



# EDF Quarterly

VOLUME 1 NO. 2

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ERITREAN DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

SUMMER 2004

## Summer Youth Camp in Eritrea

Through the Summer Youth Camp in Africa Program, a collaborative project in association with the Eritrean Development Foundation, many youth have been granted a lifelong learning experience that has both enriched their understanding of the world abroad and also given them a deeper appreciation of their own culture. We are excited to announce that this year over 100 youth will travel to Eritrea in *July* for the 2004 Summer Youth Camp in Africa.

Participants will experience two weeks of travel exploring the history and beauty of Eritrea--the beaches, mountains, cities and villages. This trip also advances several aspects of the EDF mission. The Youth Camp students and counselors help promote peace, reconstruction and development in the Horn of Africa through a range of special projects *and also immerses them in the culture of Eritrea through educational visits to a variety of important historical sites.*

On the last trip in 2002, where 48 young people from seven different states in the US



participated, the focus was to improve the educational resources for the youth and the children of Eritrea. Accordingly, we donated US \$2500 to the School of the Deaf in Keren and furnished the library at the Asmara School for the Blind with hundreds of Braille books and books on tape.

During this last visit, we were also all touched by the terrible impact that HIV/AIDS has had on Eritrea. In response, this year's trip will have two special projects to promote HIV/AIDS awareness:

- 1) Establishing HIV/AIDS education stations, which will include desperately needed

Continued on page 5

### EDF Mission

**WORKS** in partnership with grassroots non-governmental organizations, community groups, and other local institutions engaged in education, health care, and agricultural development in Eritrea.

**PROVIDES** financial support and material aid for emergency relief, community development, and capacity building in Eritrea.

**HELPS** Eritreans become self-reliant and productive members of their community, thereby enhancing their dignity and strengthening their cultural heritage.

**DRAWS** on its intimate knowledge of the people of Eritrea and the Horn of Africa to educate the US public, media, and policymakers on humanitarian and development issues in the region

**REACHES** out to individuals and organizations interested in participating in resource development in support of Africa and Africans

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# Message from the EDF Board

As the following pages show, EDF was involved in a number of important undertakings or activities over the last two years. It strived to pay close attention to the critical needs where the Board felt its participation could make a crucial difference in the lives of the Eritrean people. The need might have been in drought relief, education, public health, or other aspects of socio-economic life. At the same time, the Board has been pursuing and continues to pursue to streamline and rationalize the administrative structure of the Foundation so that responsibilities are clearer and duplication of work is avoided. Needless to say, these would not have been possible without the Board members, both as individuals and as a group, working very hard on voluntary basis, as it should be.

The Board realizes the Foundation is facing great challenges both in its capacity to deal with persistent needs such as the drought and its ability to diversify sources of resources under the present highly competitive and daunting environment. With determination and careful application of its resources and focus however, the Board believes the challenges are not insurmountable. With this aim in mind, the Board has begun searching for a new Executive Director. We have hired Ms. Margo M. Kelly on a temporary basis, for 3-4 months beginning in May. The Board and Ms. Kelly hope that the arrangement will become permanent but we agreed to a trial period to get to know each other better.

Margo comes to EDF with years of experiences in development issues, management skills, organizational interactions and communication adeptness. Her work with EDF can reach the desired goal, however, only if all of us chip in with our time and resources. Here is where the role of EDF's supporters and patrons becomes extremely important. It is only with the help and continued support from them that we can cover our base minimum and aim for higher achievements and steady consolidation. With EDF being the only US-based organization that targets Eritrea, we cannot afford to fail.

We believe that high on the list of EDF's indispensable supporters are the Chapters found all over the country. Thus, in the next period of our activities, one of the Board's enhanced attention will be focusing on revitalizing the existing chapters and establish new ones.

