



ERI-VOICE



A newsletter of the Eritrean Community of Greater Boston

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EDITORIAL



As we bid farewell to the old, a new year is upon us. What will the New Year have in store for us? What did we accomplish in the year just ended? These are important questions each of us should seriously ask ourselves. On a personal level, many of us may have made changes in the past year that will qualitatively improve our lives for the better. Whether it is a new job, a first or advanced degree or more pertinent and marketable training, we will be better equipped for future challenges. For some of us, on the other hand, the year just ended has been uneventful, but have now made plans to undertake changes in the coming year. Whatever it is that you have resolved to do, we wish you great success.

On a community level, the level and extent of participation we show in our community has the potential to give more meaning to our lives, as Eritreans. Regrettably, both you and the community lose when personal accomplishments and successes are not coupled with community involvement. We should be mindful that there are many in our community who can benefit from our knowledge and expertise.

In our humble opinion, it is just wishful thinking to suggest that our efforts here should be geared more towards helping our people in Eritrea. In the past year for example, valuable time and energy was wasted bickering about issues that have no bearing whatsoever on the lives of our people at home. Before we embark on a mission to extend tangible assistance to our

people we must first clean our house here and help bring about some semblance of normalcy. We can talk, write, dance or raise our fists all we want, but if we can't create unity in order to respond to what is of immediate importance to the Eritrean people, it will be a tragic disservice. We could not even come together as a community to denounce Ethiopia when it flaunted the ruling of the Border Commission.

It is no secret that our Community is currently limping along on one foot, its full potential not realized. Many of us are on the outside looking in as indifferent spectators. As presently structured, the ECC has made tremendous stride in providing services to all Eritreans. This Newsletter is a perfect testimony to the great effort expended by dedicated members. Computer training is available three times a week to those who need it. Tutoring and mentoring programs aimed to assist young students is being offered once a week. A lot more could be done if many others would dedicate their time and express willingness to serve.

If you are an Eritrean, the community belongs to you. There is and should not be any other requirement or consideration. The community is made up of individuals not groups. As members of the Eritrean community, what guides and drives us should not be

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anything but the love that we have for our people and country. It is important that we move beyond just attending community meetings and showing face when we are called to assist in managing a crisis.

To reiterate, for our community to progress at full throttle, all Eritreans must make a *personal* decision to get involved and contribute their share in the coming year. For *Eritrean-ness* to gain currency and have meaning, it must be backed up by action. Otherwise it will remain an empty slogan. In the state of limbo that we find ourselves in, neither our community nor Eritrea will benefit.

Belai Tewolde

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FINANCIAL TIMES:
SETTING YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS

By Girmai Bokre Kahassai



This month's article is meant to really get us thinking about our present financial situation. It is important that in starting the New Year we look to self-evaluation as a means of moving towards self-improvement. Here are nine tips on how to identify and understand your present financial goals and work towards achieving them.

1. Narrow your objectives.

You probably won't be able to achieve every financial goal you've ever dreamed of. So identify your goals clearly and decide which are most important, and why they matter to you. By concentrating your efforts, you have a better chance of achieving what matters most.

2. Focus first on the goals that matter.

To accomplish primary goals, you will often need to put equally desirable but less important ones on a back burner.

3. Be prepared for conflicts.

Even worthy goals often conflict with one another. When faced with such a conflict, you can sometimes choose by applying criteria like: Will one of the conflicting goals benefit more people than the other? Which goal will cause the greater harm if it is deferred?

4. Put time on your side.

The most important ally you have in reaching your goals is time. Money stashed in savings

accounts or invested in stocks and bonds grows and compounds. The more time you have the more chance you have of success. Your age is a big factor -- younger people (who have more time to build their nest egg) can act differently than older ones.

5. Choose carefully.

In drawing up your list of goals, you should look for things that will help you feel financially secure, happy or fulfilled. Some of the items that wind up on such lists include building an emergency fund, getting out of debt, and paying the kids' tuition. Once you have your list together, you need to rank the items in order of importance.

6. Include family members.

If you have a spouse or significant other, make sure he or she is part of the goal-setting process. Children, too, should have some say in goals that affect them.

