



# 2017 Degrees OF Success

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

## You're Their Greatest Ambassador!

We're delighted to bring you, our AAS sponsors, the 10th issue of "Degrees of Success". We're so proud of all that our students have achieved – achievements made possible through your wonderful support. Without you, many students could not complete their degrees, so you play a great role 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: [education@nacoej.org](mailto:education@nacoej.org). We'd love to hear your stories.

And please pass our material on 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 ambassador for these young adults. Your endorsement can make all the difference! Thank you.

**“May you continue with this blessed and important act...”**



Alan and Jane Cornell, long-time sponsors of many Ethiopian-Israeli college students (since 1998!), met recently with some of their students in Israel. They had a wonderful visit together.

Among them were Shirli Desta, a student at Hebrew University, majoring in occupational therapy, and her father, Yossi, who graduated college in 1999 (see above). He, too, was sponsored by the Cornells! Today Yossi is a manager in a community center in Kfar Saba.

Some of the Cornell's students who've graduated could not attend, but sent letters telling them where they are in life. Here are some of these letters that show the connection sponsors have with their students, and the success that the sponsorships help students to achieve.

**Osnat Zamana Adasu:** *Hi, as you most likely remember, I graduated Bar-*

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## AAS Sponsors = The Keys to Success

Since 1987, the NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program (AAS) (originally named for Vidal Sassoon) has given thousands of Ethiopian-Israeli students the financial support needed so they can complete their degrees. The Israeli government covers college tuition, but students must pay for their own 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 help your student to stay in school, earn a degree, enter a profession, and break out of poverty. You're making a wonderful, lifetime investment.

*Ilan University four years ago. Today I am the mother of four children. My twins were born five months ago. I work at Tel Hashomer Hospital as an X-ray technician; I've been working at the hospital for four years now. Thank you for everything that you did and are still doing to help students...With love, Osnat*

**Genetu Engedaw:** *As you know, I studied for a BS in business administration with an emphasis on finance at Touro College between the years 1998-2001. I worked in the Ministry of Finance as a security deputy officer, and was responsible for the government complex as well from 1999-2007. I've been working in the Prime Minister's office since 2008 in different positions. Today I am a senior coordinator in the accounting and reporting department.*

*I've been married for 17 years, and I have four children: daughters 16 and 11 and sons 9 and 7. I believe the sponsors and NACOEJ had a big part in my success: thanks to your sponsorship I was able to invest more in the studies without feeling worried or stressed, and it is something that always accompanies me. I would like to express my deep gratitude to you, Alan and Jane. I*

*wish you and your family health and success...Many thanks, Genetu*

**Orgal Almayo:** *We haven't spoken for a long time, how are you? I missed writing to you. I am happy to tell you...I completed my studies and am waiting to attend the ceremony at the college where I learned.*

*I thank G-d for giving me the privilege to learn, acquire knowledge, succeed and get to know places, different opinions and different communities and people in Israel. I find it hard to believe that I would have been exposed to these things if it wasn't for my studies.*

*I would like to thank you for your sponsorship from the bottom of my heart. It helped me while I was studying and still helps me today as well...I wish you a wonderful life together (your letters made me understand that you have a warm family). There is nothing like family, our family will always be there for us no matter where or how we are. May you continue with this blessed and important act. May you always be surrounded with love, happiness and most importantly, strong health and long life...Thousands of thanks!!! Orgal*

## **Sowing Seeds...**

When Yoni Bayna Fekede wrote to his sponsors, Alan and Jane Cornell, he included a beautiful analogy. He said:

*Dear Sponsors, the seed you sow bears fruit, and the fruit is the blessing that you will receive from above. I thank you very much again and again, and of course, may you receive a great blessing.*

*I hope that after I finish this process, I too will become a person who helps and supports as much as he can, just like you. My idea is to go on studying and do a PhD. Of course, I will update you on every step of the way. I love you very much. One of your own, With great esteem, Yoni.*

## **A Special Diploma Ceremony**

When Liat Miriam-Volda graduated from college, she wanted to express her gratitude to both NACOEJ and her sponsor, Ms. Sandy Gottstein.

Here is the note she sent to Yehudit Abramson, accompanied by a beautiful photo of her and her grandmother on graduation day.

*Dear Sandy and Yehudit,*

*The Ruppin's Academic Center diploma ceremony took place yesterday, and I couldn't help remembering that you have a big part in the fact that I was able to attend this ceremony.*

*I wanted to thank you and Ms. Gottstein for your great support. There are no words to describe my gratitude to you. I appreciate Ms. Gottstein's sponsorship very much.*

*Thank you very much once again, Liat Miriam-Volda*



# “At 8 in the morning I received the news...”

**Editor’s Note:** It's fascinating to find a young Ethiopian student in Israel facing the same dilemma so many modern women (and some men too) face these days: What must I sacrifice – my family or my career? Postpone marriage or parenthood to reach a goal in business or the arts? Try to handle both and perhaps not succeed in either?

Yaffa Tebeja let her heart speak about her painful choice in the letter below to her loving sponsor, Evely Laser Shlensky, a NACOEJ Past President and Board Member – and we can all rejoice with both of them that this time, there were two happy endings.

