

Financial Report: AWASSA CHILDREN'S PROJECT August 01- March 04  
 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.

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

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

<b>Income 8/01-3/03</b>	
Benefits:	\$ 7,830
Corporate Contributions:	\$ 21,000
Individual Contributions:	\$ 28,226
<b>Earned Income:</b>	<b>\$ 2,375</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 59,431</b>

<b>Expenses 8/01-3/03</b>	
Benefit Expense:	\$ 2,599
Business Expense:	\$ 2,503
Program Supplies:	\$ 2,125
Publicity/Fund-raising/ Documentation:	\$ 6,202
Travel (3 trips, 4 fares -private contribution):	\$ 7,026
<b>Transfers to Ethiopia:</b>	<b>\$ 37,175</b>
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ 57,630</b>



# Awassa Children's Project Newsletter

Spring 2004



Vol. 3 Issue 1

## **NEW KIDS, MICRO LOANS, VIDEO CREW AND MUCH MORE Circus Makes Show about Female Circumcision**

by David Schein

Each year of the last four I have traveled to Awassa. The first year was to work with the children to create the AIDS EDUCATION CIRCUS. Since then I have been a member of the International Board and have traveled there for our annual meeting and to meet with the CIRCUS and help plot its course.

This year eight of us came from Chicago: my wife Dana, daughter Aurora and I, Monika and Alan Kimrey (president and treasurer of the Chicago group) AND a three man video crew. Contributors, DON'T WORRY: all travelers pay their own airfare. Food and modest hotels were only paid by the project to those who were working when they were working, and, as an added perk, most of us got diarrhea. The video crew raised their own money to cover all their expenses including film stock and equipment. After 24 hours of traveling, with stops in London and Alexandria, the Chicago contingent arrived in Addis, met our German partners, and on Tuesday Feb. 8th we all converged on Awassa

That first day the kids and the project showed off, greeting us with hugs and kisses, then performing a new show about FEMALE CIRCUMCISION that was so brilliant and smart. It was actually comic, in that it made fun of the fathers who would subject their daughters to this practice. Our kid writers turned the dialogue about female circumcision into a family conflict which the wife and daughter win.

The play opens as the husband (a fool) leads his protesting wife and their daughter to the girl's circumcision. By the last act he is converted to reason and preaches to his friends in the bar about how this stone-age practice must end. Aster Dabels, an Ethiopian founder and female member of the International Board, was amazed at the intelligence of the play's approach, saying that a family comedy, as opposed to a lecture, was the best way to popularize the growing anti HTP (Harmful Traditional Practices) movement. Perhaps after seeing the play, families will talk. Daughters and mothers will question. And cultural change will get a kick.

The changes in the project are remarkable. Four years ago the children rehearsed in the mud and dust and were fed in a tent. Now we have buildings, a clinic, a computer lab and a barn with six cows that has spun off a small milk business. Huge vegetable gardens occupy the new land that Awassa town gave us last year; the kids are eating well, and we sell any excess at market. But the biggest change in the project is that we have over twenty new kids, ages 5 to 12, and more are coming in.



As the younger kids are arriving, the older kids, the founding kids of the Circus, are leaving or are preparing to leave the project, and it breaks all of our hearts to say goodbye to each other. Their graduation challenges our mission; to create self-sufficient, educated individuals who can survive in a country with 70 per cent unemployment.

Every year the kids hold a meeting, where they present their concerns to the International Board about the project. Overwhelmingly, this year they asked us set up a micro-loan system for income-generating projects. They also asked for better training that will prepare them for life after the Center. To do this will be another great leap for us and perhaps our most important task at hand.

We've actualized a lot of the original vision for the Project. We have the physical plant, are growing a lot of our own food and are bringing more kids into the project. Now we must translate our ideas about vocational training into real action.

Monika Kimrey and Paul Chadha are fund-raising in Chicago for a pilot textile project. By next year we hope to be marketing products and employing some of our graduates. The older kids are now submitting their business plans to the Center for micro-loans. Our German partners are close to landing a large grant from the German government for the creation of a wood and metal production training workshop, providing employment and training of some our graduates.

Our video crew worked their tails off, and we will have a great video because of it. I am so proud of them. They scrounged nearly all their equipment, (Thank you Columbia College Chicago) paid their way and personally raised \$1,500 which they spent almost entirely on film stock!!!! Assisted by CIRCUS graduate Nebiyu Jonas, they were everywhere with their

**NEWS FLASH**

**AWASSA, SOUTHERN REGIONS, ETHIOPIA MAY 22, 2004**

**Steven Lewis, United Nations Secretary-Genreal Kofi Annan's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa (and former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations) surveys the Awassa Vocational Training and Art Center in recognition of its work in conjunction with other area organizations in the struggle against HIV/AIDS in Africa.**

Don't miss the Third Annual *Chicago Waldorf School Circus*  
 Performance to Benefit *The Awassa Children's Project*

Monday, June 7, 2004

Doors open at 5 pm Show starts at 6 pm

Third Floor Gymnasium

1300 W. Loyola Ave. (1 block west of Sheridan, 2 blocks north of Devon)

for more info, call Monika at 708-445-2614

cameras, shooting the circus, interviewing kids, board members, the mayor of Awassa, Ethiopian doctors, even the dairy cows were questioned. Fearlessly they would wade into a Circus audience of a thousand people in the market and start interviewing. Thanks to them, we look forward to having a great fund-raising video and then an award winning documentary on our crazy grass-roots, ever-expanding and increasingly wonderful project (see article below).

