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Mathiwo's Wondu - YeEthiopia Cancer Society

Press Release - Remembering Mathiwo's Wondu

September 23, 2015, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Mathiwo's, the third and youngest son of his parents Mr. Wondu Bekele and Mrs. Amsale Beyene, was born on June 17, 1999 (Sene 9, 1991 Ethiopian Calendar) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Until he celebrated his second birthday he was very healthy, energetic and his growth was corresponding to his age. A few days after celebrating his second birthday, he un-expectedly became very ill, and after clinical investigation he was diagnosed with ALL-type Leukemia.

He had been under treatment for 26 months. Even though there is no conducive environment for cancer treatment, the staff of Medical Faculty of Addis Ababa University, commonly known as Black Lion Hospital, tried everything at their disposal to save his life. Due to lack of cancer medicines here in Ethiopia his family was forced to import from overseas almost all of the very expensive medicines that were recommended by his doctors.



Mathiwo's under treatment at the Black Lion Hospital with his parents.

Due to Mathy's family unreserved, all round commitment and dedication and cooperation of personnel of the Medical Faculty, Mathiwo's was widely believed to be one of the best-treated patients ever in the hospital. Because of this Mathy was seen as a good reference and hope to most cancer patients in Ethiopia. After 22 months of comparative improvement, unexpectedly it was found out that the disease has relapsed, accordingly the Medical Board of the Hospital decided that there was no proper medication left for Mathiwo's here in Ethiopia and refereed him to the abroad for possible Bone Marrow transplant which is not possible in Ethiopia and in Africa except South Africa and Egypt.



Left, Mathy alone and right celebrating his fourth and last birthday.

After intensive search for overseas treatment possibilities in South Africa, Europe, India and North America, National Cancer Institute (NCI/NIH) of Bethesda, MD, USA agreed to accept Mathy for further treatment option including Bone Marrow transplant. Mathy accompanied by his mother and his elder brother (donor) was about to fly to Washington D.C, U.S.A. All necessary conditions for the trip such as round trip air ticket, accommodation, visa, etc have been arranged. Before they leave, unfortunately, Mathiwas passed away on September 24, 2003, while he was under treatment at the Black Lion Hospital.

A group of people of different races and nationalities from three different continents, many of whom without knowing each other, tried together everything that is humanly possible to save his life. Even though their concerted efforts couldn't save Mathy's life, the group, without being frustrated by the unexpected outcome, decided to strengthen and consolidate their efforts to honor him and his cause, and as a result established Mathiwos Wondu-YeEthiopia Cancer Society/MWECS/.

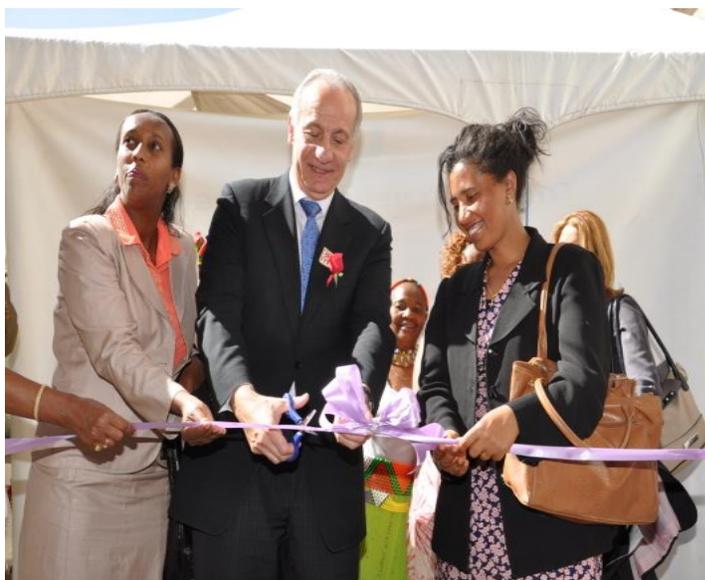
Although grief stricken, the parents of Mathiwos and founding members made a vow to continue to support other families with children diagnosed with cancer in an effort to spare them from hopelessness a parent feels when he or she is not able to help or save their child.

The Mathiwos Wondu-YeEthiopia Cancer Society (MWECS) was established at the first General Assembly meeting of the founding members held on April 17, 2004. The Society secured its legal personality through a certificate of registration bearing the number 1382. For further information refer to our web site: www.mathycancersoc.org.

MWECS is actively working in so many cancer and non communicable diseases-related activities, particularly in raising public awareness of cancer, its prevention and treatment possibilities. In addition, the society has been ardently working to improve treatment conditions and support cancer patients.

The Society began its quest by focusing its initial efforts on pediatric cancer and has been implementing cancer impact mitigation project since 2010. So far, the society supported more than 160/without including their accompanying parents/ pediatric cancer patients and at the present supports 70 pediatric cancer patients. The society covers cost of medicines and diagnostic laboratory services not provided by the Black Lion Hospital, transport from and to their regions and food support while the patients are under treatment at the hospital.

As of recently, the society started working on women cancers as one of its main focus area and towards these ends, started working with the Federal Ministry of Health, government and non government organizations to join forces intended to challenge the growing burden of women cancers which account for more than 50% of all cancer mortality and morbidity in Ethiopia. The long-awaited Mathiwo Wondu-Ye Ethiopia Cancer Society's Office and Psychosocial Support Center officially launched on February 10, 2015 by Mr. John Damonti, President of Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation accompanied by officials from the First Lady Office of Ethiopia and Federal Ministry of Health, the Honorable Margaret Spellings, President of George W. Bush Presidential Center and officials from several international organizations such as American Cancer Society, National Institute of Health, MSH, Cordaid, and partner organizations.



Mr. John Damonti, President of BMSF in the middle with officials from the First Lady Office of Ethiopia and Federal Ministry of Health launching Psychosocial Support Center.

MWECS has been implementing anti-tobacco campaign in selected schools here in Addis Ababa and planning to expand the same to universities. Thanks to the support of Bloomberg Foundation and Campaign for Tobacco Free kids, we have started implementing project on tobacco control, the major objective of which is to introduce Comprehensive Tobacco Control Law/Bill here in Ethiopia. The project being implemented with partnership of the Federal Ministry of Health/FMoH/, Food, Medicine & Health Care Administration and Control Authority/FMHACA/, Ethiopian Public Health Association,/EPHA/, World Health Organization Ethiopia Office, Consortium of Ethiopian NCD Associations/CENCDA/, African Union etc.

As of 2012, has been implementing “Meet the Targets” project intended to encourage the timely implementation of Political Declaration on non-communicable diseases passed by United Nations Head of States in 2011. The American Cancer Society after evaluating the two years project implementation finally agreed to extend the project for another two years. The main objective of the project will be to consolidate the achievement scored so far and encourage FMOH to develop and implement the long awaited National Cancer Control Plan/Program/ of Ethiopia.

We are grateful to every single person and organization that showed the courage to step up and give of themselves. We are especially thankful to our partners, sponsors and supporters, without whom we would not be able to support cancer patients and their families; to our members & volunteers with their relentless energy and selfless giving; to our staff and representatives who carry our name with dignity and pride; and to our survivors and caregivers for showing us the way.

Cancer is not a battle that one can fight and win in isolation and we look forward to the professional, moral and material support of willing individuals and organizations in order to make a difference!

September 23, 2015
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia