



## 2nd Half of 2021 IMPACT REPORT

Even as the pandemic continued and flashes of violence caused turmoil across Israel, at the Oasis of Peace, the story of 2021 is one of defying the odds and surmounting perceived boundaries. Alongside the Villagers of the Oasis of Peace, the American Friends of the Oasis of Peace were able to support new strides forward in the larger peace-building project. With great pride, we present the highlights of 2021; the fruits of this international coalition for peace, creating positive change far beyond the Village itself. The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and all the inhabitants of the Oasis of Peace invite you to join us as we continue in this lifelong vision and invest our time, funds, and energy into a more peaceful future.

### Learning Together, Building Together

With the support of American donors, the **Primary School** successfully accomplished a litany of laudable achievements in the latter half of 2021. These include:

- Re-opening in person for nearly 300 students after more than a year on Zoom
- Adding, in response to demand, a second first-grade classroom
- Welcoming and orienting a new principal, Neama Abo Dalu, an educator and administrator with over 17 years of experience in binational education
- Strengthening, through teacher workshops, the HOTAM curriculum (Education, Culture, and Tradition), setting the standard for bilingual, culturally inclusive education in Israel
- Working with the parents, teachers, community, municipality, and consultants to develop a systematic expansion into middle and high school grades, increasing their regional impact
- Developing or strengthening weekly instructional classes in music, sports, local ecology, theater, film, and nature crafts, in addition to teaching the mandated core curriculum
- Providing teacher training and mentoring in the HOTAM curriculum, lesson planning, and bilingual education during the summer and school calendar year

- Planning and carrying out curriculum-connected field trips and special days including first-day-of-school celebrations, science and art workshops for teachers and students, an experiential learning olive harvest trip, and multiple holiday activities connected to Purim, Ramadan, Easter, and Sigd, all of which included parents and the wider community in their invitations
- Strengthening the Parents Community, including increased classroom involvement and increased community engagement, with a goal that the greater connections fostered among parents provide a place and people with whom to process the tensions and erupting violence in Israel's Mixed Cities
- Continuing renovation and new construction of the new playground, to be fully completed in 2022



Areas 1, 5, and 3 of the new playground. Areas 2 and 4 will be completed in 2022.

## Peace-Building in Action



In every year, but especially following the 2020 arson attack that destroyed their headquarters, providing funding for the **School for Peace**'s trainings and programs is a cherished priority of the American Friends. 2021 achievements include:

- Rebuilding the SFP facility to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The imminent completion of the rebuilding project will allow more space for world-renowned SFP trainings as well as alumni working sessions and conferences
- Offering Change Agents courses for lawyers, mental health professionals, journalists, environmentalists, professionals from human rights and social change organizations, leaders in mixed cities, literature and history teachers, urban planners and architects, physicians, politicians, and others.
- Leading, in the wake of violence in the Spring and Summer, a workshop for over 50 members of the Israel Association of Community Centers to help them develop a more inclusive approach to working with the Palestinian community and work more effectively in a multicultural environment
- Providing excursions for Change Agent course participants, such as the October trip for the environmental and climate justice course to Negev for encounters with Bedouin peoples in the region.
- Working directly with universities to offer courses to students across Israel taught by two facilitators from the School for Peace (one Jewish, one Arab), and guest lecturers. Courses were offered at Tel Aviv University, Haifa University, Ben Gurion University, Ruppin Academic College and the Arabah Institute.
- Strengthening other course offerings, including courses specifically designed to empower women, courses for teens, and facilitator training.
- Fostering active alumni networks in order to allow graduates to spearhead projects that put the anti-oppressive models they learn at the SFP into practice in their home communities

- The Binational Educators' Forum at the School for Peace was an outgrowth of both the HOTAM teacher training and the Mixed Cities course offered by the SFP.
- 30 graduates of SFP change agents courses who are now members of the Arab-Jewish Planners Forum met in November for a study tour and discussion in Acre.
- In August, graduates of the 2020/21 change agents course for creators in the performing arts and cinema organized an art exhibition and performance in the unrecognized Village of Al-Araqib in the Negev as part of an event marking the 11th anniversary of that Village's first demolition
- Creating life-changing encounters and experiences for changemakers of all ages and experiences, leading to entry into a powerful network of professionals organizing for concrete change
- Spreading the message and the impact of the School for Peace around the world: Samah Salaime, Director of the NSWAS Department of Communication and Development, met with US congress representatives and J Street members to present the educational institutions of NSWAS, with particular focus on the activities of the School for Peace

### Delivering Aid, No Matter the Obstacles



In collaboration with Friends organizations around the world, as well as partner physicians and medical professionals, the American Friends led two special fundraising drives for the Humanitarian Aid Program to deliver masks, supplies, and emergency aid to Gaza in 2021.

