

NY 1 News
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Scholar/Athlete



**Girma Segni:
Ethiopian
Immigrant
Dominates On The
Track And In
School**

DIAL UP TO BROAD BAND

Girma Segni travels from his home in the Bronx to Brooklyn every day to attend the Brooklyn International High School. But that journey is nothing compared to the one he made four years ago, when he and his three siblings emigrated to the United States from Ethiopia, escaping civil warfare and the political and financial hardships they once endured.

His parents are deceased, so an older brother is now supporting Girma and two other siblings.

"If I work hard I think, 'I will make him happier because he paid the price for it,'" says Girma.

"To have come from where he's come from and to have been through what he's been through and to still succeed at such a high level and persevere, I mean, those are the utmost qualities for success in the future," says internship advisor Daria Witt.

When Girma first moved to New York, he didn't speak any English, but he was determined to excel in academics and sports. Today he has a 92.1 grade point average, and is a member of his high school's track teams.

For the last two years, Girma has been ranked as the city's fastest high school long distance runner.

"When you're out there running those miles, your mind is wandering and you want to stop, but you never see that in him," says track coach Marc Cinamon, "All you see in him is he wants to go further."

Girma's also gone far as a leader to his peers. He's captain of his high school's cross country team, and he co-founded the African Club.

Girma is also involved with student government, and is a member of the National Honor Society.

"He works harder than almost any student I've ever seen in my life," says math teacher and cross country coach Jay Mellstron.

Girma hopes to become an international civil rights lawyer so he can someday help Ethiopians who are still suffering from political persecution, and he's already on the right track. He's interned at the Immigration Defense Fund and was a member of the City Hall Academy, where he acted as a liaison between Ethiopian immigrants and City Hall officials.

He also volunteers as a peer educator, where he helps to increase HIV and AIDS awareness.

"His commitment to the immigrant community and the Ethiopian and African community is very, very strong and apparent in everything he does," says Witt.

Girma says no matter which college he attends, he knows he'll achieve his dream of becoming a civil rights lawyer. And he'll also do his best to achieve his other goal, representing the U.S. in the 2012 Olympics.

"I want to run for America because it's a free county. It's my country," he says.

So, for persevering though personal hardships, going after his dreams, and giving back to his community in New York and Ethiopia, Girma Segni is our NY1/Health Plus Scholar Athlete of the Week.

The NY1/Health Plus Scholar Athlete program celebrates student athletes who successfully combine academics with athletics, and also find time for community service. The program, operated in conjunction with the New York City Department of Education, is open to any senior attending a New York City public high school. Selected students receive a \$2,000 scholarship to the school they choose to attend in the fall.

*To apply, download and print out the **official Scholar Athlete application**, then mail it to the address on the form.*