

# 41 Years of ESFNA: The annual Celebration in Atlanta

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The Ethiopian Sports Federation North America (ESFNA) Week has been vibrant and colorful as usual. Despite being organized quickly this year, the festival showcased excellent planning, with all aspects, from guest reception to food stalls and sales booths, appearing well-prepared and meticulously arranged.

Throughout the year, there were rumors that the Federation's leadership would move to Denver, Colorado. However, less than two months later, the unexpected relocation to Atlanta created a noise that added an element of surprise to the event. Yet, the event didn't reflect any signs of being hastily put together.

On July 2nd, I arrived in Atlanta with my wife and went straight to the stadium. To my surprise, the microphone announcement program was absent, a staple of the event for years. This absence was felt deeply, as for 30 years, the microphone announcements have been a critical feature, introducing competing teams and providing game updates. This year, however, there were no such announcements.

I immediately called the old friend I had known for many years and asked him why he was not there; he told me with some history that he was out of service and had no reason to be in the stadium. The old friend explained, "I'm not on the field this year but preparing the Ethio-Dallas team on another field. We will come when it's our turn." While this explained the change, it didn't improve my mood. Despite the microphone announcements' absence, the event was running smoothly, and the activity around the tents was as lively as ever.

Walking through the unique tents, I noticed young people actively engaging with attendees. Some were promoting charitable causes, while others advertised the night's concerts. Vendors enthusiastically pitched their goods, adding to the dynamic atmosphere of the festival. A new generation has emerged, bringing a fresh mindset and vibrant energy. The young people of this generation believe wholeheartedly in this Federation, infusing it with new life and enthusiasm. As I looked around, I couldn't spot my old acquaintances, my 'guardians,' who had

been pillars of the community for so long. Instead, I saw their children, who were once small and playful, now grown and confidently navigating the event. This sight filled me with immense joy.

Witnessing these young adults, who once ran around innocently at past festivals, now taking charge and participating actively was incredibly heartwarming. It's not the narrative that the detractors of this Federation might have you believe; instead, it's a testament to our community's enduring spirit and resilience. Seeing our children stepping up, taking over the field, and embracing their roles with such vigor fills me with hope for the future.

Their presence and involvement signal a promising continuation of the Federation's legacy. This new generation is maintaining traditions, innovating, and adapting them to contemporary times. Their enthusiasm and commitment suggest that the Federation's future is in capable hands, ensuring its prosperity and relevance for years.

This 41-year-old federation, with all its remarkable achievements, grandly celebrated Ethiopia's Day this year. The event was a fitting tribute to the past leaders who received well-deserved recognition, and the stories of their dedicated service were read aloud. The generation that established this federation were young immigrants at the time, filled with dreams and determination.

As I watched these individuals, who had served the federation so diligently, walk to the stage with the assistance of canes to accept their awards, my eyes filled with tears. These were once vibrant, athletic individuals whose bodies have now aged and require support. The sight was profoundly moving, a testament to the passage of time and the enduring spirit of service.

I deeply appreciated their contributions, recognizing the immense effort it took to sustain the organization against all odds. Their dedication ensured the federation's survival for 41 years, and it continues to thrive today. Their legacy lives on, inspiring new generations to carry forward the federation's mission and values.

Their commitment and perseverance have laid a strong foundation, allowing the federation to serve as a beacon of hope and unity for our community. As we celebrate these milestones, we honor the history and future potential of this esteemed institution.

The leaders of the federation are people who should always be given high respect. What many people need is that if managers were hired to organize such an event, the amount of money they could ask for would not be paid, so this federation would not have been able to continue for 41 years, let alone organize two events. We have seen that the strength of all the federation leaders, the excellent work, and the actions of the organizers, who are elected every time in the cities where the event is held, have always needed improvement. We have always made corrections, but it was impossible to be free from defects.

### **Areas of improvement**

However, this institution has thrived for 41 years by accommodating diverse ideas and making necessary corrections. Therefore, the leaders of ESFNA are always open to improvement. If the federation prepares a field with ample space and sufficient parking, it will be more profitable and attract guests from different states to attend the event. Ensuring better logistical planning and accommodating the large number of attendees will enhance the overall experience and prevent the recurring issues plaguing past events.

Leaders like Mr. Abiy, who genuinely listen to our concerns and suggestions, are instrumental in addressing these areas. Our diaspora communities, known for our respect for laws and order, must congregate at this important annual event in cities with larger sports stadiums.

The ESFNA board should focus more on selecting appropriate venues with adequate facilities. By doing so, we can ensure a dignified and enjoyable event celebration. It's not just about the festivities; it's about creating a welcoming and well-organized environment that honors our community's spirit and the event's significance. With thoughtful planning and community input, we can continue to uphold the legacy of ESFNA while making each year better than the last.

Last but certainly not least, I wholeheartedly appreciate the current committee members who have worked tirelessly to bring us together and ensure we have an enjoyable time. Their dedication and hard work behind the scenes have been instrumental in the success of this event. These individuals have continued the federation's legacy, demonstrating a commendable commitment to community and celebration. They have navigated challenges, coordinated logistics, and created an environment where we can all celebrate our heritage and enjoy each other's company.

Their efforts have not gone unnoticed, and I am deeply grateful for their contributions. Through their passion and perseverance, we can continue to uphold the federation's traditions, a task they have carried out with utmost respect and dedication. We look forward to many more years of unity and joy. Thank you to all the committee members for your invaluable service and for making this year's event memorable.