



# 2018 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 11th issue of "Degrees of Success".

We're so proud of our students' achievements, made possible through your wonderful support. Without you, many students could not complete their degrees. 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: [education@nacoj.org](mailto:education@nacoj.org). We'd love to hear your stories.

Please pass our material to family and friends who may want to help a deserving Ethiopian-Israeli college student. (Want more copies of Degrees? Let us know.) You're the best ambassadors for these young adults. Your endorsement can make all the difference! Thank you.

## "Nursing school is my way of giving back to the community..."



Solomon Tapeta studies in the Hebrew University School of Nursing. He's sponsored by Faye and Mike Lieman, whose involvement with, and service to, NACOEJ goes back many years.

Solomon appeared in an article in the May/June 2018 *Hadassah Magazine*: "100 Years of Nursing Education".

His story, in the biography he wrote when he applied for a NACOEJ sponsor, is captivating. It expresses the love of a child for his parents, his community, and the importance of education.

"My name is Solomon Tapeta. I live in Jerusalem. I just finished a year of preparatory school at the Hebrew University, and was accepted to a nursing program at Hadassah Ein Kerem.

"I was born in Ethiopia in 1984. For as long as I can remember I heard stories about Israel, and in 1991 we - my parents, my three older brothers and myself - made our dream a reality and came to Israel.

"Our absorption was very difficult. My parents were mostly busy surviving, and so we were forced to experience the difficulties of growing up alone.

"I am the fourth child of eight children. The financial difficulties that my family suffered were evident in day-to-day life, especially during the holidays, but it was not the financial difficulties or my environment that caused me to want to succeed.

"After my army service, my father, who has always been a strong and stable presence in our house, became sick with cancer and needed his children's help. For years now, my mother has been battling diabetes. Despite this, she

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## 36 Years and Counting...

Since 1982, NACOEJ has provided humanitarian and educational aid to the Ethiopian-Jewish community. NACOEJ is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



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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) 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 to drop out of school and take low-paying, unskilled jobs to help their families. Your AAS sponsorship helps your student to stay in school, earn a degree, enter a profession and break out of poverty. You're making a wonderful, lifetime investment.

is a lioness who fights every day to keep her family together.

"Caring for, and helping my parents, has become the job of the children, but I carry the majority of the burden - accompanying my parents to the doctor often and translating for them at government offices.

"In 2007, I started to study law at Haifa University, but, even though I had good grades, I was forced to abandon my studies because of personal and financial difficulties.

"I believe that social advancement and mobility are possible through education. I hope to finish my studies successfully to prove to myself, and to serve as an example for those younger than me, that it is possible to change and that it is never too late. I hope to continue my studies and join the academic staff at Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a lecturer.

"Nursing School is my way of giving back to the community, to investigate the various illnesses that

are common among the Ethiopian community (which developed due to the change in lifestyle), to develop an information system to help the elderly in the community, and to expose the younger generation how to live a healthy life.

"I am asking for your help so I can finish my studies successfully and make my dream a reality. I have the spirit and strength to lead this change. I am convinced I can give back. Thank you."

### **The Liemans became Solomon's sponsors. Here is his short, heartfelt note thanking them:**

"I would like to thank you for your contribution to the scholarship for me, which can help me continue to learn with great success.

"I am an Ethiopian and come to these studies after many years in which I really wanted to learn and succeed in my life. I hope I can contribute back to my community and to the society in which I live."

## **“Thanks to people like you who light up the world...”**



**Sometimes when students write to their sponsors, they include a poem. Israela Hayloo wrote a touching poem to her sponsors, Alan and Jane Cornell (at left) who sponsor many Ethiopian-Israeli college students.**

"Dear Alan and Jane Cornell,

"Hello, how are you? I hope you feel well. Yesterday was Lag B'Omer. I assume you too celebrated the holiday around a bonfire in far-away America.

"I wanted to bless you in honor of the holiday, that just as the bonfire burns and warms and lights things up, so too may your hearts and lives light the way for you always. May you be successful in everything – health, good deeds, your business. May the fire of Torah not be far from you and give you everything you ask for.

"I want to dedicate a poem I wrote to you. (It sounds better in Hebrew!):

***Every person has that friend with whom you dare to be yourself.***

***They do not ask for anything. Just that you dare to be you! Yourself.***

***Next to him you will not regret all the little things,***

***because he knows, understands how to gather...***

***Through what you are lacking, he knows who you truly are,  
and makes sure to fill the empty space.***

***He fills that dark space...and brings the fire that burns in his heart closer.***

***Because he knows how dear you are to G-d and how happy he is for you to lean on him!***

"Thank you just for being people with big and warm hearts. Thank you for who you are and what you are, and if only I would be able, some time, to dedicate of my heart to repay you (and only in happiness). Because thanks to people like you who light up the world, I know that when the day comes I will light up the world in my own way!!!! Just like you!

