



Alula's Dream Foundation

Dreams Taking Shape Giving Gala
Post-Event Impact Report



Incorporated Jan. 12, 2023

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A Reflection from the Chair

When we began this journey, it was rooted in both loss and conviction. The war in Tigray did not only destroy buildings. It disrupted childhoods, fractured communities, and interrupted years of learning for thousands of students. Education was intentionally targeted, and the consequences continue to unfold.

The Dreams Taking Shape Gala was more than a fundraiser. It was a gathering of people who believe that rebuilding education is essential to restoring dignity, stability, and long-term opportunity. Seeing our community come together in faith and solidarity reaffirmed that this work does not belong to one person or one organization. It belongs to all of us who believe that children deserve safe classrooms and a future shaped by possibility, not conflict.

We are grateful for every partner, donor, volunteer, and supporter who continues to stand with us. Together, we are rebuilding not only a school, but hope.

Selam Kahsay
Co-Founder and Chair
Alula's Dream Foundation



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Mission and Regional Context

Alula's Dream Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educational, humanitarian, and charitable aid. Our mission focuses on supporting the Tigrayan people of Ethiopia, who continue to face severe hardship and human rights violations following the war in Tigray.

During the conflict, education infrastructure was intentionally targeted. An estimated **7,000 schools** across the region were damaged or destroyed. Classrooms were burned, supplies were looted, and many facilities were rendered unusable or repurposed to shelter internally displaced families.

As a result, educational access has deteriorated significantly. Schools designed for 1,500 students are now serving more than 2,500 due to prolonged closures and the loss of neighboring facilities. Students have endured years of interrupted instruction, creating long-term academic gaps and instability.

Rebuilding schools is essential to restoring structured learning, community stability, and long-term opportunity.

Goal and Background of the Event

The Dreams Taking Shape Gala was organized to advance Phase 2 and Phase 3 construction of the Alula Tesfai Zeweli Primary School in Nebelet Town, Embasneyti Woreda, Tigray, Ethiopia.

The event was developed in response to the widespread destruction of educational infrastructure during the war in Tigray. With thousands of schools damaged or destroyed and enrollment levels exceeding facility capacity, the need for new, safe, and functional learning spaces remains urgent. In partnership with the Tigray Regional Education Bureau, Alula's Dream Foundation committed to constructing a primary school that will help alleviate overcrowding and restore structured learning environments for students who have experienced prolonged educational disruption.

The primary goals of the Dreams Taking Shape Gala were to:

- Raise financial resources to support ongoing construction phases
- Increase community awareness of the educational crisis in Tigray
- Strengthen institutional partnerships and sponsor engagement
- Provide transparent updates on construction progress and timeline milestones

By bringing together donors, faith leaders, community partners, and regional education representatives, the Gala served as both a fundraising initiative and a strategic opportunity to mobilize sustained support for long-term educational rebuilding.



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Event Overview

On January 31, 2026, Alula's Dream Foundation hosted the Dreams Taking Shape Gala at Gospel Life Church's Carol Stream campus. From 5:00 to 8:00 PM, approximately 220 attendees gathered in support of rebuilding educational infrastructure in Tigray, Ethiopia.

The purpose of the evening was to raise funds for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Alula Tesfai Zeweli Primary School, developed in partnership with the Tigray Regional Education Bureau to address urgent overcrowding and infrastructure destruction in Embasneyti Woreda.

Program Highlights and Event Achievements

The Dreams Taking Shape Gala served as both a fundraising initiative and a strategic moment of institutional growth and alignment.

Attendance and Engagement

- Approximately 220 guests in attendance
- Strong participation from faith leaders, business partners, donors, and community supporters
- High engagement during live appeal and auction segments

Fundraising Outcomes

- \$48,102 in gross revenue
- \$43,132.52 net after expenses
- Individual donations represented the largest source of revenue
- 100 percent of proceeds designated for Phase 2 and Phase 3 construction

Program Excellence

The evening featured structured programming designed to communicate urgency and inspire action:

- Guest remarks from Dennis Wadely
- Musical performances by Dina Bach and Dr. Paul Isihara
- Prayer and reflections led by Pastor Scott and Pastor Tey



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- Remarks from Dr. Kiros Guesh, Head of the Tigray Education Bureau
- Interactive Heads or Tails segment
- Live auction led by Isaiah Nichols

The program effectively balanced mission clarity, storytelling, and engagement, resulting in strong donor response and expanded awareness of the school construction initiative.

Institutional Advancement

- Formal partnership with the Tigray Regional Education Bureau reinforced publicly
- Clear construction timeline shared with attendees
- Transparent financial reporting presented
- Expansion of sponsor and community partnerships

The Gala strengthened not only financial capacity, but also organizational credibility and long-term sustainability.