7. Start now!

The longer you wait to identify and begin working toward your goals, the more difficulty you'll have reaching them. In fact it wouldn't be a bad idea if after reading this you took out a piece of paper and listed your financial goals and where you stand for each one.

8. Sweat the big stuff.

Once you have prioritized your list of goals, keep your spending on course. Whenever you make a large payment for anything ask yourself: "Is this taking me nearer to my primary goals -- or leading me further away from them?" If a big expense doesn't get you closer to your goals, try to defer or reduce it. Although this lesson encourages you to focus on long-range plans, most of life is lived in the here-and-now and most of what you spend will continue to be for daily expenses -- including many that are simply for fun. That's okay -- so long as your long-range needs are also provided for.

9. Be prepared for change.

Your needs and desires invariably change as you age, so you should probably reexamine your priorities at least every few years. One of the biggest life changes is starting a family. Next month's issue is going to look at setting a family budget and financial planning when you have more than yourself to consider.

HEALTH TIMES: CERVICAL HEALTH MONTH

By Naomi Bitow



January is Cervical Health Awareness Month. The cervix is a female reproductive organ that is located in the womb area between the uterus and vagina. Even though the topic of this month's health section is primarily about female reproductive health issues, this article is not meant to be read by only the women in our readership. For men, it is important that they encourage their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters to attend to their health by increasing their awareness about issues like cervical cancer and accessing health care services regularly.

When we discuss cervical health the first thing that comes to mind is often cervical cancer, and rightfully so. It is the second leading cause of cancer death among women, first being breast cancer. Yet unlike breast cancer it can be detected with a simple and effective test called the Pap test. The Pap test, also referred to as a Pap smear, gained its name from Dr. Georges Papanicolaou, who developed it in the 1920's. The test, which has been in use since the 1940's, entails scraping cells from the cervix and analyzing those cells for any abnormalities. Although like any screening test it is not 100% accurate, it is as close as

screening tests get, and has led to a decrease in the number of cervical cancer associated deaths over the past 20-30 years. And the fact remains that cervical cancer is preventable, with regular testing and a conscientious lifestyle.

Some of the risk factors for cervical cancer are certain types of the sexually transmitted disease Human Papillomavirus (HPV), not having Pap tests done regularly (every 1-3 years), cigarette smoking, sexual history, and being immune compromised. The behavioral component of these risk factors cannot be ignored. Being sexually responsible, and not smoking are two obvious lifestyle choices that are important to preventing a number of diseases. While getting regular Pap tests, every one to three years is important to detecting cervical cancer, HPV, and other cervical conditions. And because Pap tests usually take place during routine check-ups a pelvic exam is done as well, which is an early detection method for ovarian cancer.

For those of you that already receive regular Pap tests, wonderful! If you are a woman that has not ever had a Pap test or has not had one in over three years now is the time. The State of Massachusetts offers free breast and cervical cancer screening services through the Women's Health Network. For more information on screening sites and eligibility call 1(877) 414-4447. You can also receive further information regarding cervical health at the following websites:

National Cancer Institute
<http://www.nci.nih.gov/>

National Cervical Cancer Coalition
<http://www.nccc-online.org/>

The Office on Women's Health
<http://www.4women.org/owh/index.htm>

Correction: AIDS stands for *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* and not Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome as it was mistakenly noted in the Health Section of the December issue. We apologize for the misinformation.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: OUR PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL REALITY

By Dr. Andrew Chi



Let us look into understanding how we process thoughts and emotions. We will begin with a paradigm, a model, of experience.

At any particular point in your life, you exist in a given situation in which multiple forms of sensory inputs are entering your brain through various nerves. Your mind, which operates through use of the neural circuits of neurons of the brain and inadvertent modulation of neurotransmitters between individual neurons, converts the sensory inputs into distinct images, sounds, and sensations. Your mind then goes through the task of assigning meaning to these images or sounds. While interpreting the significance of these meanings, your mind automatically shifts through various memories, values, emotions, priorities, etc. that you might have. Then your mind decides what to do what this new information as it weighs the significance of the data in light of other things. At this point, one's mind may shift some emotions, change perspectives, create new memories, react behaviorally, or discount the value of the information as relatively unimportant. This constitutes an experience. Given the various internal and personal factors involved, it is easy to see how people in the same situation may develop very different experiences.

