



## The Kiryat Malachi Connection

*How volunteering in a small Israeli town led to new high school sponsors!*

“A few years ago,” Ann Bardacke writes, “I was fortunate enough to do some volunteer work in the small Israeli city of Kiryat Malachi through a program sponsored by my local Federation” (Jewish Federation of Greater Portland).

“It was one of the best experiences of my life — four weeks in a town so small one can walk across it from one end to another in less than an hour.” Ann taught conversational English in one of the local high schools and worked with students from Ethiopian as well as Moroccan, Tunisian, and Iraqi backgrounds.

Kiryat Malachi is located 17 kilometers southeast of Ashdod, one of Israel’s port cities on her southern Mediterranean coastline. The town was founded in 1951 to replace a “tent city” housing Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Kiryat Malachi means “Angels Town”, and was named in honor of the Los Angeles Jewish Community which helped establish and develop it. Kiryat Malachi has remained a magnet for lower-income

immigrant families. Most recently, the town has been absorbing immigrants arriving from Ethiopia, who now make up about 20% of the town’s population of 20,100.

Coincidentally, after Ann’s first experience in Kiryat Malachi, a friend who worked for the NACOEJ office in New York spoke to her about the possibility of sponsoring an Ethiopian Israeli high school student. Having such strong feelings for the people of Kiryat Malachi, Ann asked that her student be from there. At that time, there was no formal NACOEJ program in Kiryat Malachi, but the Israel office found her a Kiryat Malachi student to sponsor anyway.

As Ann explained to NACOEJ staff, “Once I got my letter with the photo, I knew I had done the right thing. When I returned two years later for another volunteer stint, I visited the NACOEJ office in Jerusalem to see if I could set up a high school sponsorship program in the Amal High School. I also visited the Amal School, where my student was studying, to meet him,

## LOOKING FOR YOUR FEEDBACK...

We are happy to bring you the second issue of "Bridges". We would love to have your feedback, comments, suggestions, etc. Please feel free to call me at 212-233-5200, ext. 232, or email me at [highschool@nacoej.org](mailto:highschool@nacoej.org)

Also, please pass our information to friends who might be interested in sponsorship. You are really an ambassador for this wonderful program. Your endorsement and encouragement will go a long way toward enabling these teens to get the education they need. Thank you so much.

**Lisa Gran Kovitch**  
Director  
NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor  
High School Sponsorship Program

and to meet with the school principal to see if she was interested in such a program. Both NACOEJ and the school principal were very supportive, and I returned home to see what I could do. Between friends (from Seattle and Phoenix) and family, I managed to find five more sponsors. Then the Jewish Federation of Portland stepped in, and offered to sponsor seven more students.”

This personal connection to a special town and its students has been very satisfying to all of those involved. It has given Ann and her friends the well deserved sense that they are supporting teens who will grow up to contribute to the future of Israel. NACOEJ is proud to have been able to assist in making the Kiryat Malachi connection, and especially thrilled to work with such dedicated and committed sponsors. Perhaps more of our sponsors can encourage their local Federations to participate!

Ann Bardacke and company with their high school students.



## THE NACOEJ/EDWARD G. VICTOR HIGH SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM



Rear left: George Cohen, Yossef Rata (15 years old), Rivka (oldest Rata sister, now in college in Jerusalem), Judy Cohen and Mazal (19 years old and a National Service Volunteer). Front left: Workanesh Rata (Mom), Sharaz (7 years old), David (17 years old) and Moges (Dad).

where he has begun to develop an interest in Economics and Business Administration.

The Rata family has an amazing history of service to Ethiopian Jewry and the State of Israel. Rivka, Mazal, David, Yossef, and seven-year-old Sharaz have had an excellent role model in their own father who worked with Mossad agents and the Jewish Agency for Israel in the 80’s, smuggling Ethiopian Jews out of Ethiopia and Sudan into Israel. Due to the dangers involved in his work, Moges Rata had to leave for Israel before his family. But in 1991, one month before Operation Solomon, his family was able to join him in the Promised Land. Rivka and Mazal have now served Israel in the National Service, helping to assure that the Ethiopian community will flourish in their new homeland.

The Cohens feel that NACOEJ has given them a gift: the opportunity to be part of this particularly wonderful family in Israel. They are hopeful that their experience will encourage others to sponsor students through NACOEJ as well.

At NACOEJ, we believe that the Cohens and all our special high school sponsors are playing a vital role in supporting and strengthening Ethiopian Israeli teenagers and their families.

## A Wonderful Follow-Up

As reported in our last issue of “Bridges”, George and Judy Cohen of Rhode Island were planning a trip to Israel. Judy said, “Aside from seeing our wonderful personal family, we had one most important mission. That was to finally visit the Rata family in Ashkelon.”

This visit took place last October. “What a visit we had one Saturday evening after Shabbat,” the Cohens told NACOEJ, “It was the highlight of our trip as we got to hug and kiss all of the Rata family”.

Some five years ago, the Cohens began their connection to the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program by sponsoring Mazal, the second oldest of the Rata

siblings. This began a “family friendship” between the Cohens and the Ratas. When Mazal graduated, she went into the National Service (an alternative to military service) and began working with new immigrant children, like her older sister Rivka before her. Rivka is now a student in Kiryat Ono College studying Business Administration, and next year, Mazal will also begin higher education at Sapir College.

