

UB's Educational Opportunity Center honors its 'greatest legacy' at annual graduation

By Charles Anzalone

A community leader who moved "beyond the falsehood" after being placed incorrectly in special education classes and an Eritrean refugee who exemplifies the storybook "American Dream" will be honored at the University at Buffalo's Educational Opportunity Center's graduation ceremony on May 20.



Zola Crowell! Tedros Teklzghi

O. Eve Community Award in honor of the former New York State Assembly deputy speaker. The UBEOC dedicated and named its new facility at 555 Ellicott St. after Eve last July.

Tedros Teklzghi, who graduated in 1994 from the UBEOC's English as a Second Language Program and again in 1995 from its College Preparation Program, will receive the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Both former students will be in the UBEOC's commencement spotlight because the school's true contribution lies in its graduates who have given back to the community and rewritten the story of their own lives, according to Julius Gregg Adams, executive director of the UBEOC. Adams called both graduates perfect examples of what the EOC is all about.

"We have been around for over 40 years, and our greatest legacy is our alumni," says Adams. "The two alumni we will honor at this year's graduation are exemplars of how education and training from UBEOC can change people's lives and help them to overcome challenges they have had to endure, many times through no fault of their own.

"This year's graduating class only has to look at the thousands of UBEOC graduates before them to see how our alumni's aspirations and achievements can and will guide their own success," Adams says no one embodies the values and ideals of its graduates better than Crowell and Teklzghi. Both of their stories illustrate UBEOC's unique contribution to the community and its ability to offer redemption to students, many of whom face tremendous obstacles.

Crowell lived much of her life under what she calls a "falsehood." From first through 12th grade, she was placed in special education classes, despite never going through any formal learning assessment. She learned how to live within that stigma, she says, until she came to the UBEOC.

"The UBEOC gave me the courage to move beyond the falsehood," says Crowell. "The EOC never let me buy into that label."

Crowell grew up in Andalusia, Alabama, and Niagara Falls, and lived in Buffalo from 1967-2011. She worked as a U.S. Postal Service night distribution clerk in Buffalo and briefly in Manhattan. She enrolled in the Buffalo EOC and earned her high school equivalency diploma. She took college preparation courses, worked at Millard Fillmore Hospital as a nursing aide and as a secretary in the Open Heart Intensive Care Unit. She attended Millard Fillmore and Empire State colleges, and worked for 25 years as an administrative assistant at the VA Western New York Healthcare System.

"Buffalo EOC was my lifeline," Crowell says. "And because EOC believed in me, I developed my own resolve to succeed and help others in need."

Her commitment to the community has never wavered. She has been active in the Niagara Falls chapter of Links Inc., the Association of Black Social Workers, the Harriet Tubman 300's, the Black Pioneers of the Niagara Frontier, the American Business Women's Association and First Shiloh Baptist Church. Crowell retired after 30 years as a federal employee and now lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. She currently is a member

GOOD DEED!



Boy Scout Troop 237 from Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church were recently taking part in a "good deed" as they collected food for the needy at Tops Market on Jefferson Avenue. Pictured above (l-r) Scout Master Anthony Wiley, Scout Jeremy Dread, Scout Joshua Horton, Scout Brian Williams, and Edward Bell Assistant Scout Master. Shoppers were pleased to see such a positive image of our young men, and gave food and donations with a smile! The scouts meet on Mondays from 6-8 p.m. at the Church, located at 237 E. North Street.. Call 830-7803 for more information.

of the Charlotte Crown Jewels Chapter of Links Inc., through which she attended the United Nations Gala and met Secretary General Kofi Annan and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Embracing what "lifeline" truly means, Crowell believes a person's past influences her future. Genealogy has become her true passion. She has been recognized by the Library of Congress for her gift of her genealogical manuscript of her great-grandmother, Charity Butler, who was born into slavery in the 1850s. She also has received recognition for her research from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Teklzghi has become a testament to the adage "hard work pays off," an embodiment of the way talented and resourceful immigrants have created better lives for themselves and their families for generations, say EOC officials who have worked with him.

After coming to the U.S. in 1991 from Eritrea, a small country on the Horn of Africa, Teklzghi initially relocated to San Francisco and worked as a cashier at Walgreens. Accepting a friend's offer to visit Buffalo, Teklzghi saw opportunities and moved here in 1994. Again, through the encouragement of his friend — who was attending classes at the EOC at the time — Teklzghi enrolled in the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. He worked diligently learning the language while assimilating to a new culture. After completing the ESL program, he enrolled in and graduated from UBEOC's college preparation program in 1995.

He went on to Erie Community College and earned an associate's degree in computer information systems. He was hired as a computer technician for ECC's downtown campus. Teklzghi then enrolled in the computer information system program at SUNY Buffalo State, working as a computer consultant while a student. He graduated with a BS in computer information systems in 2000. He took a job as a user support technician at the UB Law School and later was promoted to manager of the school's computer lab, where he set up an extended-use system accessed by 200 users.

He now works as system administrator and user support technician at the Law School, supervising eight students and staff. Married with two children, Teklzghi is active in the community. He coordinates a volunteer ministry group, offering services for North Collins Correctional Facility inmates. He also has chaired committees working to enhance opportunities for the Buffalo Eritrean population.

And he "gives back" to UBEOC, serving on the school's Information Technology Search Committee. His life and accomplishments personify the UBEOC's mission of lifelong learning and overcoming odds that have defeated others.

"Because of EOC," Teklzghi says, "I am here today."

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House could easily instruct Treasury Secretary Jack Lew to redesign the \$20 bill.

"I think it's really a very easy

Harriet Tubman Could Be The First Woman On A \$20 Bill

Harriet Tubman Could Be The First Woman On A \$20 Bill Tubman was the winner of a 10-week poll conducted by the nonprofit group Women On 20s, which wants to replace President Andrew Jackson with a woman on a \$20 bill.

Tubman, who helped hundreds of slaves escape to freedom on the Underground Railroad, received 33.6 percent of the 352,431 votes cast in the final round of the poll. Eleanor Roosevelt came in second, followed by Rosa Parks and Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller. Over 600,000 people submitted votes in the contest overall.

"Our paper bills are like pocket monuments to great figures in our history," Women On 20s Executive Director Susan Ades Stone said in a statement. "Our work won't be done until we're holding a Harriet \$20 bill in our hands in time for the centennial of women's suffrage in 2020."

Women on 20s also announced on Tuesday that they were launching an online campaign to urge the White House to adopt the changes. Obama has said that he thought putting a woman on the \$20 bill is a "pretty good idea."

Stone said that the White

House could easily instruct Treasury Secretary Jack Lew to redesign the \$20 bill. "I think it's really a very easy thing for the White House to do if they decide that they want to do it," Stone told The Huffington Post.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) introduced legislation in their respective chambers of Congress last month to put a woman on the bill. Stone said that the legislation had given momentum to her group's campaign by showing that there was support for the idea in Con-

EOC continued

UB's EOC serves more than 1,900 students each year — the majority of whom are 25 or older — providing a range of tuition-fee remedial, vocational and academic programs leading to college entry or employment. Among the services offered are academic enrichment, English as a second language, high school equivalency, college preparation, life skills, dental and medical assistant programs, medical billing and coding, patient services lab technician, and computer readiness and Microsoft certifications.

The UBEOC Alumni Affairs and Student Development Office offers alumni support in their lifelong learning and career pursuits. The office connects alumni to networking, professional development, community service and employment opportunities.

Alumni who want to re-establish a relationship with UBEOC can contact Margot Barrett Keysor, alumni affairs administrator, at 645-1908 or keysor@buffalo.edu.

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