## From Yaffa to Evely:



Hi, I mentioned in my first letter that I plan to run for head of the student association. It was a really crazy month; I was at the college from the morning early hours until the late hours of the evening, I barely slept...We were listening to the students and what they needed, and learned what we could do...to make it happen.

After a long month of working on the election campaign, the time for the elections finally came. But, a day before the election, I received the difficult news that my brother was missing and that people were looking for him.

I had to decide what I'm doing...if I should continue to work on the campaign for the last 24 hours or to give that up to be at home and support my family.

**After taking some very difficult considerations, I decided to continue to work on the campaign, and I made this decision with tears in my eyes. Before I left home, I put a few shekels in a charity box and asked G-d to find my brother and that I will win.**

At 8 in the morning I received the news that my brother was found! And I won the election at 11pm!

I am now the head of the student administration at my college.

I would like to thank you again for helping me, it isn't something that could be taken for granted, and I am happy to tell you about myself and what I am going through.

Thank you very much.

I am hopeful that in the next letter I will tell you that I am doing well and succeeding in my new position...  
Sincerely...Yaffa

## From Evely to Yaffa:



I apologize for taking so long to respond to your wonderful news about winning the school election to become head of the student administration at your college.

I'm sure this will give you many opportunities to exercise your talents as a leader, learning as you go. No doubt the leadership position will also enable you to meet many interesting

people: students, teachers and administrators.

I think you are a person who makes the most of such opportunities and brings a great deal to them.

**Also, I was relieved to read that your brother was found. How frightening it must have been for you and your family when you realized he was missing. I do hope that he's doing well.**

My daughter, Aviva, and her family who live on the East Coast of the U.S. ...were here for Passover. It's wonderful when we're...together. Her daughter is about to graduate high school at the end of this month. She'll begin college in the fall. Aviva's son is already in college.

This coming week my oldest grandson will graduate from college: the University of California at Berkeley (the same school from which I graduated). My husband and I will drive up there...to be at the graduation on Saturday.

I just attended a large conference in Washington, DC. It's called the Consultation on Conscience. It's a social justice conference of the Reform Jewish movement which takes place every two years.

Ira and I will travel to Italy in June for two weeks. I love Italy and am happy that we can spend time there.

I hope you're doing very well, Yaffa! B'vracha...Evely

**As a deeply-valued sponsor, you, too, know what it is like to share your life with an Ethiopian-Israeli college student. We have many more students waiting to be sponsored, so if you have family members or friends who you think would love to have this kind of experience too, please contact Karen Gens at 212-233-5200, ext. 230 or email: [education@nacoj.org](mailto:education@nacoj.org) and she will happily help you out.**

## From Ilan to his former sponsors, the UJA-Federation of New York: "You have no idea how much it helps..."



*Shalom...I am writing you this letter to thank you for your sponsorship...which is helping and making things much easier for me during...my studies. It allows me to focus and invest all my efforts in the studies. It also relieves some of the financial concerns.*

*I am 30 years old and an electrical engineering student. I'm in the second semester of the final year of my studies at Ben-Gurion University in Be'er Sheva. I am so happy to be graduating. I began to send my resume in the last few weeks, and to look for a job in the area of Haifa. I was interviewed and passed all the different stages of the placement process for a high-tech company in Migdal HaEmek, and I am waiting for their reply.*

*I would like to thank you again for your sponsorship. Thank you for the concern and care. You have no idea how much it helps. Thanks...Ilan Eliyahu*

## "I was privileged to share my life with them..."



Yehudit Abramson is the Israel Coordinator for the NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program (AAS). This lovely note came to her recently from a graduating student, Shlomit Solomon-Desta, about her sponsors, Barney and Rachel Gottstein.

*I wanted to thank you Yehudit, for everything. I was happy to get to know my sponsors. They are very good and lovely people.*

*I was privileged to share my life with them and they shared their life with me as well. Having these kinds of people in your life isn't something that could be taken for granted, and we don't thank them enough. Thanks to their help I was able to afford the recent year of my studies. I saved every shekel that I received from them for the tuition, and it helped me very much...Shlomit*

## "I certainly made a friend for life!"

Karen Gens, our New York Director of Sponsorship Programs, recently received a note from her own sponsored college student, Tarik Goshu Kopcha, who was married not long ago. We've taken just a snippet from it, but one that says everything:

*"It is now the time to say that in addition to having an amazing person like you in my life, you are also contributing so much to me. I appreciate everything you did so much, and for recognizing me in the first place, I certainly made a friend for life. With love and appreciation, and I hope to see you soon. Kisses and hugs to all of you...from me and Boris...Tarik Goshu Kopcha (my additional and new name)."*



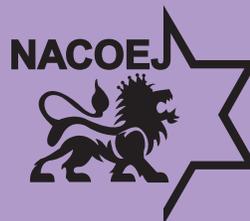
## Just the Facts

In the 2016-2017 school year...

- **116** AAS sponsors helped support **364** students in **5** universities and **30** academic colleges, including **10** nursing schools and **8** engineering schools.
- **118** sponsored students finished their coursework this year and graduated in their fields of study. About **126** students will finish their studies soon.
- **38** sponsored students were studying for advanced degrees.
- **2** sponsored students received Masters Degrees and **12** more students will finish their Masters Degrees soon.

## For 35 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.



## North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry

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