The Cohens went on to offer the same support to the Rata brothers, Yossef and David. David, who will graduate this year, has attended the ORT Givat Ram School. He is looking forward to his service in the Israel Defense Forces. Yossef, currently in 9th grade, attends the ORT Ronson School in Ashkelon

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Barbara Ribacove Gordon, Founder and Executive Director

# Sponsoring an Amazing Young Athlete

## Introducing Daniel

**P**olly Goldberg, of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, counts herself as quite lucky to have been matched with her new student. Through their correspondence, Polly has discovered that her new student, Daniel Mulusau, is in her words, "a stellar young man". Daniel's natural ability, combined with drive and determination, elevated him to the status of a potentially world-class athlete at the age of 15.

Now living in Lod, Daniel and his family still recall their vastly different life in Ethiopia. Until they came to Israel in 1999, they lived in a village called Atege where Daniel's parents were farmers, while he and his older brother were shepherds. In Israel, life for the Mulusau's has not been easy. Daniel's mother works in housekeeping in Ben-Gurion International Airport, but his father, who was injured on his job, is now disabled.

Daniel will be entering 10th grade in the Elyashiv School in Lod. He works hard and despite his extraordinary energy that makes it hard for him to sit still, he is able to maintain his grades in the highest level Math and English classes.

Rather than sitting still, what would Daniel prefer to be doing? Running – and perhaps, breaking more records. Last June, before Daniel's 15th birthday, the Israeli newspaper, "Yediot Achronot" reported that "In the last month, Ethiopian Daniel Mulusau set three Israeli records for children under 15 and has become one of the biggest hopes in athletics for the 2012 Olympics in London."



Daniel has held the Israeli Athletic Association's records for the under-15-year-old division and has been National Champion for three years in the 1000m and 2000m runs. He has also set new records in the 2000m run and in the 800m run (breaking a record that had held since 1973). In the 1500m run, Daniel broke his own record from last year. Recently competing in the Israeli Championship for ages 16-17, 15-year-old Daniel easily took 1st place in 800 and 1500m.

Daniel is looking forward to participating in international competitions in France and the Czech Republic. He and his trainer are pursuing big dreams – the 2012 Olympic Games. Daniel's trainer calls him a "highly disciplined boy, who loves to work hard and invest himself". Daniel's determination – he runs about 100 kilometers each week and is an excellent soccer player for a Maccabi Tel Aviv League team – is likely to help him make those Olympic dreams come true.

Daniel's trainer has one worry: he fears that Daniel's family's "economic

difficulties will not give Daniel the peace of mind he needs" to continue in Track and Field. But, our high school sponsorship program is helping this talented teenager.

Daniel has expressed enormous gratitude to his sponsor for her support and involvement in his life. His letters, keeping Polly informed of his progress, are signed "With thanks from the bottom of my heart". Polly Goldberg can truly feel that her sponsorship is helping a very special youngster to fulfill his dreams and make his family and all of Israel proud of him.



Daniel Mulusau

**"In the last month, Ethiopian Daniel Mulusau set three Israeli records for children under 15 and has become one of the biggest hopes in athletics for the 2012 Olympics in London."**

Yediot Achronot  
Israeli newspaper

## Ten-Fold Growth in Only Five Years at the Alon Ginsburg School

To: Leah Barkai, HS program director, Israel The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, Jerusalem

First of all I would like to wish you and the staff a happy and successful New Year, blessed with work and good deeds.

I would also like to inform you that the student Yshai Mengistu, who is now in the 12th grade, has succeeded extraordinarily in her "Bagrut" exams!!! She achieved 100 in Bible, History and Math. She is also studying for the Psychometric exams [a standardized test similar to the SAT's]. She never informs us of her financial difficulties and always wishes to be independent. I hope you will continue your support and follow her in her higher studies. I am sure she will continue to be an exceptional student.

Also, Daniel, in the 12th grade, who tragically lost both his parents last year, is continuing to do very well at school, and I am sure that he will be a brilliant student in the future!

When we first got in touch with your organization, we had only one Ethiopian new immigrant as a single student in our school. Later on he became a combat soldier in a special unit and was sent abroad on special assignments.

Now I am happy to say that the whole Ethiopian community has found a warm home in our school. This current year we have 20 students. It means the number has grown ten-fold in only five years.

I will be so grateful if you continue to sponsor our students,

Iris Grinberg  
Vice Principal and Counselor  
Alon Ginsburg School  
Rishon Le Zion

## At Ulpanat Eliad We are Happy to Announce...

November 22, 2006  
To: The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry

Shalom,  
In my name and in the names of the students and staff of Ulpanat Eliad, we would like to thank you deeply for your special support.

The reaction of the students' families to your help is a deep thank you for the wonderful educational opportunity you have given them.

We are happy to announce that, as in former years, the percentage of girls you have supported that have successfully passed their "Bagrut" exams is very high. In the graduating class of 2006, 29 students have graduated successfully, and 2 failed one subject only [out of a total of 6-10 subjects on which they are tested]. With G-d's help they will take another exam to correct it this year. Their success is also your success.

Bless you for it,  
Rabbi Saadia Denan  
Director of Ulpanat Eliad