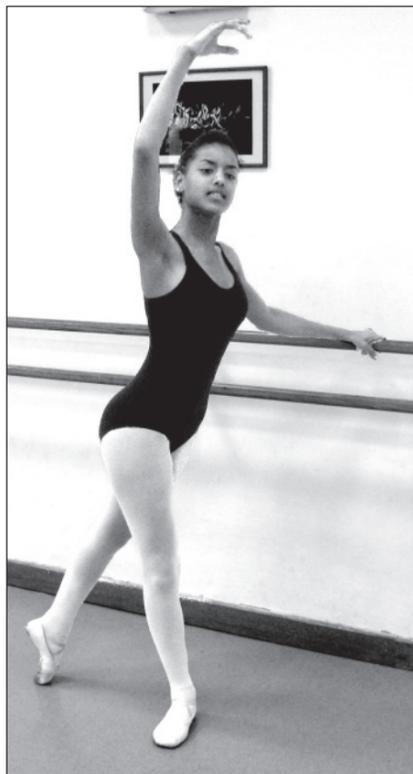


Sponsorships Encourage Students to Develop Their Potential

Sponsorships give Ethiopian students the chance to gain the most out of school. In some cases, students' talents become a gift for everyone! The outstanding examples below help us understand how valuable your contributions are.



Sivan Sisai,

a talented ninth grader in the gifted program in the Katzir A High School in Rehovot, excels not only at her studies but in dance. She discovered dance after a teacher recommended the program to her in seventh grade. Sivan had lost her mother the year before and the school's special dance program has helped her to stay engaged in school, despite her grief. She is thankful to her sponsors, Sandra and Jordan Laby of Ventura, CA, who have made it possible for her to afford the program since seventh grade. This past year, Sivan has kept up superbly with both her intense study load and the rigorous dance program. It will be a pleasure to watch Sivan dance her way through high school!



Sara Zisanu

attends the Dror High School in Jerusalem and is sponsored by Marsha Croland of White Plains, NY. Sara has just finished eleventh grade and is active as a counselor in the youth movement *HaShomer Hatzair*, affiliated with the kibbutz movement. Sara has been a member of the group since she was nine years old and was encouraged to become a counselor by her own counselor last year. Sara appreciates the values of teamwork, independence, and positive communication that she has learned in the movement. As a counselor of fourth graders, many of whom are Ethiopian, she passes on these values and is happy to be able to volunteer on behalf of the children. She plans on continuing with this work, and will surely be a role model for young Ethiopian-Israelis!



Shachar Baruch

has a head start on university! Shachar is a ninth grader at the Menachem Begin High School in Ness Ziona. In fifth grade, he took a mathematics course by correspondence through the Weizmann Institute for Science. Since then, he has been taking special courses in math and science, won first-place in the Municipal Bible contest in sixth grade, and took second-place in the Municipal Battlefield Heritage Contest (a quiz on Israeli military history) in seventh grade! Currently, Shachar is in an advanced program for math at Bar Ilan University and takes math and science courses at Tel Aviv University. By taking university courses in high school, Shachar hopes to finish his first university degree before he serves in the army! Sponsors Benjamin Z. Forester, Charlotte Friend and David Michaels can be very proud of the achievements of this gifted student.

JUST THE FACTS

Did you know that in the 2008-2009 school year...

- **1189** students were sponsored in the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program
- **56** schools in Israel participated in the program
- **218** of our students graduated high school!

A large portion of the Ethiopian community in Israel is of school age and must succeed in school in order to help their families break out of poverty. Tragically, Ethiopian high school students in Israel have a much higher drop-out rate than other Israelis. But our sponsorships enable Ethiopian teenagers to stay in school, taking full advantage of educational and social activities and securing a better future for themselves and all Ethiopian Israelis! Thank you!



Bridges

SUMMER 2009



THE NACOEJ/EDWARD G. VICTOR HIGH SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Sponsors Give and Ethiopian Students Give Back

This spring, participants in a NACOEJ mission to Ethiopian and Israel visited a high school that participates in the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program and were able to meet some of the sponsored Ethiopian students in person. A discussion with the students at Ramla-Lod High School, a good school in a poor neighborhood, illustrated the students' engagement in their studies and their high hopes for the future.

