

ACP is a non-profit organization incorporated in the state of Illinois. ACP relies on donors to fulfill its mission of supporting the Awassa Vocational Training and Circus Center and is committed to financial transparency.

**The \$\$\$\$\$. Where its fr om. Where it go es.**

*Establishment of Bank Account: August, 2001  
Final Incorporation as non-profit: December, 2002*

**Income 8/01-5/03**

Benefits:	\$ 6,100
Corporate Contributions:	\$ 11,000
Individual Contributions:	\$ 18,400
<u>Earned Income:</u>	<u>\$ 1,450</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 36,950</b>

**Expenses 8/01-5/03**

Benefit Expense:	\$ 1,705
Business Expense:	
Incorporation	\$ 850
Meetings (food)	\$ 575
Office/phone/copies	\$ 705
	<u>\$ 2,130</u>
Program Supplies:	\$ 645
Publicity/Fund-raising/ Documentation:	\$ 2,370
Travel (3 trips, 4 fares):	\$ 5,400
<u>Transfers to Ethiopia:</u>	<u>\$ 22,500</u>
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ 34,750</b>



The Dehub Nigat Vocational Training & Circus Center is a grass-roots organization. The support of our contributors is what keeps the AIDS EDUCATION CIRCUS performing and touring, and the children of the CIRCUS fed and educated. Thank you for your contributions ranging from \$10 to \$6,000 in the last year:

Beverly Abbott, Addis Ababba Restaurant, Abyssinia Market, Neatha Aikonedo, Miriam Alper, AIDS Legal Council of Chicago, Deloris and Ephriam Axelrod, Randy Baygood, Sandra Berrigan, Doris Blessof, Blue Man Group, Paula Block, Roberta and Philip Bole, Louise Bourgault, Ann Boyd, Brodsky and Marder-Eppstein Families, John and Luz Bucarro, Ron and Debbie Buzil, Terrie Sue Cardella, Robert Calvin, Carribana Bar and Grill, Ellen Sebastian Chang, Aaron and Anne Cohen, Naima and Steve Cohn, Jessica Cherry, Custom Hair Creations, Ray and Jan Edelman, Ethiopian Diamond Restaurant, Denis Chernyshaw and Kelly McDonough, Melanie Cleveland, Carlos Cumpian and Cynthia Gallaher, Demelash Dejene, Helen Doria, Doris Blessof, D. R. Edwards, Lois Elia Goche Endris, Candace English, Ethio Mini-Mart and Abera Café, Kate Ezra and Daniel Headrick, Zelalem Feleke, Gallagher-Kalensky Family, Dr. Tessa Fischer, Lauren and Jim Foster, Whoopi Goldberg, Goodsmith Gregg and Unruh, Ronald and Audrey Grzywinski, Shirley Brice Heath, Geof and Janet Hewitt, Jessica Holt, Hope Hornstein, Richard Howard, Shari James, Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation of Evanston, Monika and Alan Kimrey, Wendy Kinal, Judith Kinch, Sue and Ken Klonsky, Becky and Mathew Kohl, Ken Kokrda, Dr. Jack Kowlaski, Glenn Leopold, Donald and Ruth Levine, Sydney and Adrienne Lieberman, Freddie Long, Vicki Magee, Wendy Mages, Mama Desta's Red Sea Restaurant, Yosef Maru, Daniel and Lisa McCarthy, Laurence and Elena McCarthy, Margaret McClay, Dereje Mekonnen, Joan Mendelson, Sheila Meyer, Haile Mezgebe, Abner Mikva, Steven and Elizabeth Moore, William and Evonne Mulutich, New Sheba Café and Restaurant, Jim Nisbet, Kelli Jo O'Connell, James Pekar and Maren Laughlin, Pleasant Travel, Q3 Art, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Ras Dashen Restaurant, Tesfaye Reta, Rhythm and Soul Productions, Charlie Rizzo, Dudley Rood, Carol Rosofsky and Bud Lifton, Carmel Avegnon Sanders, Deanna Sawyer, Hon. Jan Schakowsky, Max Schein, Schein Family, Lynn Schuette Gebru Sebhatu, Brian and Stephanie Shaw, Dr. Renslow Sherer, Cheryl Sloane, Maurice Stein, Sara and Andrew Susanin, Kelebe Takele, Alicea Teamer, Asratie Teferra, Mary and Mark Teresi, Kristine Thatcher, Gloria Thompson, Russ Vandenbroucke and Mary Dilg, Verner Family

# Awassa Children's Project Newsletter

Spring 2003



Vol. 2 Issue 1

## ON THE ROAD IN THE RIFT VALLEY WITH THE AWASSA AIDS EDUCATION CIRCUS

*By David Schein*

Saturday morning we get up early, and meet in the town by the soccer field: two vans, twenty five kids, two drivers. Poles and banners tied to the top of the van, inside--costumes, the instruments, the amp. It's the same all over, the musicians are late. By 9:30 AM we're ready.