"May you be blessed, Israela"

## “The Time has Come to Stop and Say Thank You...”

Among the many beautiful letters college students write to their sponsors in the NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program, some stand out so much that we want to share them with you. This letter is from college student Zion Menase to his sponsor, Samuel Gelfand. We think you'll be as moved as we were when we read it – and, also, by a touching statement Mr. Gelfand made to another student of his.



"Hello! I've been enjoying your support for a few months now. The time has come to stop and say thank you.

"Thank you for helping me meet the challenges ahead of me with my head held a bit higher. There is no doubt that I am surprised at how high the hurdles in front of me are, how the experiences that I have undergone

shake me, and how much your contribution makes things easier for me.

"I believe that you know about the high cost of living in Israel. The gap between the average person's income and their monthly expenses is only expanding with the years. The Jewish State is a rich country with poor citizens. It is very difficult to advance at all in our tiny country, especially when you come from a low socio-economic background.

"Every good biography starts with the story of a difficult childhood - a poor family in a small unknown town - until the subject of the biography finds his purpose with the help of good people along the way and from there the path to success is paved.

"The biography goes on to tell of roadblocks and resistance

the hero experiences, but through his own inner strength he can overcome everything and focus on his goals.

"If the biography is really good, the hero thanks those who helped him on the way and will not forget that he came from the bottom, and will always hold out a hand to help.

"You are one of the people that I am meeting along the way. I do not think of myself as someone who biographies will be written about, but even so, in the small biography of mine, I am the hero, you are among the good people who I will always be grateful for who help me without expecting anything else in return.

"In giving me this scholarship you give me a sense of how much generosity can be pure. You 'compel' me to continue the circle of giving to others, and for this I will also say thank you. In great thanks, Zion Menase"

In writing to another of his students, sponsor Samuel Gelfand expressed this beautiful thought that we want to share with you as well:

**"I have found as I've grown older that I get greater pleasure in giving than in receiving; I thank you for the opportunity to help you in a small way."**



**Genet Desse** is a young woman who is sponsored by Barney and Rachel Gottstein. She is now the Director of a kindergarten program for children with special needs.

Yehudit Abramson, the AAS Coordinator, traveled to Netanya to bring her Barney's Books for the children in her care.

This photo tells the whole story of Barney's Books and how important it is – and how beloved it is.

**As a deeply-valued sponsor, you know what it is like to share your life with an Ethiopian-Israeli college student. Many more students are waiting for sponsors. 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@nacoelj.org. She'll happily help you reach out.**

## From Yehudit Abramson, Israel Coordinator of the NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program (AAS):



*Yehudit with a student's baby*

This is my 21st year as Coordinator of the NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program.

When I first started my job in NACOEJ in 1997, we had only 78 sponsored students. Today, after 21 years, we have about 350 sponsored students each

year and more than 200 sponsors.

At the beginning, most of the students studied subjects that fit their abilities as new emigres to Israel who had difficulties with a new language and a different culture.

From those early limited choices, usually consisting of nursing or social work, we can be very proud today to

find our students studying a wide variety of subjects such as law, computer science, engineering, medicine, teaching and the arts. Today, the sky is the limit.

I was, and am, also lucky to know all of you, our very generous faithful sponsors who support our students with patience and confidence.

As many of you know, sometimes a student keeps in touch with his or her sponsor long after graduation. Sponsors are invited to the weddings of their students and often get to know their students' families.

What's so important about the relationship you develop with the students, in addition to the financial support you provide, is that the students feel they can talk to you about their personal difficulties and you always have a listening ear and an encouraging answer.

I love coordinating the AAS program. I love working with all our sponsors. And I hope you will help this program continue to reach out and give a hand to our Ethiopian-Israeli students for a long time to come.



**Tarik Goshu Kupcha** is the personally-sponsored student of Karen Gens, our U.S. Director of High School and College Sponsorship Programs.

She received a Bachelor of Law degree in Israel and came to America to attend Cardozo Law School at Yeshiva University where she just received a Master of Laws degree.

Tarik invited Karen to come to her graduation and Karen happily accepted.

*Photo from left: Tarik's cousin Yael, her sister Dorit, Tarik, and Karen.*



### **Vicki Trachten Schwartz**

sponsors many college students and helps support the Limudiah program.

She recently had a wonderful meeting in Israel with several of her students.

*From left standing: Ilana Yamtza, Vicki, Israela Beinesan-Yasso.*

*From left sitting: Maayan Asayahu, Flego Mola.*

## **Just the Facts**

**In the 2017-2018 school year...**

- **103** AAS sponsors helped support **358** students in **5** universities and **24** academic colleges, including **14** nursing schools.
- **20** sponsored students graduated during the first semester and **91** graduated during the second semester.
- **44** sponsored students are working on advanced degrees, **41** on second degrees and **3** on third degrees.
- **3** sponsored students graduated with advanced degrees during the first semester and **25** will be graduating soon.