An education at Ramla-Lod High School not only teaches students to value academic studies but also to give back to the community by participating in a variety of community service projects. Leah Finder, the school's vice-principal, explains that all students are required to complete 60 hours of community service and volunteering in soup kitchens, libraries, health clinics, youth movements, Magen David Adom (Israel's national emergency medical relief organization) and more. One of the students in the NACOEJ Sponsorship Program, Oshrat Teweve, helps first graders in a local school while another,

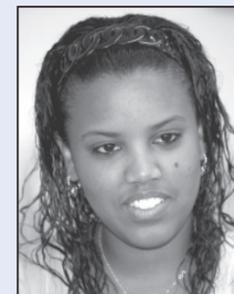
Continued on page 2



NACOEJ mission participants Daniel Friedman and Marion Seidemann (front left and center) and others watch as sponsored high school student Senait Mulat (front right) conducts a physics experiment.

Senait Mulat

Born in Addis Ababa, Senait came to Israel in 2001. Now in eleventh grade, she is studying computer science and physics. Senait attends the Weizmann Institute of Science program for scientific-technologic advancement. Her skills were in evidence when she showed NACOEJ mission members a physics experiment about circuits. In fact, she had to simplify her explanation so that mission members could understand! Senait's dream is to be a doctor.



Ortal Admassu

Ortal Admassu

Ortal, a tenth-grader, already displays leadership ability! Her younger sister surprised Limudiah* teachers when she began first grade because she already had some reading skills. It turned out that Ortal, herself a former Limudiah student, had been teaching her to read at home! Ortal plans on going into the intelligence division in the army and is studying Arabic.

*NACOEJ after-school program for Ethiopian elementary school children.



NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON ETHIOPIAN JEWRY
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 Barbara Ribakove Gordon, Founder and Executive Director

Small Groups That Make a Big Difference: A Model Seder Raises Support for High School Students

A little creativity goes a long way – especially in Delray Beach, Florida! The Sisterhood of Temple Sinai of Palm Beach County, sponsors of two high school students through the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program, has found a unique way to inspire its members about Ethiopian Jewry and enlist their support. At the annual Sisterhood Women's Pre-Passover Seder, the theme of Exodus is expanded to include stories of women from throughout Jewish history who were part of an exodus, from ancient to modern

times. Sheila Firestone, the coordinator of the Sisterhood's Special Events, makes the connection between the Biblical Exodus and the exodus that Ethiopian Jewish women experienced and still experience.

At this year's seder, the focus was on Biblical mothers and the relevance to the NACOEJ high school program was a natural. As Sheila noted, the seder community is invested in this program because "we're all mothers!" Part of the celebration includes reading stories of Ethiopian-Jewish life from NACOEJ newsletters. The choice to

sponsor two Ethiopian-Israeli high school students reflects the group's interest in building personal relationships with the Ethiopian community. Updates about the group's two high school students were given. As an added program component, three NACOEJ embroideries were raffled off and proceeds from the event and raffle more than covered two student sponsorships for the upcoming school year! Always a time of hope, this Passover gave two more Ethiopian girls in Israel a reason to celebrate!

Sponsors Give and Ethiopian Students Give Back Continued from page 1

Ortal Admassu, tutors younger students. A number of the other Ethiopian girls volunteer in the soup kitchen, *Latet* [Lit: "to give"].

High school sponsor Marion Seidemann felt that it made a difference to see the program in action. She commented that the students spoke a lot about choosing professions that would allow them to give back to Israel and the Ethiopian community. Still in high school, these teenagers are already on this path!

May 26th, 2009

The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry

Shalom,

I wish to thank you once again for the support you grant our students from the Ethiopian community.

Your support encourages these students to focus on their studies and to apply themselves diligently to overcome the challenges that they face in school.