Plans and budgeting for the year include setting up loans, vocational training, admitting more kids and earning income through the circus. We will hire a half-time nurse and a full-time teacher; our kids need better medical care and supervision on their homework and their chores. We will build a library. We will rent a much larger off-site house. The Chicago chapter increased its funding pledge to \$15,000 this year and we hope to do better. Our manager, Girma Melesse and his key staff, Tesfaye, Berreket, Mechtes and Sunnait, are great. They turn your contributions into ACTION.

To close, it was wonderful to see Ethiopia freshly through the eyes of the folks who were there for the first time, my wife Dana and daughter Aurora, Alan Kimrey and the video crew. Surprisingly often, I would see one of my partners' eyes tear up, and then I'd remember why and say to myself, "Hey, Dave, don't get used to this, the hope, the need, the poverty, the beauty, the sadness, the strength of our friends here and their culture. Stay fresh, stay surprised, keep your eyes new and your heart open.



Scene from anti Female Circumcision show

## ***"DOCUMENTARY ON OUR CRAZY GRASS-ROOTS, EVER-EXPANDING INCREASINGLY WONDERFUL PROJECT"***

by Krishna LeFan, Producer, Dehub Nigat Films

From tape stock to gaffer's tape, there was a lot to gather to shoot in Awassa. We were going to film The Documentary. Pre-production was tough, but fruitful. Columbia College granted us everything from our wish list, including our ideal b-camera and light and sound packages. We went to every travel, hardware, electrical store and Home Depot in the area at least seven times before we left.

We got vaccinations. We got visas. Also, Dr. Hallu of the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, D.C., provided us a letter of intent stamped with a seal. You're nothing in Ethiopia with out a stamped seal! The Department of Homeland Security (formerly U.S. Customs) was kind enough to certify our equipment list with -- you guessed it -- a stamped seal.



Performance and crew in the Awassa Market

to our shock, we got through customs with all our equipment, and without a shakedown. We toasted our late night arrival to Addis with some cognac bottles pilfered from British Airways. I swallowed my weekly malaria pill and we all turned in for some much needed horizontal sleep. I had insomnia mixed with hallucinations instead.

Aster Dabel's cousin, Daniel, met us at the hotel in the morning to take us to get breakfast, change currency, get bottled water, and put us on a van to Awassa. I had no appetite. It was probably due to the flu I caught in transit. After a night of insomnia and a breakfast of prescription Ibuprofen, I lost consciousness on our first official day of filming. I came to and realized I was being carried by all fifty-four orphans of the Dehub Nigat Circus and Vocational Center. Dr. Hermann patched up my lacerations, and we were off. Over the next week, we interviewed the orphans, the international board, a town doctor, and even the mayor. What they told us was already apparent: That without the Awassa Children's Project these children would be on the street with nothing. Instead, they have food, clothing, and shelter. They are educated. They are loved.

We all cared a lot about what we were doing on the other side of a small world. Part of me is still in Ethiopia at the Center with those wonderful children. They have so much to teach the world. I am proud to work to give them a voice and a leg up as well. It has been a privilege to help in the fight against AIDS/HIV, harmful traditional practices and drug abuse. I know from their stories that the orphans have had hard lives. Trust they have it good for the moment. That is a lot.

## **LETTER FROM MONIKA KIMREY, PRESIDENT, AWASSA CHILDRENS PROJECT, CHICAGO**

*My heart heavy, I must inform you that one of our girls in the Awassa Children's Project, Sitena Legesse, age six, died in mid-May from an HIV infection. Sitena was one of our newest children adopted into the project late last fall.*

*It appears that other children of this newest round of adoptees may also be HIV positive--in spite of their adoption health records, which indicate otherwise. We must now retest all of our youth and begin an immediate campaign to teach universal precautions. Also, before officially accepting more children into the project, we ourselves must test for HIV to be sure that we do not admit more youth who are infected until we can provide an appropriate standard of care.*

*If, in fact, additional HIV-positive children have joined the program, it is our duty to provide them with the best chance of survival, treat their infection openly, and set a standard of support, tolerance, and stewardship. Sitena Legesse's death crystallizes our resolve to improve service and to calibrate a more effective attack on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, for both those infected and those around them.*

*We are working to start a sponsorship program in tandem with our continued support of operating costs and vocational training for our Ethiopian children.*

*At this time we must also build a program addressing the spiritual and emotional needs of all our youth, who have suffered the loss of one of their community after having already endured the losses that orphaned them and brought them into our collective. I am seeking professional support and consultation in these matters in addition to possible written material and books to support a strong peer counseling program. If you have such information or materials please contact us.*

*It seems as though we have found ourselves in a situation beyond that for which we had planned to be at this stage in the development of our organization; with a family such is often the case. We believe, however, that with the energy of our love, resourcefulness and responsibility, will fuel the engine that enables us to reach and fulfill the critical needs of the task at hand.*

*I am writing to stress the depth and breadth of this new responsibility. It is time to answer the call. While on our watch, the children will not languish.*



## **YOU CAN HELP!**

1. **Volunteer and join our Board of Directors:** work on our fund-raisers, 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 708-445-2614.

And PLEASE, contribute, checks to:

**Awassa Children's Project**  
**930 S. Grove Ave.**  
**Oak Park, IL 60304**  
**708-445-2614**  
[awassa@awassachildrensproject.org](mailto:awassa@awassachildrensproject.org)