

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia Hosts Meet and Greet with Miss Israel, Yityish Aynaw on Tuesday, September 24, 7:30 PM

FAIRFAX – The Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia is pleased to host an evening with Miss Israel, Yityish Aynaw, the first Ethiopian-born woman to win the Israeli beauty pageant, on Tuesday, September 24, at 7:30 PM at the JCCNV, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax, VA 22031. The event is free and open to the public. Donations are welcome.

Ms. Aynaw, who will make a stop in Fairfax during her U.S. tour, will speak about her incredible journey from growing up in a small Ethiopian village to becoming an Israeli beauty queen. Her message — welcoming and celebrating ethnic diversity — is compelling.

About Miss Israel

Aynaw was born in Chahawit, a small village in northern Ethiopia, near the city of Gondar. Her father died when she was young, and ... she lost her mother to a painful illness ... when she was 12. Heartbroken, she arrived in Israel with her brother to live with their Ethiopian Jewish grandparents.

While still a child, Aynaw was suddenly faced with a new language, a new culture and all the rest of the challenges that come with starting a new life in a foreign country. Like the estimated 125,000 Ethiopian Jews who have gone in waves over the years to Israel, Aynaw experienced the same struggle to assimilate into her new environment. But she threw herself at it, not shying away from all that her adopted country expected of her, including mastering Hebrew and serving in the Israeli army after school. "It (was) three of the most significant years in my life," says Aynaw about her time in the military. "There I learned a lot about myself; there I developed," she adds. "I was a girl of 19 and the army gave me structure."

After finishing her army service, Aynaw started working as a sales clerk in a clothing store. Tall and beautiful, she long had her eye on becoming a model but she never thought about taking part in a pageant. Instead, it was a friend of hers who entered her name into the Miss Israel competition. Her win in February changed her life instantly. Within a matter of weeks, her name and image were splashed across newspapers and websites, both in Israel and abroad.

The publicity also caught the attention of one of her heroes: Aynaw was invited to an exclusive state dinner for Barack Obama in honor of his first visit to Israel as U.S. president.

Aynaw says she had never expected something like this would happen to her. "Suddenly I thought about the little girl who had suffered and the little girl whose only dream was to run and play the whole day. The pain I went through; I saw it all," she says.

For more information, please contact Laurie Albert, Community Engagement Director, LaurieA@jccnv.org or (703) 537-3064.

This program is made possible through the support of the National Juneteenth Christian Leadership Council (www.njclc.com), Rev. Ronald V. Myers, Sr., M.D., Founder & Chairman and sponsored through donations to the Myers Foundation (www.MyersFoundation.net). NJCLC sponsors the National and World Day of Reconciliation & Healing from the Legacy of Enslavement and hosts the 2014 Israel Juneteenth Reconciliation Tour. -END-

About the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia (JCCNV)

Since 1980, the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia is dedicated to offering quality programs, activities and services which emphasize Jewish culture, identity and values to people of all ages and backgrounds. The Center is a nonprofit social service organization committed to providing social, educational, fitness and wellness programs guided by Jewish values. For more information, please visit us online at www.jccnv.org.