsorships into the future. They have changed the lives of 17 young people in Israel whose futures are brighter because of them.

We wanted to give a little more background on the Congregation's involvement with Ethiopian Jews which precedes their involvement with NACOEJ, as told to us by congregant Stanley Estrin who has been the AAS liaison to Traditional since 1991.

Their commitment to Ethiopian Jews goes back to 1985 when the congregation established a relationship with the Nega family, newly immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia. They wrote to them, provided financial support, and also clothing and toys for the children. Congregants would



**Stanley Estrin and Traditional Congregation sponsored student, Neguse Ermias, 1999.**

visit them when they were in Israel.

In 1989 the Nega family told Traditional that members of their extended family were still trapped in Ethiopia and asked if they could help them get to Israel.

They contacted Elsie Roth, who lived in the St. Louis area and who was known to be involved with Ethiopian Jews, and she connected them with NACOEJ (Elsie was a NACOEJ President).

In 1990, in response to a NACOEJ appeal, Traditional collected thousands of dollars' worth of medications, supplies and instruments for shipment to Ethiopia.

In 1991, a congregant had personal contact with the then mayor of Tiberias. Traditional held a community fundraiser to help purchase playground equipment for new immigrant children from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union.

And then, in 1991, their sponsorship of Ethiopian-Israeli college students through NACOEJ began and has gone on continually since then.

According to Stanley: "Since then we have been privileged

# A Letter that Will Touch Your Heart



*Sharon and Edwin Wigutoff with the parents of one of their sponsored students, Emanuel Hadane. Qes Hadane Tukuye (right) is an Ethiopian religious leader. He was Lika Kahanat (High Priest) in the Gondar region in the late 1970s. His son, Rabbi Yosef Hadane, is the head Rabbi of the Ethiopian-Israeli community.*

On June 29, 2016 we received a letter from Sharon and Edwin Wigutoff of Florida. It spoke in warm, captivating

words about the years 1991 - 2003, when they sponsored Ethiopian-Israeli college students through the AAS program. Since 2003 they have also been supporters of the NACOEJ Limudiah After-School Program.

There is no possible way in which we can encapsulate their feelings, emotions, words and thoughts adequately in the space we have here.

So we've posted their inspiring and touching letter (interspersed with beautiful photos) on our website. You can go to [www.nacoej.org/llol-19](http://www.nacoej.org/llol-19) or scan the QR code here and it will take you straight to the page.



We thank the Wigutoffs for sharing their thoughts and feelings in such an expressive and wonderful way.

Since you are fellow AAS sponsors, we hope you enjoy reading Sharon and Edwin's letter as much as we have.

## "SILVER ANNIVERSARY"

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to participate in AAS. Our students have been an inspiration to us." (For example, one of their students had to take a break in her studies to donate a kidney to her brother.)

Earlier this year, another one of Traditional's students wrote to tell them of his life after their sponsorship. Here are some of Gideon's own words:

*First of all, I want to thank you again for the support and care. Thanks to you I was able to concentrate on studies and be successful.*

*As you probably know, I am a graduate of Haifa University Law School in 2011. I am happy to tell you that today I am married and have two sons.*

*Also, I am a member of the Israel Bar Association from 2012, and I work as a lawyer in a firm that deals with labor law and insurance claims. In the near future I plan to open my own private office.*

*I wish you all the best!!!*

## To NACOEJ and Yehudit

*From Michal: ...I am finishing my studies this year and I want to say thank you to you and NACOEJ. A special thanks to my sponsor who helped me during the three years of my studies...It contributed to me very much by having the peace of mind to study. I wish you lots of strength, love and giving with NACOEJ's continued work. You are doing a most significant holy work.*

## Just the Facts

**In the 2015-2016 school year...**

- **113** AAS sponsors helped support **350** students in **5** universities and **30** academic colleges, including **10** nursing schools and **8** engineering schools.
- **32** sponsored students finished their coursework during this year and graduated in their fields of study. About **120** students will finish their studies soon.
- **25** sponsored students were studying for advanced degrees.
- **4** sponsored students received Masters Degrees and **3** more students will finish their Masters Degrees soon.
- **210** students are waiting for sponsors.

## For 34 Years and Counting...

Since 1982, the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ) has been providing humanitarian and educational aid to the Ethiopian-Jewish community. 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 students this year.*



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