



# 2017 Bridges

The NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program



## You Can Be an Ambassador

We're delighted to bring you the 12th issue of Bridges. We hope you enjoy the stories and that you will serve as an Ambassador for Ethiopian-Israeli high school students by passing this newsletter to friends and family who might also want to support our students.

Your endorsement can ensure that more deserving Ethiopian-Israeli teens get the good education that is the key to their successful futures.

Questions? Call Karen Gens at 212-233-5200, Ext. 230 or email: [Education@nacoej.org](mailto:Education@nacoej.org). She'll answer questions, contact prospective sponsors, and chat about the joys of sponsorship (she's been a sponsor for years). And if you have news to share about your student, please let her know. Thank you for your dedication to these Ethiopian-Israeli young people!

## Their Relationship Came Alive...



NACOEJ High School Sponsor Doris Gordon and her husband, Robert, met with her student, Eden Chekol, on a trip to Israel this year. Eden is in the 12th grade in Rishon LeZion.

It was a warm, lively visit that included School Advisor Shoshi Rabinovich, School Principal Haya Shoyerman, and Leah Barkai, NACOEJ Coordinator of the High School Sponsorship Program.

Eden happily chatted with the Gordons, telling them how she was taking units for the Bagrut matriculation exams. She told them she would be going to Poland with her high school class and, after graduation, into Sherut Leumi (National Service) in a medical capacity.

The Gordons told Eden about themselves and how Doris has been sponsoring NACOEJ students for many years. Spending time together made the relationship between Eden and her sponsor come alive!

## The Best High Schools in Israel

An article in "Yediot Aharonot" provided a list of the best high schools in Israel in 2016. This was based on the following criteria: fewer dropouts and a high percentage of IDF recruitment.

The list included high schools and junior high schools that excelled in both social and educational values.

The following schools from that list are ones in which we have our High School Sponsorship program.

- Atidim in Lod
- Ulpanat Zvia (Eliad) in Lod
- Ulpanat Zvia in Bat Yam
- Hebrew University High School in Jerusalem
- Evelina de Rothschild High School in Jerusalem

We are proud that these schools in which we have sponsored students have made this prestigious list.

## High School Sponsorships = School Trips, Extra Study Hours, and More...

Since 1997, the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program has changed the lives of thousands of Ethiopian-Israeli teenagers. Thanks to their sponsors – you! – they can attend high-quality, local high schools rather than leave home for lower-level, state-subsidized boarding schools.

Basic high school tuition is covered by the government, but Israeli schools charge additional fees, which many Ethiopian families cannot afford. You enable your student to get essentials like extra study hours, fees for special programs, and to take advantage of all the school's educational opportunities like school trips.

As many students say, a sponsorship lets them be "...just like the other kids." Your partnership gives these teens self-confidence and an education that is key to getting into, and succeeding in, college. And this, in turn, enables them to go on to successful futures. Thank you.



North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry

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## 35 Years and Counting...

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

# The Bagrut Numbers Tell the Real Story

The Bagrut, Israel's matriculation exam, is the key to entry into good colleges and universities. The NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program prides itself on enabling Ethiopian-Israeli high school students to pass the Bagrut with flying colors. Here are some statistics to prove it:

## Bagrut Statistics in the Two Largest Cities in the High School Program: 2015/2016

### Students Who Graduated with Full Bagrut in Lod

- Total number of Ethiopian-Israeli students in our program in Lod: **103**
- Number of students who graduated in 2015/2016: **21**
- Schools, number of graduates, how many passed Bagrut:
  - Ulpanat Zvia (Eliad): **8 out of 8**
  - Elyashiv Zvia Yeshiva: **6 out of 6**
  - Ort Lod: **2 out of 3**
  - Ramle Lod HS: **4 out of 4**

**95%** of Ethiopian-Israeli students in our high school program in Lod graduated with full Bagrut.

### Students Who Graduated with Full Bagrut in Rehovot

- Total number of Ethiopian-Israeli students in our program in Rehovot: **265**
- Number of students who graduated in 2015/2016: **41**
- Schools, number of graduates, how many passed Bagrut:
  - Amit Rehovot: **15 out of 15**
  - Ort Rehovot: **3 out of 3**
  - DeShalit Rehovot: **9 out of 9**
  - Katzir HS: **6 out of 7**
  - Wizo Rehovot: **4 out of 7**

**91.5%** of Ethiopian-Israeli students in our high school program in Rehovot graduated with full Bagrut.

The Evelina de Rothschild Secondary School in Jerusalem also had seven Ethiopian-Israeli young people graduate in the 2015-2016 school year - and all seven of them also passed the Bagrut with flying colors.