- In March, with COVID surging, a delegation of doctors received permission to enter Gaza. Dr. Raed Haj Yahya, a member of the Village, disbursed medicines, supplies, and care in the region

- During the summer violence, when many hospitals in the area were destroyed, Dr. Raed and other collaborators delivered emergency aid to the Gaza Health Department for distribution to those Gaza hospitals still left standing

### Learning Through Play



With the support of the American Friends, the NADI Youth Program holds weekly meetings and produces special events for the youth of the Village. A sampling of these events are described below:

- During the fighting in May, the Nadi staff organized safe space discussion sessions for groups from fourth grade through high school to help the children process emotions and, later, to discuss the geopolitics of the situation in developmentally appropriate ways
- To culminate weekly theater classes, a final performance went up in June and was attended by many in the Village. The youngest class put on a circus act, the middle group made a movie involving a treasure hunt that ended on the performance stage, and the oldest group chose a half-hour drama that explored when to disobey authority and think for yourself.
- In the summer of 2021, as a special project of the Village and the NADI, the American Friends funded a Summer Camp especially for Palestinian children impacted by the summer's violence in mixed cities
- The NADI will welcome a new coordinator in 2022 who will create and administrate theater and arts programs for the Village's youth, alongside ongoing educational field trips and collaborations

### Art Heals, Art Speaks.

The **Oasis Art Gallery** is one of precious few venues that intentionally feature multi-cultural artists in Israel, an indispensable part of the Village's programming gratefully funded by the American Friends. Highlights of 2021 include:



- A successful season of in-person exhibitions, all featuring Palestinian and Jewish artists from Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Nazareth, Tira, and elsewhere. These included:
  - “Confusion,” an exhibit of art pieces created to “attempt to discern reality in an era of ‘fake facts’”
  - “Global Climate Scream,” grappling with the changing climate and its particular effect on those already disenfranchised
  - A special exhibition commemorating Israel’s Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Remodeling the gallery to be more handicap accessible, ensuring the art is truly available to all
- Collaborating with the NADI so that children could visit the art on display, then create their own art pieces at the gallery
- Planning for 2022, including a new season of art exhibitions open to the public, featuring events produced in collaboration with the Tel Aviv Museum of Art Youth Section.

### **Advocating for the Spirit, Advocating for Change**



The mission of the **Pluralistic Spiritual Center** is to serve as a multicultural spiritual center for the diverse inhabitants of the Village. With the support of the American Friends, the center was host to myriad religious and cultural celebrations in the Village, including:

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- A series of interfaith meetings between Jewish and Muslim leaders, with the assistance of Rabbis for Human Rights, culminating in a community *iftar* meal during the holy month of Ramadan
- A book launch party for local resident Prof. Michael Karayanni to commemorate the launch of his book "A Multicultural Entrapment: Religion and State Among the Palestinian-Arabs in Israel" (Cambridge University Press, 2021)
- An evening of testimony and discussion moderated by attorney and human rights advocate Neta Amar-Schiff, with the participation of Adv. Adi Lustigman (a resident of the Village, MK Osama Saadi, Sumiyah Abu Zar (a social activist from Lod) and Asmahan Jabali (coordinator of the Forum for Families Harmed by the Citizenship Law)

### Welcoming a Season of Growth



The American Friends also supported the growth of the Village, both in numbers and in emotional connection.

- Children, parents, and grandparents of the Village started a community vegetable garden in October.
  - As part of a larger "Going Green" initiative supported by the American Friends, the community garden will be accompanied by beekeeping, instruction in sustainable, organic farming, and a youth-led recycling program
- After many months of effort securing permits, 42 new families will soon start to build their homes in the Oasis of Peace
- Quarterly town meetings have been established to discuss expanding the Village and to talk through feelings about current events with outside meeting coordinators selected by the School for Peace.

Across NSWAS programs, 2021 was a year of considerable challenges, but every challenge was met with ingenuity, teamwork, and a fervent belief in the necessity of reaching across cultural barriers to build sustainable peace. The American Friends walked side-by-side with NSWAS to continue building peace through a challenging year of ongoing pandemic and devastating violence. Because of this labor and enduring spirit of collaboration, 2022 represents a season of growth, opportunity, and hope for the Oasis of Peace and all of its supporters and friends.