



American Jewish
Joint Distribution
Committee



BREAKING NEWS – Right now we have 21 kids in Ghana undergoing spine surgery by Dr. Boachie's FOCOS team. We are not fully funded, and greatly appreciate contributions - from small gifts to full sponsorships of \$18K per child. Detailed information is available on each patient.

Tax-deductible donations to JDC's spine project via www.Rickhodes.org

Contact us at: EthiopianSpines@gmail.com

Thank you! Rick Hodes, MD and the JDC-Ethiopia spine team



AKEWAK



BEREKET



BERUK



BETELEHEM



BEZAWIT

Akewak is a 15 year old boy from Burayu, outside Addis Ababa. He lives in a mud house with his mother who works in a school, his dad, a policeman, and his three sibs. Their toilet is outside. Akewak is in 9th grade and ranks in the top 15%. He especially enjoys biology. When Akewak is not in school, his hobbies include watching movies and reading. He loves playing soccer with his best friend, Obo. Akewak has VACTERL syndrome, which has malformed his spine with congenital fusions, and his heart with a PDA. Heart surgery in Ethiopia was disastrous, but successful corrective surgery was performed in Denver last summer. Akewak is teased in school and cannot play like other kids, since his heart begins to hurt if he runs long distances. He went to numerous doctors without success, which cost his family a lot of money and time. Two years ago he was referred to Dr. Rick. Since then, Akewak says, "he has helped so much. He has given so much to us." Akewak hopes he grows up to be healthy so he can become a doctor, and help people like himself.

Bereket is a 13 year old boy from Addis Ababa. He shares a mud house with his parents and three older sibs. Bereket is in the 6th grade where he ranks in the top 40%. His favorite subject is English, which he understands and speaks well. When not studying, he enjoys watching movies and playing soccer. His favorite film is Jim Carey's "The Mask," and favorite soccer team is Arsenal. Bereket's mother first noticed his abnormal spine when he was 2 years old. His curved spine has made it difficult for him to walk long distances. He has lost 70% of lung volume. His parents have taken him to many doctors, with high fees resulting in financial and emotional hardship, without any solution. Bereket dreams of becoming healthy so he can grow up to become a doctor and help people like himself.

Beruk is a 4 year old boy from Addis Ababa. He lives with his grandmother and 7 of her children in a mud house. They've dug a hole to use as a toilet. Although his parents are alive; his mother lives in the countryside selling tea and coffee, his dad lives in Addis, unemployed. He sees them on holidays. Beruk is very excited to start kindergarten next year. He wants to learn how to build a big house for his grandmother. He enjoys playing soccer with his friends, and cheering for his favorite team, Manchester United. When he was 18 months old, his grandmother noticed a bump on his back. It continued to grow. Although Biruk has been to many hospitals and has had x-rays, treatment was impossible. Recently he has become very thin, had trouble breathing, and keeping up with his friends. He has congenital scoliosis plus neurofibromatosis, and needs "growing rods," with 4 or 5 surgeries over the next 6 – 8 years. His grandmother dreams of him becoming a healthy and educated young man.

Betelehem is a 13 year old girl from Addis Ababa. She lives with her mother, a coffee seller, and her brother in a mud house. Her father is not in the picture. They are very poor. They have no latrine, so they walk 30 feet to use a river. Betelehem is in the 5th grade and ranks in the top 20%. Her favorite subjects are math and science. She studies hard because she wants to become an ophthalmologist, so she can help the many people here with eye problems. She is so dedicated to fulfilling her dreams that in her free time, relaxing with her best friend, Mesganaw, they study together. Betelehem has had scoliosis for 10 years and had 4 surgeries with growing rods. It is difficult for her when kids at school tease her, screaming: "you carry a child" due to her curved back. Her mom dreams of seeing Betelehem happy and healthy.