Your donation makes it easier for the students to acquire the necessary study supplies and equipment. It also pays for the school's compulsory cultural program which includes educational trips, professional activities and cultural enrichment, according to the needs of each student based on the program of study that she has chosen. Your donation does not cover all their needs, but enables the school to complete anything that is missing for each one of these students.

I hope that during your visit here you were exposed to at least some of the dedication and fruitful activities in our school.

Sincerely,
Leah Finder,
Vice Principal
Ramla-Lod High School

* Translated from the Hebrew and edited for clarification.

A letter from Ramla-Lod High School's vice principal expresses thanks for the sponsorships provided by the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program.

All in the Family: A Sponsor Gets Involved

Ethiopian families face great challenges at every stage of their children's educational careers. NACOEJ offers these families several programs to help their children advance academically. Last summer, a sponsor of an Ethiopian student in the NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program learned that her student's family was going through a difficult time. In a conversation with her student, Israela Wendam, sponsor Evelyn Axelrod learned that Israela's father's job in the Polgat plant had been eliminated when the plant closed, placing great financial pressure on the family. Israela, the oldest of eight, confided in her sponsor her worries about two of her siblings in high school, Hadas and Nimrod, who are talented students in good academic high schools. Now they might not be able to stay in these schools because the family could no longer afford the school fees.

Ms. Axelrod contacted the NACOEJ office in New York to ask if there was any way in which NACOEJ could help – and discovered that NACOEJ also offered to sponsorships for Ethiopian high school students! NACOEJ-New York connected the Wendam family to the NACOEJ staff in Israel, and after a fruitful meeting with Hadas and Nimrod, the students were accepted into the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program. Ms. Axelrod immediately offered to sponsor both students.

Following in her sister's footsteps, Hadas is already planning to attend university and has excelled in her Bagrut (matriculation) examinations to date. The importance of family role models in the Ethiopian community, largely new to higher education, is tremendous. Recent news

gives the Wendam family reason to celebrate – Israela has successfully passed her nursing examinations and has started a nursing job in the prestigious Assaf Harofeh Hospital!

Israela is proud of her accomplishments but stresses that they are especially important because

"...it is also an example for my younger siblings who want very much to follow me and succeed in their own way. Especially because we are Ethiopian and feel that education will open doors for us. For an Ethiopian student it is not easy to concentrate on studies when he or she knows that the financial situation at home is a problem, when parents can't financially support their children and have to lean on them."

Evelyn Axelrod, a long-time NACOEJ supporter, feels that the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program is important because it gives young Ethiopians extra support at a time when it is crucial for them to do well so that they can go on to pursue a higher education and train for a profession. She has special sympathy for the Ethiopian community which has faced so many challenges adapting to a new society. Ms. Axelrod will continue to sponsor Hadas and Nimrod and is already thinking about how to ensure that their other siblings get a good education!



The Wendam family at their home in Kiryat Gat.
Front left: Hadas, Front right: Nimrod.

"I wish to thank you for your gift; it helped me buy things for school like books, notebooks and school shirts. I think I used it well."

Nimrod, 9th grade
Shalon High School

"I also like to take trips, especially nature trips that the school has, but also just simple trips. By the way, next week we have a school trip and I will be able to go, thanks to your help. Without it, I could not have participated, thank you!"

I also wanted to thank you for what you do for Israela because she works very hard (and succeeds) and I know you are a great help to her."

Hadas, 11th grade
Gross High School, Kiryat Gat

Be An Ambassador

We are happy to bring you the fourth issue of "Bridges", written by Judy Dick, Coordinator of Educational Programs. While you hear about the progress of your own students, we would like to let you know about the accomplishments of other students in the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Program. Let us know if you have news about your own students that you want to share! Please feel free to call us at 212-233-5200, ext. 230 or e-mail highschool@nacoelj.org. In addition, please pass on our information to friends and family who might be interested in supporting the program. You are an ambassador for those wonderful boys and girls, and your endorsement will go a long way toward enabling more Ethiopian teens to get the education they need in Israel.