

MAHEBER

Ethiopian community Association Of Chicago

July 2013

Dr. Erku Yimer Receives the ICIRR's 2013 *Refugee Rights Champion Award*

On June 20th, The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), a Coalition composed of more than 150 organizations from Latino, Middle Eastern, Asian, African and European communities across the state of Illinois, of which the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago (ECAC) is a member, awarded Dr. Erku Yimer, Executive Director of ECAC, the *Refugee Rights Champion Award*. This year, June 20th was a very special day for Dr. Erku, who was once a refugee and resettled in the USA back in 1975, has sacrificed most of his time to serve the refugee and immigrant population here in Chicago for the last three decades. It was a privilege and a great honor to witness that he was one of the few honorees of that day's event at the Museum of Broadcast Communications.

Mr. Lawrence Benito, CEO of ICIRR, presented the award to Dr. Erku for his inspired leadership in building a thriving, empowered and fully integrated Ethiopian community in Illinois.

After expressing his great gratitude and appreciation to ICIRR for the sincere acknowledgment and award, Dr Erku notably reminded every participant to focus on the visible and aggressive struggle for African refugees, who are under immense and inexplicable persecution at the moment. He further underscored that this is the time when we need to stand up together to address African refugee and immigrant issues alongside with issues of other immigrant groups, and work together for fair immigration reforms.

Elected officials and delegates of the State of Illinois, Cook County and the City of Chicago as well as community leaders, representatives, and civic activists were in attendance of this huge event that coincided with the World Refugee Day.

Senator Heather Steans of the 7th District also presented a proclamation by The Senate of The Ninety-Eighth General Assembly of the State of Illinois to Dr. Erku on his receipt of the Refugee Rights Champion Award, honoring him for his extraordinary career in community service. Members of the Board and staff of ECAC congratulate Dr. Erku for the award, and express our deepest appreciation for his hard work and extraordinary career in community service. We are very proud of you.



ECAC's 2013 Walkathon

On Saturday April 20th ECAC held its first ever 5k Walk-A-Thon. Heavy rains the Thursday before led to the course being shortened to a route that went from Bryn Mawr and Lake Shore Drive to Foster Beach. The theme of the walk-a-thon was "I Walk for ECAC" and 90 walkers of all ages participated and raised over \$16,000! All participants received t-shirts and at the end of the walk everyone enjoyed snacks and a great view of the lake.

We would like to extend our thanks to Ethiopian Diamond Restaurant and Demera Ethiopian Restaurant for their generous sponsorship of the event. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of our staff and volunteers for helping make this event possible! We plan to make the Walk-A-Thon an annual event during the summer season.



Congratulations to recent graduates!

ECAC would like to extend its congratulations to the newest college graduates in our community:

Gabi Dressligné - B.A in Sociology from Northeastern Illinois University

Yonas Zewdie - B.A. in Business Administration from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.



29th ECAC Anniversary Celebration and Fundraiser

The Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago celebrated its 29th anniversary in great fashion at the Dank Haus German American Cultural Center on the evening of June 8, 2013. Among those in attendance were new and old community members, volunteers, and staff from ECAC and from related human services agencies across Chicago. The evening started off with a reception and cocktail hour with Esrael Yoseph providing guests a taste of lively Ethiopian music, as well as a silent auction of Ethiopian handmade goods. Felasfaw Woldegebriel, President of ECAC, and Dr. Erku Yimer, Executive Director, addressed guests to officially start off the program with humble attitudes that showed their great appreciation for those that have made ECAC the successful organization it is today over the past twenty-nine years.

Dinner was catered by the Ethiopian Diamond Restaurant in a buffet style with plenty of Ethiopian cuisine to go around as well as a large dessert selection. Once dinner was served, guests were treated to performances by the KWA-NTUKIRI International Group, who delighted everyone with their rhythmic and energetic playing of the drums, and the Ethiopian Community Children, who proudly shared their culture as they danced to Ethiopian music. Both groups did an excellent job at entertaining guests and providing a bit of insight into Ethiopian culture.



Dr. Alie Kabba, Executive Director of the United African Organization, then addressed the audience in regards to the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill and the future of the Diversity Visa in this debate. Recently named among the top 100 black leaders in the United States, Dr. Kabba proved himself to be a dynamic and passionate speaker on the subject of immigration, especially when it came to motivating guests to contact their respective congressmen to express the view that the Diversity Visa be included in the final version of the Comprehensive Immigration Bill. To emphasize this point, he used the analogy that Africans will miss dinner if they are not seated at the table and in order for lawmakers in Washington to take Africans seriously when it comes to immigration reform, Dr. Kabba argued, they need to unite and prove a force to be reckoned with in the voting polls.

Five individuals who have gone above and beyond to support the organization and the community it serves were recognized and awarded by the organization. Fikuru Kidane was recognized for his outstanding volunteer support in providing transportation for donation items throughout the years. Dr. Daniel Amick, professor at Loyola University Chicago, who developed Loyola Refugee Outreach, was recognized for his outstanding volunteer support and cooperation. Fasika Y. Alem, past President of ECAC and of the Awassa Children's Project, a Chicago based not-for-profit that assists a children's home and youth campus in Awassa, Ethiopia, was awarded for her committed and effective leadership. Girum Hailemariam, previous board member and secretary, was presented with an award for his committed and able leadership in serving ECAC. Liknesh Yimer was also awarded for her outstanding community support and her constant efforts to serve the community.

Once the formal ceremony came to a close, guests were once more entertained with Ethiopian music and dance. Everyone was all smiles as they mingled, met up with old friends and made new ones. The Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago's 29th Anniversary celebration was not only that: it was a celebration of all that is Ethiopian culture and heritage as well as the expression of a hope for African unity in the future. All in all, the event proved to be a huge success. ECAC would like to thank all those in attendance for a wonderful evening, and for those that could not attend, thank you for your continual support to the agency's mission.

Update on ECAC Museum Collections



ECAC has started cataloging the artifacts for the museum collection with the help of Chicago Cultural Alliance to provide training for the cataloging and labeling of the collection items. ECAC has procured software and a laptop dedicated to the museum as well as other items and materials to organize the collections. Three members of the ECAC staff have been trained in cataloging and labeling the items. ECAC continues working with the Chicago Cultural Alliance to get more people trained and to complete further training for those who have started the training. ECAC also obtained some donation items from Susan Pollack. These included pottery items and weavings made by Ethiopian Jewish craftsmen. Some of these items were displayed at the ECAC's Annual fundraising dinner.