Bezawit is a 13 year old girl from Debreberhan, 80 miles north of Addis Ababa. She lives in a mud house with her dad, a small shop owner, her mom, a housewife, and two sibs. They have electricity, but they walk to an outdoor latrine. Bezawit is in 6th grade and loves studying math. She has big plans: to be a spine surgeon to operate on kids with back problems like hers. She is so dedicated that she says her favorite thing to do is study. Outside school, she enjoys drawing pictures and playing hide-and-seek with her best friend, Amira. Bezawit has had severe scoliosis for many years. She has lost 2/3 of her lung volume. Five Ethiopian doctors have examined her, but Dr. Rick has been the only person to offer hope. This year, her extended family collected money and she was taken to a hospital in Thailand, but that sent her family into financial distress, and the Thai doctors said that she was too complicated to operate. Her family just wants her to finally be healthy.

ETHIOPIAN SPINES



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STRAIGHTENING IN GHANA



ASELEFEW (WITH DR. RICK)

DAGIM

DAGUMA

EYERUSALEM

FANTAYE

Aselefew is a 20 year old male from Pawie in Gojjam, northwest Ethiopia. He is an orphan. He shares a mud hut and outside latrine with another spine patient in Addis Ababa. Aselefew is in 12th grade and ranks in the top quarter of his class. Every day he walks two kilometers to class where he enjoys studying his favorite subjects, biology and English. When not in school, he loves reading books as well as both watching and playing soccer. Aselefew had tuberculosis of the spine for years with a 120-degree angle. He has lost 55% of his lung volume. People have teased him about his back and chest. He cannot do much physical exercise, like running and playing soccer, two things that he loves. Aselefew had spine surgery in 2010, and is now returning for a second operation. He dreams of becoming healthy, to grow up to be a film director and a surgeon. He knows there are a lot of people who need surgery, and he wants to help.

Dagim is a 15 year old boy from Addis Ababa. Dagim lives in a mud house with his father, a shoe repairer, his mother, a housewife, and six older sibs. They have electricity but must walk to a communal latrine. Dagim is in the 8th grade- his favorite subject is biology. He is studying hard to become a scientist, hopefully an astronomer so he can discover something new. In his free time, Dagim spends time with his best friend, Filimon. They play soccer, study and read together. Dagim has had scoliosis for 14 years, and has lost 38% of his lung volume. He has seen 10 doctors without success. Often, he is nervous to play sports because he is scared of injury. His family just wants to see him healthy.

Daguma is a 15 year old Oromifa-speaking boy from Chanco, outside Addis Ababa. His father has died, so he lives in a mud house with his mother, a housewife, and his 6 sibs. They have no electricity and must walk 30 feet to an outside toilet. Daguma is in 6th grade where he ranks number 1 out of 54 other students. His favorite subjects are English, math and Oromifa. When he is not studying, he hangs out with his best friend, Tamerat. They have been best friends for 7 years. Daguma has had progressive scoliosis since he was a baby. He's lost half his lung volume. Consequently, it is difficult for him to play sports, and he is teased by kids. He was once taken to a doctor, who said there is no treatment for him. A visiting American introduced Daguma to Rick. He is returning to Ghana for his second spine surgery. Daguma dreams of being an engineer so he can grow up to be someone important.

Eyerusalem is a striking 16 year old from Addis Ababa. She lives with her unemployed mom, sister and brother in a mud house. Her father has died. They walk to an outdoor latrine shared with many families. Eyerusalem is in 9th grade where she ranks in the top ¼ of her class. She loves studying chemistry. Outside of school, she enjoys watching movies with her best friend. She frequently helps her mom with household chores. Eyerusalem has severe scoliosis. She has been to several other doctors without help. She is teased at school because of her deformity. Eyerusalem dreams of becoming healthy to become a doctor and help people like her; "I just wants to be a good person!"

Fantaye is a 13 year old girl from Addis Ababa. Both parents have died, and with no sibs, she lives with her wonderful grandmother and uncle. Fantaye is in 8th grade where she ranks in the top 15%. Her favorite subject is biology. When not in school, she helps her grandmother fetch water from a nearby well. If she has any free time after her chores and studying then she plays soccer and hangs out with her friends, especially her best friend of 9 years. Fantaye has progressive scoliosis and has lost 1/3 of her lung function. She has frequent pain and is often teased in school. Fantaye dreams of being healthy so she can become a doctor, to research and treats patients like herself.



