

ONE ROOF

Rain does not fall on one roof alone.
Cameroonian Proverb



Fall 2010

Advocates for Survivors of Torture and Trauma

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The mission of ASTT is to alleviate the suffering of those who have experienced the trauma of torture, to educate the local, national, and world community about the needs of torture survivors, and to end torture worldwide. ASTT was founded in 1994.

Running with the Team of Strength

Twenty-two thousand runners participated in the Baltimore Running Festival on October 16th. Among those runners were four torture survivors who were running the marathon relay. These young men had never met before but came together to form

ASTT's Team of Strength. Their goal was not a specific time to finish the marathon but to raise awareness about the issue of torture and ASTT. This is an amazing group of men from three different countries (Ethiopia, Cameroon and Togo). They fled to the United States to seek asylum and safety. They have been using running as a therapeutic tool to heal from the psychological and emotional wounds of torture. ASTT therapists have always encouraged survivors to use sports as a way to release energy, build self-confidence and "clear your head."

One of the runners from Ethiopia said he runs 10-15 miles a



day in order to clear his head. He has only been in the United States for little more than a year but already feels that ASTT and running have helped him to rebuild his life.

The outpouring of support from the community has been phenomenal. A local running store, Falls Road Running Store, heard that one of the runners was wearing his street shoes to run and offered to fit him in a brand new pair of Under Armor running shoes. The local NPR station interviewed two of the runners and aired a story about the Team of Strength. Donors pledged support and volunteers came to cheer.

On the day of the race staff, volunteers and runners were caught up in the excitement. Runners were there from all 50 states and 60 different countries! There were 800 relay teams. The Team of Strength came in 47th in the field of men's only teams. This is a remarkable finish for any team but even more remarkable considering what these men have endured. It proves that the human spirit is incredibly strong and resilient.

We call the runners our Team of Strength because they are strong for being able to run miles but stronger yet for overcoming the wounds of torture. Now these runners are ready to help other torture survivors benefit from running. They will be starting a running group in DC. The group will meet once a week and train together. The runners already have their eye on the next race – the National Marathon in DC on March 26th.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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Learn how running reduces anxiety, improves mood

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“When people now get tortured, they speak about it. The public perception of what’s to be done about police torture is changing.”



IRCT Facebook Page: World Without Torture

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Country Profile: Somalia

Somalia gained nationhood in 1960 and after a coup d’etat in 1969, was ruled by Mohamed Siad Barre. Barre imposed an authoritarian socialist form of government characterized by a new standardized writing system, anti-clan promotion of the “modern state,” and rampant human rights abuses.

After Barre’s regime was overthrown in 1991, the country descended into tribal warfare. In an attempt to reconcile violent opposition groups, a conference was held in Djibouti in 2000 to set up a transitional government. After four years, little progress had been made in uniting the country and in 2004, a new parliament was set up which later appointed a new president. Since then, Islamist militias, especially the group al-Shabaab, have gained significant control over the southern part of the country, including the capital.

In the latter half of the decade, the UN-supported transitional government and al-Shabaab have been wrestling for control of the country. The transitional government has also enjoyed the support of Ethiopian troops, as well as the backing of Western governments like the United States. As the transitional government and al-Shabaab battle for dominance, the civilian population is falling victim to ongoing violence.

Civilians have been enduring famine, displacement, arbitrary detention and brutality as conflict continues. They experience extreme poverty and violence. Likewise, nations have been threatened by Somali pirates, whose presence stems from the absence of a central authority.



THOUGHTS FROM OUR GARDEN

A garden in the autumn can be one of the nicest places to be in, whether you are working, sitting, or drumming and dancing! The urge to weed and water and tend all of the plants lessens, and we can see the beauty of the plants' structures. I love flowers in all their variety, but by this time of the year, I am happy to look at the seeds, leaves, and branches, and appreciate the more subtle colors of the autumn garden.

What is amazing to me is how the Healing Garden has flourished in its first year. When I look at it now, it appears more like a two or three year-old garden which has had time to establish itself. It may be possible to identify why some gardens thrive and some don't do so well, soil type, watering regularly, fertilizing and so on, but I, myself, have to admit to believing that a certain amount of love and kindness also contribute to a garden's success. And if all of those qualities, seen and unseen, are combined in a garden – well, then I think you get a garden that looks like ours!

Of course, the garden could never have thrived without the help of the volunteers. I cannot give enough thanks to all who have made the garden so bountiful. Make sure you find time to enjoy the garden in all its autumnal glory. With the protection of the fence and getting so much direct sun, I think the garden will be growing strong for a while longer!

Welcome Externs!

Nancy Furst has a Master's degree in clinical psychology and is currently working towards her doctorate at the American School of Professional Psychology. She has previous clinical experience working with children and adults suffering from a wide range of psychological disorders. She has a particular interest in trauma and PTSD, particularly with disenfranchised individuals. Nancy also volunteers at a homeless shelter in Washington, DC and is a therapist at a private practice in Virginia. She lives in Washington, DC and enjoys exploring the nation's capital in her free time.

Seth Shaffer recently joined the ASTT staff as a therapist/Extern. He is a fourth-year doctor of clinical psychology student at the American School of Professional Psychology/Argosy University located in Arlington, VA. Engaging in clinically related work with an international population has been a passion of his since he founded a non-profit organization called, Harmony Through Education (Harmony). Harmony creates schools for mentally and physically challenged children in rural India. He helped open Harmony's first school in Dharamsala, India in July of 2008. He hopes to utilize his clinical skills to benefit the clients and looks forward to growing as a person through working with the clients and staff at ASTT.

Joshua Semiatin is a clinical psychology doctoral student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He received his master's degree in clinical psychology from Loyola University Maryland in 2008. His main professional interests are focused on post-traumatic recovery and growth for individuals, couples, and families. ASTT is very glad to have him for a second year as an extern.

Join our Circle of Strength! Becoming an ASTT monthly donor is quick and easy and can be done online. Best of all, regular monthly donations help us spend less on fundraising and more on client services. To join, please visit our website or contact Molly at development@astt.org.

PARTICIPATE

Message from the Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'K' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical line, resembling 'K-H'.

Karen Hanscom, PhD.
ASTT Executive Director