### How do all these numbers compare to other students in Israel?

A recent Meyers JDC Brookdale Institute report says that 60% of non-Ethiopian-Israelis graduate from high school qualified to enter college. That means only 60% pass the Bagrut.

Among Ethiopian-Israelis in general, only 37% of the girls and 24% of the boys pass the Bagrut.

**We are very proud of our high school students and their sponsors. These Ethiopian-Israeli young people now have the keys to unlocking successful futures and you, their sponsors, have made this possible.**

## Keeping It in the Family...

Karen Gens, New York Director of the NACOEJ Educational Sponsorship Programs, has been a sponsor herself for many years.

Recently her nephew, Eric Sandler, his wife Rachel, and their children Brianna (7) and Noa (4), adopted a high school student themselves.

Their reason: "We decided that we would like to sponsor a child because of how our family values education. These children will build a strong foundation with the educational opportunities that NACOEJ and donors afford them.

"My aunt has been involved with this organization for years and has had a very fulfilling experience sponsoring educational opportunities for children through NACOEJ. It is also a wonderful touch that the sponsored student reaches out to the donor. This serves to personalize the sponsorship and make it more meaningful."

The Sandler family recently received a beautiful and informative letter from their student, a lovely girl named

*continued on page 4*



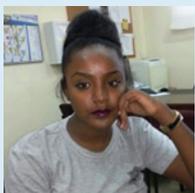
*Karen's nephew, Eric Sandler, his wife Rachel, and children in Iceland.* ▲

## “We would like our thanks to reach all the way to you...”

A group of students at the AMIT Kiryat Malachi High School wrote a beautiful note to their sponsor, Diana Yacobi, a member of the NACOEJ Board. We want to share it with you, as well as some personal comments the students wrote to her about themselves.

*Shalom. We would all like to thank you very much for your huge heart, and for thinking and helping us with the school tuition each year.*

*Even though you live far, we would like our thanks to reach all the way to you, and that you will know we appreciate what you're doing for us very much. Here is a bit about ourselves:*



**Sharon Adene: (10th grade)**

*I try hard to do well in school. Sometimes I stay after school to prepare my homework. I also get help from the teachers. Math is very difficult for me. I love playing soccer with my friends, and I'm very good at it.*



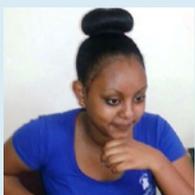
**Avetau Bayech: (11th grade)**

*I am already taking the matriculation exams. I want to study at university like my older sister...I'm working hard to do well in the Bagrut.*



**Adam Dagna: (12th grade)**

*I am focused entirely on the matriculation exams. Math is my favorite subject.*



**Aschelo Gadamo: (10th grade)**

*I like going to school and everyone is helping me succeed.*



**Eden Melede: (10th grade)**

*I work hard to do well in school. It's important to my mother that I do well in school, and I want to make her happy. I love going on school trips with my friends.*



**Chen Wasi: (10th grade)**

*The studies are a little difficult. My homeroom teacher is helping me all the time with different subjects. I love my homeroom teacher.*



**Matan Aysham: (10th grade)**

*School is a bit difficult. I want to advance in the studies very much. I also enjoy playing soccer with my friends.*

*All of us appreciate your help, and we hope you will come visit us here at our school in Kiryat Malachi.*

## How Important the NACOEJ High School Program Really Is

Another meaningful letter from the AMIT School in Kiryat Malachi, this one to Leah Barkai, Israel Coordinator of the Edward G. Victor/NACOEJ High School Sponsorship Program, tells the story well:

