The future Children and Youth Library in Adi Gudom.

The Segenat Foundation, officially founded by Yohannes Gebregeorgis on July 21, 2011, has been duly determined by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service on October 19th to be exempt from Federal income tax under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

It was further determined that the Segenat Foundation is classified as a public charity with all rights and privileges therein.

“This is really an incredible achievement. Thanks to all for making this happen. This determination will definitely launch the SEGENAT FOUNDATION into new horizons,” expressed Yohannes upon hearing the official determination.

The mission of the Segenat Foundation is first to support the continued development of The Segenat Children and Youth Library in Mekelle; the future Children and Youth Library in Adi Gudom.

Noted Storyteller Conducts Workshop at the Segenat

Her preference is to work in areas of the world that have not been paid much attention, preferably outside of the capital city. This need to serve an underserved population brought Anne Pellowski to the Segenat Children and Youth Library in Mekelle, Ethiopia in October to conduct two workshops on creating simple cloth books in local languages. Ms. Pellowski, a former member of the Executive Committee of IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) and active for more than 50 years in the work of IBBY, sent Yohannes Gebregeorgis a simple and understated letter of inquiry offering her services. “I have read with interest your efforts to bring books to Ethiopia’s children. I would like to offer my services to do a workshop in Ethiopia, for the purpose of making picture books in your local languages there.”

Knowing the importance of introducing first language materials early to very young children, Yohannes jumped at the opportunity. What a chance for aspiring authors, illustrators, teachers, and librarians to be introduced to a simple, inexpensive method for sharing reading in the local language! Typically, Ms. Pellowski offers two workshops back to back within a five-day period. Yohannes pulled together faculty from nearby Mekelle University, illustrators interested in ex-
Noted Storyteller Conducts Workshop at the Segenat

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expanding their skills, and both experienced and promising new authors. Ms. Pellowski put them to the test and they rose to the challenge. Each participant had an opportunity to create three cloth books: a word book in Tigrigna and a second language (English or Amharic); a concept book such as a folk tale; and a third of his or her own design.

The workshop stressed the importance of having colorful books in the home language of the children. A secondary goal is that participants will share their newly acquired skills and lead further workshops of this type to others in the community. These initial books are made of cloth because cloth is an easy medium in which to work and cloth is easily available in most communities. At the end of this workshop, the participants chose two of the finest cloth books among the participants. Funding has been promised to photograph these selections and turn them into printed books for further distribution to home, school, and community libraries.

Ms. Pellowski has written extensively on storytelling and is in fact a gifted storyteller. Her list of writings include children’s stories as well as sourcebooks on publishing and storytelling. As a representative of IBBY, she travels to two or three countries each year to present these workshops to future authors and illustrators.

Yohannes is not unfamiliar with the works of IBBY. In 2009, Yohannes was a panelist for the 8th IBBY Regional Conference "Children's Books: Where Worlds Meet" held in St. Charles, IL. The workshop provided by Ms. Pellowski continues this great relationship between IBBY and Yohannes with the likely possibility of collaboration in the future.

Each page of the book is assembled by hand one-by-one.

Illustrator and author work side-by-side on their storyline.

The storybook characters are ironed on the fabric using fusible web.

Participants from Workshop Two show off their finished stories. With Anne Pellowski.
The American Association of University Women of Virginia in partnership with the Tigray Development Association, presented a Fall International Program on September 24, 2011. The program “Literacy: the Key to Development in Ethiopia” held at the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, DC was a fund raising event for the Segenat Children and Youth Library in Mekelle. Open to all AAUW members and friends, this free program began with a warm welcome from the honorable Deputy Ambassador Tesfaye Yilma. Deputy Ambassador’s remarks focused on the importance of education of all children and girls in particular. He stated, “As the saying goes Educating women is educating the entire nation. It is a huge factor for development as it unleashes a potential which would otherwise have been paralyzed. Educated girls make informed decisions in family planning, with significant impact on child and mother health care issues.”

