

## YTH CELEBRATIONS:

We have just returned from our February Expedition in Ethiopia. We are thrilled to report to you that the children and youth of the YTH Centers are doing well.

We did not conduct individual interviews on this expedition, but instead joined with the centers in celebrating the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of YTH, and offered public health education seminars.

The education seminars this trip were based off questions that the youth and staff provided to Dr Northcott and Dr Patterson ahead of their meetings. Each session lasted about 2 hours. It is impressive to see how much education and candid discussions with these youth help them to become more confident, and able to learn in other areas. Thank you to both Dr Northcott and Dr Patterson for their contributions to making the sessions a success.



The celebrations at each YTH center were planned by the children and staff. They were fun to watch and we are so thrilled to have been invited to attend.



YTH Alemgena had a morning program that featured traditional dance, games, skits, and a MISS YTH contest amongst the Jr high and high school young women. The grounds of the center were decorated with streamers, masaabs, with tarps on the ground to keep the dust down, and curtained off to create a stage.



They began the event with a special song about their love for Ethiopia and it's place as their motherland, with a young girl wearing a specially made dress to look like the Ethiopian flag. During the song they symbolically added Canada, with another young girl wearing a dress made to look like the Canadian flag. The song then talked about how the two countries working together can help the children of Ethiopia, and bring peace to both nations. At the end of the song, the young girls dressed in the flags released live doves into the air as a symbol of the peace of the two nations working together for a brighter future. It was very touching.



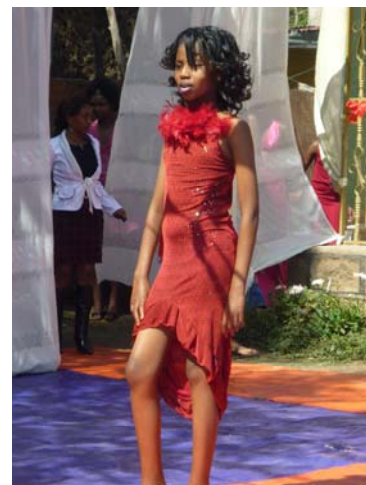
The young girls competing for the honor of MISS YTH 2002 (Ethiopian calendar) first came out in traditional dress, and demonstrated their knowledge of ethnic customs and dancing. Next they came out in ball gowns to be judged by a panel of judges on their composure, and knowledge of Ethiopian history and current events. After each had a chance to respond, the judges chose three top candidates, 1<sup>st</sup> place being MISS YTH, and the other two being runners up. The traditional and ball gown dresses were provided by loan from friends and family of YTH staff, and modified to fit the girls as needed. Their center director Mamitu, and teacher Tigist, assisted in their hair and makeup needs.



One of the final questions asked of each MISS YTH candidate was what YTH meant to them. Their answers were moving including: it was like family to them, it was a place where they felt safe, where they were able to learn, where they were cared for and loved, and several stating it was their life, for without YTH 's program, they would have nothing. The top three winners were 1<sup>st</sup> place: Miss Fraol Alemeyahu, 2<sup>nd</sup> place Miss Eyerus Degu, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place Miss Ruth Kebede.



This was a wonderful event, and enjoyed by the children as they all participated in some way to celebrate YTH Alemgena's place in their lives.





YTH Guelele held their celebration at their center for an afternoon. Attending were not only staff and students, but guardians of the children, and kebele leaders.

The youth and children entertained the visitors with a number of comedy acts by the circus club, and musical numbers with soloists by the music club throughout the whole program. A young group of Jr high school youth did a ballad with acting that was about how to overcome the loss of family members from AIDS.



The literacy club ran a game show similar to Jeopardy, to showcase their academic knowledge, and the drama club performed a 2 act comedy play, that had everyone laughing at their antics.

As part of their closing, they opened up their activities to include guardians and visitors in games. Most memorable was the musical chairs game with grandmothers, and the dance competition between men and women (usually grandmother) guardians. A grandmother with incredible agility and enthusiasm won the dance competition hands down over younger opponents. The youth were so impressed by her skill, that they put 1 birr notes into her hat and her dress, in Ethiopia custom, to show their appreciation of her performance.



To end the day a cake was brought out to be cut with ceremony, and shared with everyone attending, as well as a light luncheon and soft drink for all attending.

This event was enjoyed by everyone who attended, and will probably be talked about for some time- particularly with regards to the amazing grandmothers who participated with their young people. It is evident that YTH has impacted not only the youth, but their extended family communities in Guelele.

I wish you could have been there to witness what your sponsorships are doing for your child or children. With this description and pictures we are doing our best to try and share with you what a wonderful program this is for those registered in it. If any of you are ever able to travel to Ethiopia to see it for yourself, you will know for certain that your monthly contributions are making a difference in the lives of these young people.



Thank you for your continued support of the YTH program.