Due to time constraints, Attorney Steve Brown and Ms. Yobi Amdemariam have made changes in their relations to EDF as well. Steve will now be a member of the Advisory Board of EDF after serving the Foundation ably and faithfully as its Board-member treasurer for the last two years. He introduced a number of improvements in the financial administration of the Foundation. Also, after serving EDF as its Board-member Executive Director on voluntary basis, Yobi reverts to her regular Board membership. The Board would like to express its profound appreciation for the selfless services both of them provided to EDF in their respective capacities, raising in the process the spirit and meaning of voluntary work to higher level of community service. We look forward for the same kind of commitment to EDF in their new capacities.

Finally, the Board wishes Margo, Steve and Yobi the best in their new areas of responsibilities.

*Yacob Fisseha, Chair  
Board of Directors*

**Eritrean Development Foundation**

# EDF Benefit Dinner Supports Medical and Drought Relief



*Thomas Keneally speaks at the dinner*

**T**he Eritrean Development Foundation organized a 600-person gala benefit dinner that raised over \$130,000 for immediate drought relief in Eritrea. The dinner was held on May 22, 2003 at Capital Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC. Acclaimed Australian author, Thomas Keneally, became the Fred Hollows Award recipient, acknowledging his exemplary artistic and humanitarian contributions to the development of Eritrea.

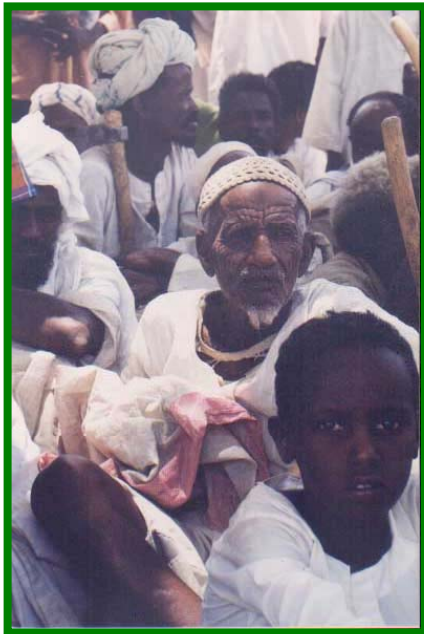
“The Eritrean Development Foundation 2003 benefit dinner was a resounding success and reflects the hard work and dedication of many people. Thousands of Eritreans will benefit from the nutritional supplements we will be able to purchase with the funds we raised,” said EDF Board member Yobi Amdemariam. “While we were successful in raising a significant amount of money in a very short amount of time, it is unfortunately only a beginning. Eritrea is still in dire need of emergency assistance to alleviate the impact of the current drought,” she added.

The evening included addresses by Mr. Keneally and Congressman Conyers. Ambassador Girma Asmerom read a message from Eritrean President, Isaias Afwerki, congratulating Thomas Keneally and praising Fred Hollows’ and Keneally’s work on behalf of the Eritrean people.

EDF honored Congressman Conyers for his efforts to increase awareness of Africa and to promote peace in the Horn of Africa. Congressman Conyers presented the award to Mr. Keneally, who later spoke of his longstanding involvement with Eritrea and of the legacy of Fred Hollows in battling curable blindness in Eritrea and around the world.

Thomas Keneally has written a number of works, including *Schindler’s Ark*, the basis for the Academy Award-winning film, *Schindler’s List*, and more recently *Office of Innocence* and *American Scoundrel*. He also penned *To Asmara*, an account of the Eritrean struggle for independence. ♦

# Emergency Drought Relief Boasts Success



## MICHIGAN

The Association of Eritreans and their Friends in Michigan (AEFM) held a very successful fundraising event for the drought victims January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003. People ventured from all over the country (including from Chicago, Ohio, and Windsor-Canada) for this worthwhile event—despite the frigid Michigan winter weather. Their commitment to come and participate makes the event all the more encouraging and reassuring of what people coming together to help can really accomplish. Signs adorned each table reading, “NO ERITREAN WILL DIE OF HUNGER AS LONG AS WE ARE AROUND.” With the help of generous donors, this event was able to raise almost \$12,000 for the Eritrean Development Foundation.