For example, if we all met at the Eritrean Community Center for the first time, we would all experience this same similar situation differently. Most importantly, we would all arrive at the center with varying ranges of emotions, expectations, priorities, and other thoughts on our mind. Upon arrival, we would

then notice different things, develop different emotions, react in various ways, and reach different conclusions or hold different memories of the same event.

Those of us who are more inclined to socialize or tend to a particular community function (like tutoring or cooking) may not take note of the color of the walls or the number of doors in the fellowship hall of the ground floor. While some might find an intended joke funny, others might either find the joke lacking in humor or taste. An Eritrean song playing out of the kitchen might evoke sweet nostalgia of many different images and memories from Eritrea for many adults while evoking no particularly significant thoughts or emotions in a teenager. Children might crowd around the television while others might ask them to turn down the volume. Some of us may also meet someone at the Center who reminds us of our mother, our brother, an interesting acquaintance, or an old rival. Because of the similarity, we might almost begin to converse with that person as if they were our mother or our rival. The stories of our personal experience at the Center would therefore be quite different.

Given this example of the variety of flavors of experience at the Eritrean Community Center, it may be easy to see that each of us would be holding many different emotions and thoughts (perspectives, values, decisions, etc.) about various issues in our life at a given time. With the aroma of an Eritrean meal wafting through the Center, one might be feeling hungry and nostalgic while maintaining a conversation during a meeting and calling after one's child at the same time. This is because we have the wonderful ability to multitask on both levels of conscious and subconscious awareness. Often times, these thoughts and emotions may progress "linearly" and "rationally," whereas most of these thoughts and emotions may intermingle "associatively" with other thoughts and emotions in loose fluid patterns. Whenever we think and emote more "associatively" (particularly during dreams or day-dreaming), various thoughts and emotions about one issue, whether positive or negative, can affect thoughts and emotions regarding another issue. One's feeling about one's body can also greatly affect one's emotions and thoughts.

For example, one might arrive at the Eritrean Community Center carrying a large burden of stress that causes negative emotions of anxiety and frustration accompanied by numerous negative thoughts of hopelessness and despair. These may all heavily influence one's demeanor and disposition at a meeting at the Center, transferring into cynicism about various topics and goals discussed with other members of the community. Or, one might return from work physically and emotionally exhausted and transfer one's discomfort and frustrations onto one's dog by "kicking the dog," who had nothing to do with the arguments with one's boss during the morning.

Unfortunately, these negative experiences can become ingrained into problematic patterns of reacting and behaving if they are repeated, for the mind and brain learns and remembers things best, consciously and subconsciously, through repetition. Thus, one can develop a negative emotional behavioral pattern in certain circumstances or relationships. Fortunately, bad habits or patterns can be changed through the exercise of one's mind. This is often difficult, because we tend to have a difficult time recognizing our own bad habits; phenomena psychiatrists call "a lack of an observing self."

In these situations, psychotherapy, a professional form of careful analytic listening, counseling, and education that helps build up an "observing self," can be very helpful. There are times in our lives when we fall into a crisis, which overwhelms our ability to think or react well or normally to given situations. During these times we must be willing to access our social support networks or psychotherapy services.

VIEWPOINT:
THE UNITY IN COMMUNITY

By Yonas Kinfu



Sometimes people perceive a false dichotomy between Eritrean community associations and Eritrea, but in reality both are connected inextricably. However, because of their geographic divides and associated factors, they have different realities. We cannot live Eritrea in the Diaspora, nor can we ignore the influence of Eritrea and our past experiences on our respective communities.

Eritrea Begins at Home

I strongly believe that Eritrea begins with our families and communities. Supporting Eritreans in the Diaspora is also helping Eritrea, directly or indirectly. After all, to love Eritrea means to love Eritreans wherever they may be. Not necessarily that we have to hug and kiss them on occasions (although, there is nothing wrong with that!) but, at least, we have to be supportive and respectful enough. Patriotism that does not motivate and encourage the support and respect a fellow compatriot is selfish, if not shallow. And, patriotism not founded in social unity and harmony is an aberration at best, and a cult of some sort, at worst.