*Dear Leah... We wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and NACOEJ for continuously encouraging donors to support our students at AMIT Kiryat Malachi. As you know, the Ethiopian families in Kiryat Malachi are some of the neediest families in the country. The support your donors have given our students is their lifeline to a successful future.*

*Last year, twelve students received scholarships through NACOEJ. Three of them have since*

*graduated – Aviv Gavra has been learning in a pre-army military training school and is waiting to be called to enlist. Leah Gambur moved to Yavneh and is working at various jobs. And Esther Almo is a basic training officer in the Air Force.*

*Thank you very much!  
Karen Americus*

**From: Avi Bayene to his sponsor Elaine Schwartz**

*Thank you very much for four amazing years. Your aid helped me very much, and I hope that in the future I will become the CEO of a prosperous company, and I will be the one who will sponsor and help others.*

## “A Privilege and an Honor...”

### Letters Between a Graduating High School Student and His Sponsor

Dear Sponsor... Getting to know you was both a privilege and an honor. There are no words to thank you for the privilege of receiving your great help.

Helping an Israeli teenager you don't even know finance his studies for three years is not something that can be taken for granted. I owe you a debt of gratitude for what you have done, thanks to you I had no financial concerns and I was able to devote myself entirely to succeed in my studies.

I would like to update you that I graduated high school with good grades. I am now headed toward a new path: joining the army. I hope once I'll complete my military service to continue to pursue my education and study academically. Many thanks for your great help. You will always have a warm spot in my heart.

Yours fondly and with appreciation, Ezra



Hi Ezra,

I am so happy to hear that you are completing High School and about to start off on a new Journey!

I hope you live a righteous and prosperous life and that you give help and hope to others along the way. I am so happy that I have been able to help, even if only in a small way.

May God bless and keep you.

Shalom,

Michael,

Your sponsor and supporter



#### “Keeping It in the Family” continued from page 2

Mula Adiselem: I am 12 and 1/2 years old. I immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia in 2012. We came to the city of Be'er Sheva and lived in an absorption center for four years. We moved to Holon during the summer vacation, and I am now studying at Yavne High School.

We are a family of 6 including my parents. I have two sisters and one brother. My youngest sister is 1 1/2, the second youngest sister is 3 1/2, and my brother is 11.

At school, my favorite subjects are PE, math, and Bible. I love to draw, read and play dodge ball. When I grow up I might become a doctor. I love going to school and have friends in my class.

Before I come home from school, I take my sisters from their daycare; I give them food and play with them until my mother comes back. I prepare my homework afterwards.

I went on the school trip to Mitzpe Ramon, and I enjoyed it very much. We learned about the Ramon crater, and about Ilan Ramon. I like to travel and get to know different parts of the country. During the trips I also got to know the other girls in my class.

I really love a class called field training: we learn about different parts of the country...and go on a trip once a month. One of the most beautiful trips was to Ancient Yaffo, we learned about the ships that used to sail there, and traveled along the beach, we also learned about the history of the place. I love PE very much, and I also participated in two running tournaments...Thank you, Mula Adiselem

And now, this past May, Karen's sister and brother-

in-law, Judie and Ted Sandler, have also become sponsors. Their student is Idan Zeleke who is in the 9th grade at the Branco Weiss School in Beit Shemesh. Karen's family has truly made sponsoring high school students a part of their family and they and their students are all gaining so much from the experience.



Karen (left) and one of her students, Ricki Goshu ▲

**Note:** Karen first heard Barbara Ribakove speak at a Hadassah meeting 20 years ago. She was inspired to sponsor an Ethiopian-Israeli student and has been doing so ever since. She shared her “amazing and very fulfilling experiences” in sponsoring students with her family and thinks that made “...the prospect of a NACOEJ sponsorship click with her family.”

## Just the Facts

In the 2016-2017 school year...

- **222** sponsors participated in the H.S. program
- **835** students were sponsored
- **50** schools in **14** Israeli cities
- **174** of our students graduated

**Hundreds** of students are still hoping for sponsors