Dr. Gebrewahid Woldu, Chairperson, TDA Board, provided information about the Tigray Development Association and its ongoing humanitarian efforts. Janet Lee, Librarian, Regis University, Denver, and Returned Peace Corps Volunteer/Ethiopia, engaged the audience in a special multi-media presentation on the Segenat Children and Youth Library, a project of the Tigray Library and Literacy Development Project, spearheaded by Yohannes Gebregeorgis. The Segenat was dedicated August 2010. This flagship library was featured in American Libraries http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/news/08232010/new-youth-library-ethiopia-makes-impossible-dream-reality and caught the attention of members of the Virginia State Board. The program concluded with a video presentation on the cultural and historical aspects of Ethiopia along with a traditional coffee ceremony. To mark the first anniversary of the Segenat Children and Youth Library, cake was served along with traditional Ethiopian coffee.

This program provided AAUW members and friends an opportunity to make a voluntary contribution that will make a significant difference in library and literacy efforts for children in Ethiopia. Special thanks to our host, Mulugeta Berhe of the Tigray Development Association.

The Power of an Education

Deputy Ambassador Tesfaye Yilma listened to the presentation of Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Janet Lee in rapt attention. He could not believe what he was hearing. Was it possible that she taught at his old high school in Emdeber, Shoa immediately following the overthrow of the Emperor? He was from the even smaller village of Gubre, some twenty kilometers from the high school and attended the high school during the initial reign of the Derg. Still in disbelief, he asked her of the name of her school and confirmed that the school of which she spoke so fondly was indeed the same. She taught from 1974-76 and he attended from 1977-79. Together they reminisced about the turbulent time in which they had lived in Emdeber and about a few people whom they had known in common. She has since returned to Emdeber but he has not. There are still too many memories. She promised him a copy of Maaza Mengiste’s book, “Beneath the Lion’s Gaze,” a powerful telling of that difficult time. It was the least that she could do for her Gurage brother.

She marveled at the power of an education and having a bit of determination. From the small village of Gubre, a mere bump in the road, came...
The mission of the Segenat Foundation is first to support the continued development of the Segenat Children and Youth Library in Mekelle; the Dr. Thomas Hooyman Memorial Library at Fre Sewat Elementary School; the school libraries at Myliham and Dehri Elementary Schools; similar libraries throughout Ethiopia; the development of portable and home libraries; and other literacy and scholarship initiatives.

http://segenatfoundation.org

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Shewit—Children’s Writers and Illustrators Association of Tigray

A distinguished group of writers and illustrators endorsed the constitution and bylaws for the establishment of SHEWIT – CHILDREN’S WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS ASSOCIATION OF TIGRAY. SHEWIT (a Tigrigna word describing produce that is freshly picked) has been in the making for the last four months and directly came out of discussions held during a fruitful seminar in Mekelle for children’s writers and illustrators sponsored by the Swedish Institute. The seminar and workshop was held in Mekelle and Addis Ababa May 17, 18, and 20. It brought together children’s writers and illustrators from Sweden, Tanzania and Ethiopia and was a collaboration of BOKSPENDELN, INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOTEK of Stockholm, Sweden and TIGRAY LIBRARIES AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, the precursor to the SEGENAT FOUNDATION and SOLOLIA PUBLISHING. Participants in Mekelle had an opportunity to visit the highly acclaimed Segenat Children and Youth Library and sung its praises.

The Tigrigna Department of the University of Mekelle and the SEGENAT FOUNDATION worked together to organize writers and illustrators and to make SHEWIT possible. SHEWIT was launched Saturday October 8, 2011 at a public ceremony held at Mekelle University. Presenters from the University of Mekelle and the Tigray Development Association (TDA) discussed the importance of the founding of SHEWIT and the need to develop a reading culture.

The launch of SHEWIT preceded a five-day workshop on bookmaking at the SEGENAT CHILDREN AND YOUTH LIBRARY (see story pg. 1). Anne Pellowski, the workshop presenter, attended both the establishment and launch of SHEWIT.

SHEWIT will do its best to work with national and international organizations to realize its goals and objectives.