Community and Eritrea

A unified and strong Eritrean community association could make a tremendous contribution towards Eritrea. The effort of helping Eritrea and building Eritrean community associations go hand in hand. Both are two sides of the same coin. Eritreans in the Diaspora can help Eritrea effectively when their community associations are functional and strong. Thus, the development and advancement of the Eritrean community associations is in the best interest of Eritrea.

In November of 2000, in the aftermath of the border war, a group of Eritreans got

together to raise funds to help the displaced. The benefit dinner went so well that not only funds were raised but non-Eritreans were also made aware about the plight of Eritreans. Undoubtedly, the effort was a success, both financial and intangible benefits, because everyone helped and there was a strong sense of solidarity. Nowadays, I wonder whether a similar event could be held amidst the tensions prevailing among community members. That is a very sad situation and costs Eritrea a lot. Loss is not only when something is deducted from what you have, but also when time is wasted and could not achieve what you could have, otherwise.

Small has to be Beautiful

Eritrea is a small country with limited resources, and Eritreans everywhere are very few in number. The only asset Eritrea has is the resourcefulness of its people. For Eritreans to thrive unity and development is a must. In addition, for Eritrea to succeed among its big neighbors, not only Eritreans have to unite, but also have to be of a higher caliber in whatever they do; whether in education, industry, commerce, the arts, sciences, or public service. Mediocrity is not an option for a small nation. This same assertion is also true when it comes to the Eritrean Diaspora.

For the second and third generation of Eritreans to succeed in their respective mainstream societies, they have to be achievers, to say the least. They cannot afford to be satisfied with the ordinary. That is the only way a small nation or community can excel, by compensating for what is lacking in quantity, by quality. And that is why community associations have to be strong enough to play an utterly important role in the personal development of their members. There are going to be a few individuals who will succeed in whatever situation or circumstance they are in. For those individuals, aspirations and motivation come naturally. But most people will need support and help in realizing their potentials and fulfilling their dreams. That is where pulling resources, to help each other, through a community association is critical both to our individual and common success. We have not tapped into our vast potential yet, let alone to scratch the surface. Quite a lot of talent is wasted for a lack

of goodwill and coordination. Thus, community associations have to become agents to unleash the energy, creativity, and goodwill of individuals for the common good.

COMMUNITY PROFILE:

Yonathan Tekleab



Yonathan Tekleab is a young man that came to Boston in 2002 to pursue educational endeavors. He hails from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and is currently a second year at MIT studying Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering. His extracurricular interests include basketball, good books, and good movies. He is also active as a tutor at the Eritrean Community Center. And for all those stubborn people out there beware, one of Yonathan's pet peeves is stubbornness. We caught up with Yonathan recently and asked him a few questions to introduce this young Eritrean man with a bright future to our community.

E-V: Why did you choose to study aeronautics and what do you like to do during your past time?

YT: I chose aeronautics because since childhood I have been interested in aviation and space exploration. It has always interested me how we can manipulate nature to do what we want. Flying seems like such a fantastical idea, but with science, even putting a man on the moon is possible. I enjoy playing sports and spending time with my friends and family. I played basketball at the college level for MIT last year, but this year I had to quit to focus on my studies. I still enjoy playing with my little brother and down at the local gym just for fun.

E-V: How do you like your stay in Boston and what are your short- and long-term plans?

YT: Boston is a great place for a student, and I'm enjoying myself. After I graduate from MIT, I'll probably be attending graduate school. I hope to eventually hold an executive position at some aerospace company. I'm not 100% sure what field within aerospace I'll be going into quite yet, but I'm leaning towards propulsion. A propulsion system is the part of the vehicle that pushes or "propels" the aircraft or spacecraft.

E-V: How do you find your involvement with the ECC?

YT: I'm a friend of Yonas and he interested me becoming a tutor. I feel it is very important to continue to give back to our community and the youth because they are our future. Apparently our efforts to improve upon Eritrea's economy and infrastructure haven't progressed as we had hoped, but we can give our children the tools to make the best of Eritrea's potential.

