

2019 Bridges

The NACOEJ High School Sponsorship Program

You Can Be an Ambassador

We're delighted to bring you the 14th issue of Bridges.

We hope you will continue to 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, our U.S. Director of High School and College Sponsorship Programs at 212-233-5200, ext. 230, or email: education@nacoelj.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 so much for your dedication to these Ethiopian-Israeli young people!

The Icing on the Cake



Bernice Boltax and one of her students, Chen Belai

The icing on the cake happens when NACOEJ sponsors and their Ethiopian-Israeli students are able to meet in person and enjoy each other's company.

Bernice Boltax is a long-time sponsor of Ethiopian-Israeli high school students through NACOEJ.

She spent a month in Israel in Haifa with a group of former teachers from Boston, helping students with their English.

While there she met with Chen Belai, who is a student she has been sponsoring for four years.

Chen is a student at the Hebrew University High School in Jerusalem.

Bernice has a very warm relationship with Chen (whom she has visited before).

She brought Chen gifts when they met together. Chen speaks English, and the two spent much time chatting. They decided then that they would start to correspond by email.

Chen lives in Jerusalem with her mother and siblings.

She is doing very well in school and told Bernice that she used to like math very much, but now prefers literature. She will start studying for the Bagrut (matriculation) exams next year.

Hebrew University High School is one of the best high schools in the country. Ten years ago, the school had only one Ethiopian student, today there are 29 Ethiopian students.

Many of them are able to attend this prestigious school because they have NACOEJ sponsors like you.

High School Sponsorships = Educational Excursions, Enrichment Programs and More...

Since 1997, the NACOEJ High School Sponsorship Program has changed the lives of thousands of Ethiopian-Israeli teens. It is the bridge that enables them to go on from high school to college.

Basic high school tuition is covered by the government, but Israeli schools charge additional fees which many Ethiopian families cannot afford. Your sponsorship allows your student to go on school trips, have extra study hours, attend special programs, and be able to take advantage of all the school's educational opportunities.

As many students say, a sponsorship lets them be "...just like the other kids." You give these teens self-confidence and an education that's key to getting into, and succeeding in, college. And this then enables them to go on to successful futures. **Thank you.**



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“I’m looking forward to contributing to the State of Israel...”

The following is an inspiring letter written to Karen Gens, NACOEJ New York Director of Sponsorship Programs from her own personally-sponsored student, Uda Chekol.



Dear Karen,

How are you? The school year is coming to an end here in Jerusalem and I will be graduating from the Tehilla-Evelina de Rothschild School in just a few weeks!

I’m happy, sad, nervous and excited all at the same time about closing this chapter of my life and beginning something new.

In November I will be enlisting in the army! I’ve been assigned to a combat unit and I’m looking forward to the chance to contribute to the State of Israel.

After that, I want to go to college.

The last few months have been very intense with lots of matriculation exams and end of year projects.

I’ve been working very hard and have only two exams left – in Bible and Talmud.

Thank you very much for your sponsorship over the last years. It has been a help financially, but also a help knowing that you support me and are cheering me on from afar.

My family and I are very grateful.

With all good wishes, Uda Chekol

“My grades are good, but I want to do even better...”

This letter was written by Liel Nagosa to her sponsors, Cyrus and Judy Abbe. Cyrus is a long-time member of the NACOEJ Advisory Board. He and two of his children have been to Ethiopia to aid the Jewish community there.



Dear Judy and Cyrus,

I hope my letter finds you well. Thank you for your sponsorship once again this year.

It’s a big help for me and my family.

I’ve just begun ninth grade at the Tehilla-Evelina de Rothschild School in Jerusalem.

Over the summer we spent a lot of time with my grandparents who live in Raanana and in the southern city of Ofakim.

I also helped out with my younger brothers and sisters, especially

my youngest brother who is just five.

I am determined to do well in school this year.

My grades are good, but I want to do even better. I’m focusing on math and chemistry, and my main goal is to improve in English.

Wishing you a Shana Tova.

I hope you enjoy the holidays and that it will be a sweet and healthy year.

With warm wishes from Jerusalem,

Liel Nagosa

37 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.

Partners with NACOEJ Since 1987

Dr. Jack and Judy Stern have partnered with NACOEJ in our important work on behalf of Ethiopian Jews since 1987, possibly even longer since our computerized data base only goes back that far.

