

Fighting for Gira Dima

Derek Zhou, Cupertino High UNA Co-President

Was it joy? Relief? Slight nervousness, perhaps, or outright excitement? The English language proved greatly inadequate for us as we stepped off the bus. As members of the United Nations Association of Cupertino High School, our group, 14 students and seven adults, had arrived in Gira Dima, the finale of our two-year long Ethiopian Humanitarian Project. For this project, we had raised over \$7,000 and several thousand pounds of educational supplies for Gira Dima. However, these accomplishments would pale in comparison to what we experienced, learned, and ultimately loved about the people and village of Gira Dima.

Our main focus for the first three days in Gira Dima was to use our manpower to set up the supplies within the various buildings of the community center. Among such projects were setting up multiple bookshelves to hold textbooks and supplies; bringing in tables and chairs to the schoolhouse; utilizing a single generator to install electric wires underground; painting a large mural on one building; and cleaning and arranging donated supplies in the small medical clinic and art room. We also completed some of our own projects, including cleaning and arranging 14 laptop

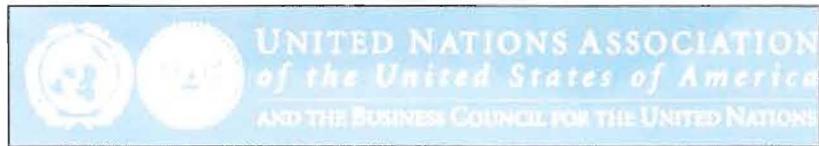
computers we had brought in the "computer lab"; sawing 752 wooden frames for 94 individual double-sided blackboards; and making a big blackboard for the schoolhouse. Once these tasks were completed we were finally able to begin what we were all waiting for, working and playing with the students of Gira Dima!

The boundless energy of the students nearly left us in the dust. From teaching English to the younger kids, to playing soccer, jump rope, and volleyball with the older children, to instructing the teenagers how to use Microsoft Word, Excel, and Power Point, each activity was met with enthusiasm and thirst for more from the students. Most importantly was the level of retention they possessed. Even the complexities of computers were not enough to deter the students as some, after only a few days, had already moved beyond the basics of Microsoft Office into more detailed skills. It was soon apparent that, though we were the teachers, they taught us the most important lesson of all: adversity does not beget surrender, and we are surely never to forget the pure resolve and optimism each pair of eyes possessed as they chanted, kicked, and typed away.

Our activities did nothing to stop the constant ticking of our 10-day clock. When our last day arrived we tried to think of anything that would prolong our stay at the village. We ran from the bus to give them one more hug and tears flowed back and forth between inhabitants of two lifestyles a world apart. Even the thought of our cozy beds at home did nothing to deter us from clutching onto the villagers we had grown to love and admire so much. As our bus slowly glided away from the mobs of waving children, we realized that, thanks to the help of the World Family, our parents, all our club members, and everyone else in between, this trip was hardly the finale. It is only the beginning.



A small sampling of the students we met together with of our group on our first day in Gara Dima



**UNA-USA Midpeninsula Chapter
Annual Meeting**

DON'T MISS THE REPORTS FROM GARA DIMA!



SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 2010

First Baptist Church of Palo Alto
305 N California Ave. at Bryant
Palo Alto, CA 94301

- 3:00 PM **UNA-USA Business Meeting**
1. Presentation of Budget
 2. Election and Installation of New Board Members
 3. UNA High School Essay Contest Awards:
Veejay Menon, Saratoga High School
Joshua Wong, Stuart Hall High School, S F
- 3:30 PM **Refreshments**
- 4:00 PM **Reports from Gara Dima, Ethiopia**
Cupertino High School Student Alliance
President Derek Zhou and members

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

UNA-USA Midpeninsula
552 Emerson Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301 • 650/326-3170 • <http://www.unamidpen.org>