Record Number of Saturday Visitors after ETV program

The Segenat Children and Youth Library recorded another astonishing record number of children on Saturday, November 20th. This is a direct result of the Ethiopian TV broadcast held the prior Thursday night. 765 children visited the library and 145 are new library users. Saturdays are normally busy days. The previous Saturday saw a total of 420 children, some of whom participated in the weekly video presentation, story hours, and science club.

Needless to say this stressed the capacity of the existing facilities. The City of Mekelle has committed to additional buildings for the future. That time cannot come soon enough as word spreads about the services that the Segenat Library provides.

Sunday hours are under consideration as we explore additional funding resources.

Thank you Zafu for your outstanding reporting and your son for leading you to the Segenat.

For more information contact: tirayreads@yahoo.com

New Display Case Houses Distinguished Authors’ Books

Through the efforts of an anonymous donor, a beautiful, hand-crafted display case was designed and built by local carpenter Ato Gere for the Segenat Children and Youth Library. The case currently houses Dinaw Mengestu’s “The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears,” a signed copy of Maaza Mengiste’s “Beneath the Lion’s Gaze,” and Dr. Solomon Inqai’s, “Tigray: The Agony and the Ecstasy” in both English and Tigrigna. Also included is Yohannes Gebregeorgis’ title, “Tirhas Celebrates Ashenda.” More exhibits will follow.

Special points of interest:

- Student leads ETV to the Segenat
- Authors’ works displayed in library
- AIDS Day program a success
- Record number of attendance
- Collaboration works in Finote Selam
- “Tirhas Celebrates Ashenda” available

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**World AIDS Day Event a Success**

On December 1st the Segenat Children and Youth Library hosted a successful World AIDS Day event. The children participated in poster, poem and essay contests, which were judged in the morning by staff and volunteers. The first 150 children received a red ribbon pin or sticker. In the afternoon the essay and poem winners read their work to an audience of 70 children and were presented with awards. The local Anti-AIDS club facilitated an HIV "Jeopardy" game show, where three teams of three children competed by displaying their knowledge of HIV transmission, prevention, myths and facts, stigma and discrimination and positive living. All of the teams did a great job!

**Astonishing Number of Visits**

The Segenat Children and Youth Library has been in operation just over six months and the number of users has been astonishing with a total of 19,164 visits (new and returning users). The boys still outnumber the girls, but the girls are catching up over recent months. The boys made 12,091 visits in comparison to 7,073 girl visits. Saturdays still remain the highest use date with children coming as far away as Debri (a two-hour walk). Congratulations to all.

**Girls Account for Sizable Increase in Attendance Records**

Month end attendance statistics of the Segenat Children and Youth Library tallied at a whopping 7,400 children for the month of November. Of these, 3,442 were female students, the largest monthly percentage since the Segenat opened in late August.

What accounts for this dramatic increase? Yes, the Ethiopian Television Broadcast was a motivating factor for the surge in attendance. It could also be the spacious interior and abundance of seating. Perhaps, it is the varied programming including the book club, science club, homework club, and guest speakers. The library collection with a large number of both fiction and non-fiction titles in English, Amharic, and Tigrigna are also a big draw, especially as school studies ramp up.

Whatever the reason, the Segenat Children and Youth Library is drawing attention across the city of Mekelle as the place to be.
In a successful effort to spread “random acts of kindness” students of Hillendale Elementary School in Chards Ford, PA collected 1,430 pencils” to share with students at the Finote Selam Elementary School in Finote Selam, Gojam, Ethiopia. The project was a part of the “For the Heart….From the Heart” campaign that was spearheaded by Hillendale student, Mahalet Tegenu, who introduced the campaign via the school’s closed circuit television.

Through the project, the students learned about the culture and customs of Ethiopia and identified Ethiopia on a map. Third grade students used their math skills to count each and every pencil.

Mesfin Tegenu hand-carried the donation to Finote Selam, where he joined Abiyu Berlie, currently living in New Jersey. Ato Abiyu and Ato Mesfin delivered the pencils to Ato Abiyu’s former school, the Finote Selam Elementary School, and distributed them to the children.

Ato Abiyu met with Keith Keyser, a current Peace Corps Volunteer, and Yohannes Gebregeorgis, Tigray Library and Literacy Development Project, to lay out plans to establish the Finote Selam Children and Youth Library in Finote Selam. This project is being funded by private donations and a Peace Corps Partnership Grant.

As can be seen from the photos, the students in Finote Selam were quite excited to receive the pencils and the gifts sent by Hillendale Elementary “From the Heart.”

Mesfin Tegenu and students with their gifts of pencils from Hillendale Elementary School.

Yohannes Gebregeorgis, Abiyu Berlie, and Keith Keyser meet in Finote Selam to discuss the Finote Selam Children and Youth Library.

Site of the temporary Children and Youth Library in Finote Selam.

Successful Grant for Library in Finote Selam

Congratulations to Keith Keyser, U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Finote Selam, for successfully funding a Peace Corps Partnership Grant to establish a Children and Youth Library in Finote Selam. We look forward to working with Keith in this worthwhile endeavor. Stay tuned for updates.

Library hours:
Monday through Saturday:
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
The Segenat Children and Youth Library is a modern, full-service library serving the information needs of the children and youth in Mekelle, Tigray Region, Ethiopia and its environs. The 20,000 volume library has a networked computer lab with limited internet access, an online catalog, reference services, and a variety of clubs and other programming. It is open 48 hours per week, Monday through Saturday.


“Tirhas Celebrates Ashenda” A Perfect Gift

“Tirhas Celebrates Ashenda: An Ethiopian Girl’s Festival” by Yohannes Gebregeorgis would make a unique gift for any occasion. Though a work of fiction, the book was well researched by Yohannes to provide insight into the very popular holiday of Ashenda celebrated throughout Ethiopia, but primarily in the Tigray Region.

The story follows Tirhas as she prepares for her first Ashenda with her mother and the neighbor girls. The girls practice singing, dancing, and drumming for weeks. As the festival approaches, the girls choose a special dress, plait their hair, and don elaborate make up. There are performances and contests during the festival and the girls also go from house to house and business to business in order to raise money for local causes. The book is beautifully illustrated by local Mekelle artist, Rahel Bluts and translated into Tigrigna by Voice of America journalist Girmay Gebru. Please contact tigayreads@yahoo.com for more information.