The right to know

By GREER FAY CASHMAN

A LARGE number of members of the Ethiopian community – whether immigrants or native Israelis – have traveled as goodwill ambassadors to university campuses across America to state the case for Israel. Heavily involved in this project of providing opportunities for higher education for Ethiopian students is the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, which has many Ethiopian students who have gone there on fellowships from Heart to Heart, an organization conceived by American businessman Joey Low more than a decade ago.

Among the outstanding students in this program is Naor Baruch, 25, a second-year student at IDC's Arison School of Business. Born in Ashdod in 1988 to parents who came from Ethiopia in 1973, he is the youngest of three siblings. Baruch is considered to be great leadership material and has made the dean's list at IDC. His talent, determination and perseverance were evident when he was still a teenager. At 17, he was accepted to a prestigious naval officer's course. He later served in the Oketz unit of the IDF, which specializes in training and handling dogs for special operations. Following his discharge from the IDF, he spent 11 months working as a security guard on a cruise ship. The job gave him time to think about expanding his educational horizons. He met Low, who invited him to join a Heart to Heart delegation that was traveling to the US. While in America, Baruch realized the challenges that Israel faces on university campuses and decided that the Heart to Heart program was exactly right for him. He had made an excellent impression on Low, as well as on IDC President Uriel Rechman, so getting into the program at IDC was a piece of cake. He completed his first year at the top of the dean's list. In addition to his studies, he engages in practical work as an intern at the Israel Taxation Authority.