The minute we're out of town the singing starts. The boys drum in the back, and we sing traditional songs, Ethiopian pop, and some rhythm and blues I've taught them, "Hit the Road Jack," "Bring it on Home to Me." We've got a microphone and a speaker which we stick out the window whenever we go through a little town. Everyone on the street waves and laughs. We sing thunderously. It's too much fun.

After an hour we're in Yir Gallum, the old capital of Sidama, a coffee center. On the outside of town we stop, buy fruit, drink water and get our costumes on. We send one van into the market to talk to the police and to find the best place to set up. They come back in twenty minutes. For the first show we'll be in the market, for the second, up the hill by the gas station where the truckers go.

We drive into the market, with the loud-speaker announcing that there will be a show about AIDS, a gymnastic exhibition and cultural dancing, slowly driving through the people, careful not to run over anyone's stall or blanket. We jump out of the van, climb the electricity pole and wire the amp while others pound in stakes and rope off a circle. The band sets up and begins to play. Meanwhile some of the others are talking to the crowd: "Do you have AIDS here? Do you learn about it? What do you learn?" The local AIDS/HIV people are there as pre-arranged. After fifteen minutes we are surrounded by maybe 800 people. We warm up and sing in the circle while the band plays. Then kids take their places and begin the gymnastics show and the dancing. After half an hour there are fifteen hundred people surrounding a 20 meter circle. They clap and whistle. Finally the AIDS SHOW begins. The performers run in carrying the bodies of the dead, keening shrilly. WHY DID THEY DIE??? Everyone sings their lies: Malaria, TB, Pneumonia. Then the ghosts, the trucker, the child, the wife, and the bar-girl jump up: "NO, it was HIV." One by one they tell their stories. Then in comes the death puppet, Mr. AIDS. They fight him but nothing works. A boy holds up a condom. Mr. AIDS begins to shake. Everyone cheers. Others take one partner (monogamy). Mr. AIDS stumbles. They go for testing, take in the afflicted and Mr. AIDS falls. They teach a song to the audience, which says:

"Condoms, Testing, One to One, Compassion, Together we can stop AIDS in Ethiopia." Everyone sings and rocks out. AIDS is finished.

After the show audience members thank us. The HIV people from the town hand out condoms and information. We do another show that day, at the gas station, for a thousand more people. Finally we're done. The payoff is a big meal in a restaurant. Orange Pop and all you can eat: Paradise. After eating it gets better, we go to a hot spring on the edge of Yir Gallum and bathe for only 10 cents per kid. Boys in one bath, girls in another. This is beyond heaven: hot water out of the ground, a day on the road, Superstardom Ethiopian style. Moshu says to me: "this is the best day of my life," but he says this after every day on tour. We come back to Awassa at night, singing in the van and drop off the kids at different points in the town. Now they must study for school on Monday. Their job is done until the next weekend.

Editors note: Since this day the circus has performed for approximately 30,000 people.



# MONIKA AND FRIDA VISIT AWASSA

## Chicago Artist Begins International Workshop, by Monika Kimrey

Eighty hands and eyes reached, sparkled like stars intent towards the suitcase of watercolors, brushes, inks, papers, wool felt, yarn, sewing and knitting needles brought to Awassa from Chicago: materials for the Awassa Youth Circus performers to explore and transform.

I was awestruck to be in Ethiopia and to have the chance to teach art to her children who greeted me with bursting portfolios. With the money we'd raised in Chicago the Center had hired a local art teacher. This was the work from their class.

Our first session was informal, spent reviewing work and introducing art materials and books I had brought--of special interest, a book on Frida Kahlo, the first art book of (we hope) many for a fledgling new library. The following days would see a profusion of earnest children nestled painting and drawing among the greenery of our compound. Frida's spirit was everywhere. The concept of "the window into your mind" gave birth to brilliant work, some of which will be featured in the book we will publish next year.

The youth recognized commonality between themselves and Frida's themes. They, too, had pondered their tribal and national roles. They, too, had a great sense of responsibility toward the preservation of their culture.