Today they are dedicated sponsors of many high school students.

In a recent email from the Sterns, in which they made another gift to the High School Sponsorship Program, Jack wrote the following:



Judy and I are in Israel regularly and when we see those beautiful Ethiopian faces we smile.

We were married in 1991, having supported the organization for the years prior, and we asked that there be no gifts, rather that donations be made to NACOEJ instead.

May 24th, the weekend of our wedding, was the weekend of the Operation Solomon Airlift!

We still get emotional thinking about it.

Thanks for doing this important work,

Jack Stern, MD, PhD

“They kissed the ground and wept...”

This is another moving letter we want to share with you.

To: Vernon and Elizabeth Neppe

Hello, This is Manali Leah Chekol. I am 17 and in 11th grade at Yavne High School in Holon.

I am the oldest in the family. My youngest sister is 10 and my middle sister is 15.

I am in 11th grade and my focus is on two subjects: 1) computer science which interests me because it is very challenging and really develops your thinking, and 2) law, I chose this subject because I like law and find it very interesting. Even if this is not what I intend to do in the future, I think that it will benefit me in life after school. I will know my rights and the law.

My family came to Israel from Ethiopia. After we moved we lived in Jerusalem. My parents studied in Ulpan and I and my sisters went to school and kindergarten.

My mother would tell me that they always dreamed of coming to Israel and that when they first touched the ground in Israel they kissed the ground and cried.



Once I didn't really understand why they wanted to come to Jerusalem so badly, so they explained to me that this is the only land we have and generations have dreamed of going to holy Jerusalem.

Now that I am older I understand the meaning and the excitement. I am also connected to the land. A year ago, I took a course to become a guide. I learned how to guide via walking and taking hikes in various important places in Israel and by doing so, learning about them.

Thank you very much for the scholarship. You are considerate, good people, and I wish you only health and tremendous joy. Your scholarship helps with our expenses and makes us very happy.

Thank you, Leah

“I hope your investment will help me succeed in the future...”

These two letters were written between a high school student, Yosef Abonech, and his sponsor, Barak Raviv. They clearly show what sponsorships can mean to both students and their sponsors.



Dear Mr. Raviv,

I am in 12th grade at Ort Lod on the Information Systems Track.

I am studying and making a large effort to finish, having taken a full course of matriculation exams.

I help my parents raise my younger siblings, and in my free time I am busy with music – editing music on my computer.

I want to thank you for the support and the accompaniment over the year as well as the financial aid which really helped me finish my studies successfully.

I really appreciate your help and hope that your investment will help me continue to succeed in the future as well.

Thank you very much, Yosef



Hi Yosef,

It's great to hear from you.

I remember 12th grade isn't easy, but I believe in you and know you'll make the most of the year and your learning. Sounds like you are dedicated.

What a great son and older brother you are, and you still have time to play music and edit.

I also like music and just recently started creating my own little music studio. Have fun and be creative, it's important to have hobbies and other activities aside from school and family.

You are welcome for all the help. I am happy to be a part of your journey and I wish you all the luck and success with the upcoming studies.

All the best, Barak

A Special Letter from a Sponsored Student On Going to Poland

Dear Sponsors... I want to start by saying thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to participate in the trip to Poland.

I think this trip is very important, because it lets us learn about the history of the Jewish people in a different way; in a way that lets us see with our own eyes what happened to the Jewish people during the Holocaust and in some sense to experience it with them.

In addition, I think the trip is important because these days the number of Holocaust survivors is decreasing and therefore we need to hear their reports and their stories in the best way possible to pass them on.

It's especially important to me to hear and see their stories because I have no personal connection to the Holocaust, thank G-d, and I really want my children to know about it so that such a cruel thing never happens again.

The people murdered in the Holocaust can't speak, but they want us to know about their lives and to know their stories and therefore I am traveling to Poland to expand my understanding of the topic.

Thank you so very much for giving me this opportunity, Adi Shimeon

Just the Facts

2018-2019 School Year

- **170** sponsors participated in the High School program
- **870** students were sponsored
- **51** schools in **15** Israeli cities participated
- **161** of our students graduated

Hundreds of students still need sponsors.

Can you or your family or friends help out?

See page 1 for contact information.