## Washington, DC

In February, 2003, the Eritrean Development Foundation sent \$51,000 to the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) specifically for drought victim children and mothers in Eritrea. The money went towards purchasing and immediately distributing DMK, a locally produced supplementary food commodity to save the lives of children and mothers whose nutritional conditions are adversely affected by the drought. EDF would like to express heartfelt gratitude to its Chapters in St. Louis, Missouri, Southfield, Michigan, Baltimore, Maryland, Rochester, New York, as well as individual donors for their generous and quick response to EDF’s “Avert Famine in Eritrea” emergency campaign. Statistical analysis recently released by UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) indicated that malnutrition levels have reached critical levels in three of six provinces in Eritrea: Anseba, in the northern center of the country, Gash Barka, in the west and Northern Red Sea, in the northeast. According to the same statistical analysis, over 400,000 malnourished women and children are in need of immediate emergency food aid to save their lives.

## Baltimore, MD

The Eritrean Community in Baltimore has come through again in support of Eritrean drought victims. Less than six months after they raised \$5,000 for the Eritrean Development Foundation’s emergency drought relief, they recently raised an addition \$8,025 in late April. This small, but committed Eritrean community has been working relentlessly to alleviate the suffering of the Eritrean people and they need to be commended. The Eritrean Development Foundation expresses its gratitude to the Baltimore Community and appreciates very much their generosity. This community has shown us that numbers of people involved is not important; commitment is critical. We all must learn from them and work hard to help our suffering people. ♦

Thanks to the EDF Chapters in St. Louis, & Columbia, MO; Grand Rapids, MI; Rochester, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Hawaii; Raleigh, NC & Boston, MA. The people of Eritrea have truly benefited from your efforts. ♦



# EDF Focuses on Emergency Relief in Response to the Drought

In 2002, below-average azmera or minor season rains (March through May) severely hindered land preparation for the main planting season (June through September). Additionally, main season rains, which are crucial to crop production in the drought-prone Anseba, Northern Red Sea, and Southern Red Sea zones, as well as the breadbasket zones of Gash Barka, Debub, and Maekel, were sporadic and insufficient. This drought has severely affected the people of Eritrea.



In response, the Government of the State of Eritrea's Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) issued an appeal in August 2002 to the humanitarian community for a timely response to the drought situation.

The Eritrean Development Foundation responded quickly to the dire situation. EDF quickly sent a medical shipment which consisted of a twenty-foot container filled with medical supplies and equipment. ♦

## Youth Camp *continued from page 1*

computer technology, at each major city in Eritrea. These stations include programs and information designed to slow the spread of the disease.

2) Initiating “adoptions” of children who have become orphaned, having lost both parents to AIDS. Our goal is to not only provide for their basic necessities but also open the lines of communication between the potential sponsors in the United States.

In 2002, we began this work with our visit to the Orphan’s School and are eager to continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship, love and support with these children.

The *NUEYS – the National Union of Eritrean Youth Association* – will host the group again and share the Eritrean culture with the youth through music and dance.

When these campers return to the United States—to their families, schools and communities profoundly changed—they are often deeply committed to bettering themselves and their lives through education and achievement and, with a new global view of the world, also improving their schools, communities and world.

The Youth Camp in Africa is organized by Board Member Solomon Teklu, who is grateful to the many sponsors, volunteers and friends who support this effort. ♦

**The Eritrean Development Foundation (EDF), is a non-profit 501 (c)3 organization dedicated to assisting in the reconstruction and development of Eritrea. EDF’s primary objective is to alleviate poverty and human suffering by supporting projects related to education, health and agriculture.**

# *EDF Transitions*

For the past two years, the Eritrean Development Foundation has been undergoing transition and reorganisation. In January 2002, the Transitional Board was formed with the mandate of identifying and selecting individuals who will serve as members on a permanent Board of Directors.

EDF was looking specifically for people who met the following qualifications: individuals who had the ability to play an effective role in defining and setting EDF policies consistent with its mission statement; people who have made significant contributions to EDF; people with experience in the operation of Non-Governmental Organizations and knowledge on potential donor institutions; and people with a subscription to the cause that EDF stands for.