I elected "experts" in various skills, such as color mixing and shading to encourage the youth to turn to each other for critique and assistance, so they could keep teaching each other long after I had gone. I remember watching one teenager, Eskadare, sitting in the shade with a small group of younger children as she showed them, in detail, the things she learned from the Frida book, pointing to each symbol with her sure, slender finger, her eyes burning with intention. I knew the work would continue.

We talked about form, perspective, color. We sewed, made botanical illustrations, landscapes, books, and, of course, thanks to Frida, self-portraits. We wrote the stories of our paintings. The wind blew through the compound off Lake Awassa, and donkey-carts jingled in the distance as we worked. It was a quiet, concentrated time. And when we were done--singing and dancing.

I brought nearly a hundred pieces back to Chicago. The best work will be featured in our website gallery. We are now making a book of images and writing generated in this workshop which we'll be selling next year to generate income to help support the center. I'll be going back next winter to continue working on fine arts with the kids and to explore the establishment of a crafts workshop to produce items for sale back in Chicago.

I count the days to my reunion with these sensitive, remarkable young people. Such a privilege to know them! You can meet the children through their art, by viewing their work on the website at [www.awassachildrensproject.org](http://www.awassachildrensproject.org) and by buying our book when we produce it next fall. Art is the bridge we've built to Awassa. Cross over with us. Go there.



# NATHANIEL VIETS-VAN LEAR, TEEN FUNDRAISER

## Youth Activist Shows the Way

Fourteen year-old Chicago native Nathaniel Viets-Van Lear has participated with the Awassa Children's Project since 2001. In that time, he has piloted two successful fundraising projects, bringing in essential funds and raising the visibility of the project.

For the occasion of his 13th birthday, Nathaniel collected pledges of \$13 each. Nathaniel's second event included the participation of his fellow confirmation candidates at Resurrection Lutheran Church, who staged a theater piece featuring folk tales of the world for a donor audience as a part of their confirmation project.

We asked Nathaniel how he got these projects going:

My mother (Board member, Jennifer Viets) really helped a lot. She had the idea that a teenage voice in the project might really help, and I wanted to help people in need. I made this happen with planning and a letter I typed up. I sent this letter to a lot of my family members and friends. After I made a speech at an Awassa Children's Project benefit, some other people were inspired to donate money as well.

Likewise for the church project. I thought it would be fun to involve my confirmation friends at my church, especially with a play. My mother was our faithful director, and with our combined efforts we made it happen. We first had to decide what type of show it would be, a children's show or an adult show. Then we had to choose what stories we would use. We also decided the theme of our show was "faith." A play was especially cool because the teens in Awassa were doing a play for a better cause, too. We put up flyers in the church, and many people stayed after church to come see the show. My Pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Brian Hiordahl, participated in the play, helped advertise it, and gave us confirmation time to rehearse. He and I also got to stage a fight!

*How did you get motivated to do this kind of work?*

It was for a good cause. I'm helping to change the lives of teenagers in Africa, and helping to stop the spread of AIDS, so in a way, I'm helping to save lives. And something as phenomenal as that should be important in anyone's eyes. Plus, doing all of that office work improved my organizational skills, and the play helped me become a better actor.



## YOU CAN HELP!

1. **Volunteer and join our Board of Directors:** work on our fundraisers, help us write grants, produce our newsletter, create our book, send supplies to Ethiopia, coordinate our penpal program.
2. More of the above. We meet monthly and work hard.

If interested, email us at [awassa@awassachildrensproject.org](mailto:awassa@awassachildrensproject.org) or call us at 773-728-5027

And PLEASE, contribute, checks to:

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[www.awassachildrensproject.org](http://www.awassachildrensproject.org)

## Calendar of Events

**Tuesday June 3rd, 6:30PM:** Awassa Children's Project Board Meeting, call 773-728-5027 for information.

**Saturday June 7th, 6:00 to 10 PM:** Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, Annual Benefit, Temple Shalom, 3840 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago IL. Featuring Ethiopian Food, Silent Auction, Ethiopian Cultural Dancers, \$50 per person. Call 773-728-0303 for information.

**Sunday, June 8th, 6:30 PM:** JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATION'S UPCOMING AIDS in AFRICA BENEFIT, 303 Dodge, Evanston IL. Beneficiaries: The Awassa AIDS EDUCATION CIRCUS and the American Jewish World Service's AIDS IN AFRICA Project featuring Aaron Freeman, Greg Bordowitz' award winning video "Habit," The Chicago Children's Choir, a raffle and African Crafts Sale. Admission: \$15.00, \$12.00 students and seniors. For information, call 847-869-6947

Watch for information on our **Benefit on World AIDS Day in December at The Wild Hare in Chicago!**