ETHIOPIAN SPINES STRAIGHTENING IN GHANA

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC)



FIRDOS



GETASEW



MAHELET



NATNAEL



OLIAB

Firdos Mohammed is an 8 year old girl from Kemisse, a small town in northern Ethiopia. She lives with her father, a math teacher, her mother, a housewife, and her three month old sister. Firdos is in the 4th grade, in the top 10% of her class. Her favorite subjects are science and Amharic. She studies hard – her goal is to be an orthopedic surgeon. When Firdos is not studying, she likes to be with her best friend, Kalkidan. They play hide and seek, “akookoolu.” Firdos has congenital scoliosis with several deformed vertebrae. She often feels uncomfortable when she is playing or even just sitting. She also gets tired very easily. Her family just wants her to be healthy and happy.

Getasew is a 14 year old boy from the tiny village of Fiche Saminchiwa. He lives in a mud house with his parents and 6 younger sibs. They have neither electricity nor a toilet. Getasew is in 7th grade and ranks in the top 20%. Amharic is his favorite subject. He loves spending time with his classmates. He is known as loyal and trusting. Demes has been his best friend since he was very young. They enjoy playing soccer together. Getasew has been suffering from severe kyphoscoliosis for years. He has lost 40% of his lung function. Although Getasew is tormented and teased by his classmates, he remains in good spirits and is optimistic. However, his family struggles to watch the pain he endures daily. Getasew received his first medical attention when a worker from the organization, “CBR - Community-Based Rehabilitation,” introduced him to Dr. Rick. He now desperately needs surgery to fix his deteriorating spine. Getasew hopes to grow up and become a doctor who helps people around him.

Mahelet is a smiley 9 year old girl who lives in Addis Ababa. Her parents live in the countryside, she rarely sees them, and instead lives with her aunt and 3 cousins in a mud house. They walk to a communal toilet. Mahelet is at the top of her 2nd grade class. Her 3 favorite subjects are English, Amharic and science. Mahelet is an active young lady. When she is not in too much pain, she loves playing akookooloo (hide-and-go-seek) and jump rope with her friends. Mahelet has congenital scoliosis, which is worsening. She needs “growing rods,” and several surgeries in the next 6 years. She’s lost 25% of her lung function. She has been to many doctors without help. Her goal is to regain her health and become a doctor and treat people like herself. Her aunt just wants her to see her play normally, like the rest of her friends.

Natnael is an 11 year old boy from Addis Ababa. He lives with his retired dad, his mother - a soldier for two decades, and three sibs. They live in a mud house and use a communal toilet. Natnael ranks at the top of his 4th grade class. His favorite subject is math. When Natnael is not in school, he enjoys doing one of his many hobbies. He likes drawing, especially houses, playing soccer and watching movies with his best friend. Their favorite is “Tom and Jerry.” Natnael has had scoliosis since he was 3 years old, and lost half his lung function. His family is very concerned about his height - he is much smaller than his classmates. Consequently, he is teased at school. He visited the military hospital, and was diagnosed as untreatable. Natnael hopes to become healthy and become a physician to help others with back deformities.

Oliab is a 5 year old boy from Debrezeit, 30 miles south of Addis Ababa. He lives in a mud house with his dad, an electrician, his mother, a housewife and his older brother. Oliab is in kindergarten. His favorite subject is English - he loves learning the ABCs. When he is not in class, he enjoys playing hide and seek and football with his best friend, Sami. Oliab has congenital scoliosis, which is progressive. He needs “growing rods,” and several surgeries over the next 8 years. He has seen 6 other doctors without help. At times he feels too uncomfortable to play with his classmates. His mom dreams of him being healthy and happy.





RAHEL TAMERU TENSAE TINUR TSIYON WONDEMU

Rahel is a 14 year old girl from Debrezeit, a town outside of Addis Ababa. She lives in a mud house with her father, a small shop owner, her mother, a housewife, and her four sibs. They must walk 65 feet to an outdoor latrine. Rahel is in 8th grade, in the top half of her class. She loves geography and hopes to become a scientist or historian. In her free time, Rahel enjoys reading fiction books. She also spends time discussing school with her best friend, Meron. Rahel has had scoliosis for eight years, with 2 severe curves and has lost over half her lung function. She feels sad all the time because of her back, and just wants to hide. Her family is deeply concerned, and has spent a lot of money transporting her to various doctors. None have helped. They just want her to be healthy and be able to play like all her other friends.

