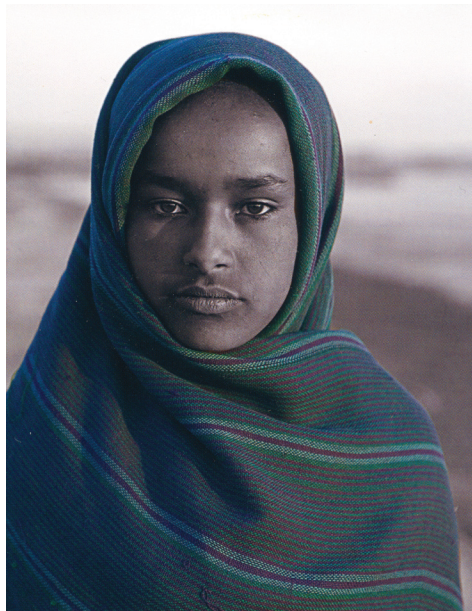


## Silver Spring photographer shares “Ethiopia from the Heart”

New book highlights compassionate vision



Above: an image from “Ethiopia from the Heart,” a photographic journey through the motherland of Silver Spring photographer Andarge Asfaw. Photos from the book are on display at Mesu Gallery on Fenton. Street. Proceeds from sales of the book will go toward fighting deforestation in developing countries.

BY LINDSEY WARNE

A Silver Spring photographer and photography professor has recently released his first book, “Ethiopia from the Heart,” which is a compilation of photographs centered on the people, nature, culture and environmental crisis of Ethiopia.

“Ethiopia from the Heart” was created by Andarge Asfaw, along with Donna Jones, his photo editor and partner of F/Stop Studio in Silver Spring. The book, released in the summer of 2007, is a visual essay whose message is to create awareness about deforestation, soil erosion, flooding and pollution in Ethiopia.

Asfaw spent the last ten years shooting for the book, traveling back and forth to Ethiopia to capture both the beauty of the region and people and the destruction that the country is currently facing.

Asfaw is also the first Ethiopian photographer to compile a visual book on Ethiopia, according to Jones.

“The fact that he is Ethiopian and from his own perspective is telling what he feels like needs to be told is what makes it special,” she said.

According to Asfaw, his greatest hope is that this passionate endeavor will create awareness about the current global environmental crisis.

“We’re only here to appreciate the land for now and then pass it along to the next generation. What are we leaving them?” he asked.

Asfaw grew up both in the countryside

and the capital city Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia. He said that his father was an amateur photographer and had a large impact on him at a young age.

“I picked the hobby up from him. He gave me my first camera at age eight, and ever since then, photography has been a passion of mine,” he said.

Asfaw immigrated to America at the age of 13 with his brother, during the time in Ethiopia when the military government took over. He attended the Hallmark Institute of Photography in Turner Falls, Massachusetts, which allowed for him to get a strong background in shooting various types of products.

“They taught me everything; how to work in a dark room, to shooting, to the business aspect of photography,” he said. “The school is very train-oriented. We were trained to go right into shooting.”

After graduating, Asfaw moved to New York City in 1979 to look for a photography job.

“I realized that if I could make it in New York, then I could make it everywhere...Every morning, I would hit the pavement and find every studio in the city,” he said. “I would knock on each door and ask for an assistant job, even if it was just to sweep.”

Asfaw found his first job in Queens, at Direct Press Studio, in an entry level job. Two weeks later, he was offered a photography position, and did “strictly catalogue work” for fashion clients, including Lord and Taylor and Gucci.

Asfaw then found himself at his second job at Justin Associates, a studio that did a lot of work for Mobile Oil, American Bankers Association, and other commercial clients. It was there that Asfaw met Jones, the daughter of Ron Jones, owner of the company.

When Ron Jones decided to close the office in Vienna, he confronted Jones and Asfaw with the opportunity to become co-partners and use that space to start their own studio, F/Stop Studio.

It was when Asfaw returned to Ethiopia after spending 27 years in America when he realized the extent of deforestation and devastation that the country was facing.

“Growing up, as you travel and drive on the streets of Ethiopia, you’d see animals crossing the street and traveling through the countryside. You also couldn’t see through the forest because it was so thick,” he said. “But the last time I went back, I asked the driver if we were on a different road. I didn’t recognize it.”

Andarge said it was at that moment that he was determined to do something about the destruction of land, as it had become a personal crusade for him.

“When I was growing up, my dad used to take me out to the farm,” he said. “I

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PHOTO: MARGARETLOOMIS

Tappers taking their positive attitude to China: Maria Guerrero, Hannah Kenton, Justin Allen, and Liza Mayman

## Tapping all the way to China

Takoma Park teen to perform with fellow Tappers with Attitude

BY KARA BERGER

Takoma Park 12th-grader Maria Guerrero and three other dancers with the youth ensemble Tappers With Attitude will head to China just before Christmas to be part of a U. S. performance at the Beijing International Dance Festival.

Guerrero, a seventeen-year-old who attends Kennedy High, was dancing with the ensemble in Chicago this summer when Lane Alexander of the Chicago Human Rhythm Project took notice and extended an invitation to the Chinese festival, which will take place December 21-23. The other dancers are Justin Allen from Woodbridge, Virginia; Hannah Kenton, from Bethesda; and Liza Mayman from Langley, Virginia.

The four teenagers will travel without their parents. For Guerrero it will be her first trip abroad. Her mother, Sissy Kegley, says, “I think it’s a fantastic once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

Guerrero began tapping seven years ago in imitation of her older sister. “I think I got kind of jealous. I wanted to do it, too,” she says. “I love that you can make music with your feet. I love the rhythms and the sounds. I love that there is a lot of room for creativity.”

She will be squeezing the trip to China into a hectic final year at Kennedy that also includes college

visits and entrance applications as well as work on the school yearbook. To prepare for her performance she must learn a new and rigorous choreography.

“Her commitment is nothing short of astonishing,” says Vicki Moss, an instructor with the ensemble. “Maria is a great dancer and is also a hoot! We’re so glad she’s part of this adventure.”

At the Chinese festival Guerrero and her three colleagues will team up with tap dancers from five other U. S. cities. “I am so struck by the fact these contemporary American teenagers are heading to China to perform a traditional dance form in a place where tradition is so revered,” says Moss, who notes her regret that the whole company could not go, due to logistical problems.

“The opportunity to work with tap pals from across the United States, and eventually to perform with Chinese tap dancers, is historic, too,” says Moss.

Tappers With Attitude is a non-profit dance organization based in Silver Spring that was established in 1994.

Guerrero’s mom says she is disappointed that the parents of the dancers were not included in the invitation, but she is ecstatic for her daughter. “I don’t know if I ever expected her talent to take her to another country, but she certainly deserves it,” she says. “When I see her dancing it gives me chill bumps.”