Despite the organizational distractions, the Transitional Board was still successful in following through with activities that were already in progress. The first EDF newsletter was completed in addition to a 2002 calendar designed to highlight development programs in which EDF was involved. A raffle was held for a 1991 station wagon Volvo in hopes to raise up to \$5,000. Overall, the Transitional Board did a phenomenal job to ultimately set the stage for the permanent Board of Directors.

July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002 the new permanent Board of Directors was established and installed. Eleven high caliber members were chosen based on their past experience, their ability to work as a team, and their ability to contribute new ideas to realize EDF's goals and objectives.

Yobi Amdemariam, a member of the new Board, volunteered to serve as the Executive Director for the Eritrean Development Foundation until the end of 2003. ♦



## **Board of Directors**

Yacob Fisseha, Chairman  
Solomon Teklu, Vice Chairman  
Stephen Brown, Treasurer  
Hellen Tesfamariam, Secretary  
Yobi Amdemariam  
Girmay Abraham  
Almaz Armstead  
Carol B. Day  
Martin Ganzglass  
Kip Mackey  
Mohammed Saleh



# Providing Eye Care in Eritrea

An estimated 30,000 people in Eritrea are blind in both eyes, half due to cataracts. The Fred Hollows Foundation is working with the Ministry of Health to strengthen the Eritrean Blindness Prevention Program and eye care capacity in the public health system.

In April 2004, the Eritrean Development Foundation donated \$25,750 to the Fred Hollows Foundation, which was then supplemented with a \$13,875 donation by the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club Foundation. EDF Board Member Stephen Brown facilitated this donation from the Rotary Foundation.

With these monies, the Fred Hollows Foundation will purchase essential ophthalmic equipment for the Birhan Eye Hospital in Asmara and six zonal hospitals serving rural areas around the country. This equipment, will help doctors to diagnose and treat affordable blindness.

The equipment purchased will include:

- *Slit lamps* which send light into the eye at certain angles so that an ophthalmologist can ascertain the cause of blindness or low vision.
- *Operating Microscopes* used during cataract surgery where the natural clouded lens of the eye is removed from the lens capsule and replaced by a plastic lens (intraocular lens or IOL). The microscope provides the surgeon with light and magnification to enable the fine tissues to be seen and manipulated and to allow the IOL to be safely placed in position.
- An *A-scan* and *Keratometer* which measure the eye to determine the dioptre (or power) of the IOL required to restore sight to a person with cataracts.
- *Cataract sets* which are sets of surgical instruments needed to perform cataract surgery.

On behalf of the people of Eritrea and the Government of Eritrea, the Fred Hollows Foundation has expressed sincere thanks to EDF for this generous support.

The Fred Hollows Foundation was launched in Australia in 1992 and has helped restore sight to more than a million people in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Professor Fred Hollows was renowned ophthalmologist who was instrumental in setting up eye health services in Eritrea, Nepal and Vietnam. He died in 1992. ♦



## Books for Education

The Eritrean Development Foundation donated books to Eritrea in May 2002. The books, shipped in a twenty-foot container, were estimated at a value of over \$200,000. The books were delivered to the Minister of Education and then dispersed to high school, middle schools, and elementary schools across the country. Additionally, ten thousand Webster Dictionaries were donated. That is enough to put one in each classroom in Eritrea. These dictionaries were arranged in coordination with the Rotary Club of Asmara, Rotarians in San Diego, California and in partnership with the International Book Bank (IBB) of Baltimore. EDF supports education as a way of reconstruction and development; and endorses projects to promote such development. ♦

# EDF Quarterly

NEWSLETTER

Eritrean Development Foundation  
1012 14<sup>th</sup> St., NW Suite 1030  
Washington, DC 20005



## PLEDGE INFORMATION

Please sign me up for EDF's Monthly Pledge Program at a monthly contribution level of:

\$40     \$20     \$15     other

Please find my One-Time contribution of:

\$50     \$100     \$250     other

Please accept my contribution by Credit Card

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Please make your tax-deductible donation to:

**Eritrean Development Foundation**  
1012 14<sup>th</sup> St., NW, Suite 1030  
Washington, DC 20005

EDF is a 501 (C)(3) non-profit organization