Financial Summary

The Dreams Taking Shape Gala generated **\$48,102 in gross revenue**. After total event expenses of **\$4,969.48**, the Foundation raised **\$43,132.52 in net funds** to directly support school construction.

Revenue sources included:

- Individual Donations: \$16,802
- Sponsorships: \$20,500
- Ticket Sales: \$10,800
- Auction Proceeds: \$2,157

Primary expenses included food and event décor. The Foundation remains committed to financial transparency and responsible stewardship, ensuring that funds raised translate directly into measurable educational impact.



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Gratitude and Recognition

We extend sincere appreciation to all sponsors, donors, partners, and volunteers who made this event possible.

Diamond Sponsors (\$2,500 and above):

Dr. Paul Isihara
Steve and Martha VanZee

Platinum Sponsors (\$1,000):

Don and Annie Carlson
Hannah and Josh Sylvan
Jim and Kathleen Galvin
Mawi, Inc.
Robert Lyon

Gold Sponsor (\$500):

Abiy Mebrahtu
Aman Gebredehan
Carl L Etheridge Jr.
Genet and Richmond Richter
GF Auto Repair
IIBSG Foundation
Jamie and Ian Sylvan
Jane Belongea
Jason and Wendy Marriott
Jonathon Gidey
Jose Luis Escalante and Paulina Duenas
Meaza, Merhawit, and Haymanot
Robert A Hensley
Tim Mander
Tigist Reda
US Bank
Yohannes Hailu

Supporting organizations include:

Tigray Education Bureau, Tigray Development Association, InLighten Window Cleaning, Gospel Life Church, Bank of America, Tyndale Publishing, the Timothy Project, DoubleTree Hotel, GF Auto and Repair, Abay Cleaning Service, I Have a Bean, Demera Ethiopian Restaurant, Egglectic Café, Wheaton Franciscan Sisters, Montessori Academy of Glen Ellyn, and Axum Ethiopian Restaurant.

We also recognize our board members, volunteers, and the Food Committee for their leadership and service.



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Official Request and Partnership

In July 2024, the Tigray Regional Education Bureau formally requested support from Alula's Dream Foundation to construct a new primary school in Nebelet Town. The Bureau confirmed that land has been reserved within the urban plan and emphasized the urgent need to accommodate an additional 1,000 students due to severe overcrowding.

This request established a formal partnership aligned with regional education priorities. The Alula Tesfai Zeweli Primary School is being constructed in direct response to this documented need.

Construction Progress and Timeline

Construction of the **Alula Tesfai Zeweli Primary School** has officially begun.

Upon completion, the school will include:

- 16 classrooms
- 8 laboratory spaces

The project remains on schedule:

- **September 2026:** School opens at 50 percent capacity
- **September 2027:** School reaches 100 percent operational capacity

These milestones represent measurable progress toward restoring educational infrastructure and long-term stability in the region.

Impact to Date

Prior fundraising efforts have already generated measurable impact within the region.

To date, Alula's Dream Foundation has facilitated:

- Donation of 100 blackboards
- Distribution of 6,000 pens
- Distribution of 6,000 pencils



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- Distribution of 6,000 exercise books
- Three food distributions to internally displaced families
- Donation of three laptops
- Donation of three desktop computers

These interventions addressed urgent classroom resource shortages and humanitarian needs during a period of severe disruption.

Looking Ahead

The Dreams Taking Shape Gala represents meaningful progress, but rebuilding education in Tigray is a long-term commitment.

We invite our community to remain engaged by:

- Making a donation
- Joining our mailing list
- Following Alula's Dream Foundation on social media
- Attending future events
- Continuing to pray for the children, families, and educators we serve

Together, we are restoring classrooms, rebuilding opportunity, and investing in a generation whose education was disrupted but whose potential remains intact.



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A Closing Message from the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we extend our deepest gratitude to every individual, family, organization, and partner who made the Dreams Taking Shape Gala possible.

The progress outlined in this report reflects more than financial success. It reflects collective commitment. It reflects trust in our mission. It reflects a shared belief that rebuilding education is essential to restoring dignity and long-term stability in Tigray.

As a Board, we remain steadfast in our responsibility to ensure responsible stewardship, transparent reporting, and strategic oversight of the Alula Tesfai Zeweli Primary School project. We are committed to ensuring that every dollar raised advances measurable progress and sustainable impact.

The formal partnership with the Tigray Regional Education Bureau, the documented regional need, and the clear construction milestones ahead all affirm that this work is both necessary and achievable.

We are encouraged by the momentum gained through this year's gala and remain dedicated to advancing Phase 2 and Phase 3 construction in alignment with the projected September 2026 and September 2027 milestones.

Thank you for standing with us in this effort. Together, we are not only rebuilding classrooms. We are investing in the next generation and helping restore opportunity where it was disrupted.

With gratitude and resolve,

The Board of Directors
Alula's Dream Foundation

Selam Kahsay
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