E-V: Are there people or ideas that had an impact on you? Do you want to say anything to the youth?

YT: First and foremost, my parents have shown me the importance of giving back and remembering who helped me reach my goals and who helped me become the person that I am. I also admire the great man Nelson Mandela who believed that through persistence and struggle, anything is possible. Here are some wise words to the youth from Mandela that have inspired me: "We ask ourselves: who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you NOT to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone."

EXPRESSION SECTION:

The following poem is from The Eritrean Youth Newsletter, October 1995 issue. The poem was part of the Valedictorian speech of Semret Tadesse Mebrahtu delivered on June 4, 1995. She was a student at St. Vincent De Paul High School, Richmond, Virginia.

BE THE BEST OF WHATEVER YOU ARE

If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill,
Be a scrub in the valley - but be
The best little scrub at the side of the rill;
Be a bush if you can't be a tree.
We can't all be captains we've got to be crew,
There's something for all of us here;
There's big work to do, and there's lesser to do,
And the task we must do is the near.
If you can't be a highway, then just be a trail,
If you can't be a sun, be a star;
It isn't by size that you win or fail
Be the best of whatever you are.

OBSERVATIONS:

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

By Feven Temesgen Abadi

A Christmas and New Year's celebration was organized for kids on Saturday, December 27th at the Eritrean Community Center. Nigisti Hadgu organized the day so there would be separation between the older kids (13 and over) and the younger kids (12 and under).

The party for the children was during the day from 12pm to 6pm. A clown was hired to entertain the children. There were activities such as face painting; the children could have taken part in. In the middle of the party Kubrom stopped everyone to hand out certificates, so the kids whom he collected grades from, that were signed by the Ambassador of Eritrea. The clown,

Bobo, wasn't as entertaining to the kids as everyone would have liked. The kids were running around playing. Food was also served such as pizza, pasta, lasagna, etc... By the end of the party the kids became interested in the balloon art, and were making requests for their own balloons such as fruit baskets, aliens, reindeer, swords, butterflies, etc...

The second party started a little after six. Danny the DJ offered his help by providing the music. The buffet was very good and it was different from the party earlier. They had rice, different kinds of chicken, pasta, soda, and more. The kids were not dancing to the music and were all sitting in their seats and socializing. Kubrom also stopped the party again to award certificates to the older kids. It was surprising to see people from about 13 years of age to early twenties attend. The party was brought to life when the older kids got some younger kids to dance in a contest to win money, which was a success. The kids voiced their opinions on the party and if they wanted anymore like that one. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed the party.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Why I thought the Eritrean party for teenagers was fun!? We had a contest. We had music playing and good food. People were dancing. I won ten dollars for doing the crip walk! That is why I loved it.

-Anonymous...age 12

The holiday party was good and should happen again. It should be done to reunite the Eritrean youth. One thing that could make it better is more people

-Sirak Tewolde

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

► The Newsletter Team of the Community has would like to introduce a Tigrinya section to the current newsletter. Therefore, we strongly encourage you send us Tigrinya articles that you think would be relevant to the Community or offer us your translation skills.

► A group of Eritrean youth are organizing an event to expose fellow Bostonians to the culture, history, and present state of Eritrea. Although an exact date and location for the event has not yet been determined, the Eritrean Open House is anticipated to be held in late February or early March. Eritreans in the Boston area are encouraged to invite co-workers, peers and friends to the event. The Eritrean Open House will be an excellent opportunity for people to learn about Eritrea through pleasant conversation, displays, traditional dress, and food. If anyone would like to assist with the planning of the event, meetings are held on Sundays at 4:15 PM at the Boston Eritrean Community Center. We hope to see you there!

If you have announcements that you would like to submit to ERI-VOICE please send them to us at eccnewsletter@yahoo.com!!!

QUIZ TIME!



1) What is the root word of Eritrea's name?

2) How high is the highest mountain in Eritrea?

3) Name the Italian company that bought Asseb at one time?

You may e-mail your answers to eccnewsletter@yahoo.com or mail them to:

**ERI-VOICE
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**Send us your answers by January 31, 2004.
The names of winners will be announced in
the February issue of ERI-VOICE.**