Tameru is a quiet and reserved 15 year old boy. He lives in Addis Ababa with his father, a day laborer, his stepmother and two younger sibs. They live in a mud house and walk to the outdoor latrine which they share with 20 others. Sometimes he hears from his mother, a farmer in the countryside. Tameru is in the 6th grade where he ranks 6th out of 38. His favorite subject is math. When Tameru is not studying, he is focusing on his other passion: soccer. He loves cheering for Manchester United. He hopes to play like Rooney, so Tameru spends a lot of time practicing his skills. Tameru has been suffering from scoliosis since birth. He has lost 1/3 of his lung function. He has been to 4 doctors, but none have helped. He has endured years of being made fun of by classmates and even family members. Tameru is highly ambitious. His 4 goals: to become healthy, to become an engineer, and to play professional soccer, and to pay for a lot of kids educations.

Tensae is a 10 year old boy from Addis Ababa. Tensae lives with his mother, a housewife and seven older sibs in a mud house. His father has died. Although they have electricity, they must walk 30 feet on a stone road to reach a shared latrine. Tensae is in the 4th grade and ranks in the top quarter of his class. His favorite subject is math. Tensae is studying hard to become an astronomer: "I want to see inside the sky." When Tensae is not in school, he enjoys spending time with Adane, his best friend since 2nd grade. They play soccer and watch movies: their favorite is The Lion King. In school, he is teased and called "gobata,"-hunchback. His mom constantly feels sad and worried for him. She just wants him to be healthy and enjoy life with his friends. Tensae has a scoliosis with >90-degree angle, and has lost half his lung function.

Tinur is a 15 year old female from Gojjam, 300 miles northwest of Addis Ababa. She lives with her farmer parents, and 5 sibs. They live in a mud house without electricity or a toilet. Instead, they walk into a local field. Tinur is currently in 11th grade where she ranks in the top third. Her favorite subject is biology. When not in school, Tinur enjoys playing with friends and discussing what they are learning in school. She spends most of her time with her best friend since 1st grade, Sentayehu. Tinur has had tuberculosis of the spine for a decade. She has over a 100-degree angle, and has lost 55% of her lung function. She also has strabismus, crooked eyes. At school, she is often teased. Tinur fears the burden her illness has caused her family, as her mother is always bringing her to clinics and is extremely sad that Tinur cannot do what other children can. She blames herself for her mother's heart condition. Tinur dreams of becoming a cardiologist so she can cure her mother.

Tsiyon is an 11 year old girl from Jimma. She lives with her mother, a daily laborer. Her father died when she was 3 months old. They live in a mud house and walk 50 feet to the outdoor latrine. Tsiyon is in 5th grade, and ranks in the top 10% of her class. Her favorite subject is English. She dreams of becoming a doctor so she can help people. In Tsiyon's free time, she attends church and loves to play hop-scotch with her best friend. Tsiyon has a congenital deformity with a 103 degree angle. She has lost 53% of her lung function. She was seen by 15 doctors, but no one could help. Tsiyon is really sad that she cannot play any sports. Her mother is deeply concerned about her condition. She hates to hear about other children teasing Tsiyon about her back. Her mother dreams that one day she will be healthy and become a good doctor.

Wondemu is a 13 year old boy from Addis Ababa, the youngest of nine children. He has an S-shaped spine, and has lost 60% of his lung function. His father is a plumber and his mother a housewife. They live in a mud house and walk to an outside latrine. Wondemu is in 4th grade and the top third of his class. His favorite subject is English, which he says he'll put to good use when he becomes an eye doctor for the many people around who need eye care. Wondemu enjoys spending time with his best friend, Temesgen. They play hide and seek, akookoolu. He has seen many doctors but no one has been able to help him. He is teased at school because he cannot run and easily gets tired. His family worries about him all the time, especially when they see all the healthy kids around him. They just want him to get well.

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