



Oasis of Peace

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

Spring 2023 Newsletter

Dear Cherished Friends and Supporters,

The spring season is here to remind us that the struggle for peace is never over, but that our hope for peace can always be renewed. As a village resident recently observed, Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (NSWAS) is a “living project evolving through time”: its ability to adapt and thrive even through difficult circumstances is proof that we are all capable of making the changes necessary to achieving peace.

Now in its fourth decade, NSWAS continues to be shaped by the vision of its founders while at the same time leveraging new technologies, pedagogies, and methods for cross-cultural and transnational dialogue and understanding. This edition of the newsletter contains just some of these stories, from the creative social benefit projects that alumni from the School for Peace are spearheading to the integration of new language-learning methods for Jewish and Palestinian children. I am grateful to share these examples with you as we bear witness to, support, and spread the word about NSWAS as an organization that is renewing our sense of what is possible.

As always, thank you for your support, and have a wonderful spring season!

Sincerely,
Joan Waller, President,
The American Friends of the Oasis of Peace



B'Tselem Receives 2023 International Rescuers Award



NSWAS has named B'Tselem their International Rescuers Award winner for 2023. The Village established this annual award in 2015 as a way of participating in the European Day of the Righteous, celebrated annually on March 6. The day commemorates those who have put themselves in harm's way or sacrificed their lives by standing up to totalitarianism and genocide.

The winning organization, B'Tselem, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit human rights watch group founded in Jerusalem in 1989. Their mission is to document and publicize the human rights abuses of the Israeli military rule and the Palestinian Authority in order to create mechanisms for accountability and foster a culture of human rights in Israel. B'Tselem also publishes research and position papers in order to bring international attention to human rights issues within Israel and encourage the prosecution of cases in the International Criminal Court. Often their work involves physical risk: in recent years, their director has been arrested by Israel and by the Palestinian Authority.

Considering “Us” and “Them” through Art

In May, the Oasis Art Gallery will open a new exhibition that explores the way racism paves the way to fascism. *Us and Them* will feature paintings and sculptures by eight Palestinian and Jewish artists exploring the collective consciousness. The exhibition will prompt viewers to consider their shared cultural beliefs, the preconceived ideas they bring to their interactions with other cultures, and how these factors shape society. The exhibition will be on view until July 30.

In August, the Oasis Art Gallery will partner with the School for Peace to commission a large-scale artwork for the Village's dining room wall. The project will be led, conceived, and executed by an artist committee, School for Peace facilitators, and a cohort of local high school students interested in the visual arts. The gallery is looking at this fledgling program as a pilot they hope to transform into an annual summer workshop.

Alumni Gather at the School for Peace



At the end of March, more than 100 alumni from the School for Peace gathered to reflect on the school's impact and legacy and what more is needed to grow and sustain dialogues necessary for peace in Israel and the region. This was the second-ever alumni convening organized by the school, which hopes to make it an annual event. Over three days of discussions, uni-national and bi-national alumni working groups came together to tackle questions about power relations in peace work and activism, what it means for Arabs and Jews to struggle in solidarity with each other, and what role young people can play in moving the peace process forward.



There were also presentations by alumni who had previously received project grants from the School for Peace. Yasmin Shbeta, a 2019 alumna of the School for Peace's Architect and Planners Course, presented her plan for greening Tira, a city in the Central District of Israel, by converting waste areas and an abandoned parking lot to parks. She is working with a group of volunteers to advance the project. Other noteworthy presentations

included a film that imagines a future in which national identities don't matter, a gardening initiative that uses recycled building materials to create planting beds and hydroponics systems for elementary schools, and a theater project that asks actors to interrogate common cultural narratives by receiving files from the national archives live on stage and discussing them with the audience.



Everybody's Talking About the New Language Center



On March 1, after more than two years of eager anticipation, the Primary School's Language Center officially opened its doors. The occasion was marked by a ribbon cutting ceremony and community celebration, with welcome remarks in Arabic and Hebrew. The center is designed to be used by children aged kindergarten through sixth grade; it was conceived and developed by Primary School teachers in consultation with language education experts and an architect. The Language Center contains

dynamic spaces that encourage users to learn real-life language skills, including a mock "corner market" where children can practice buying and selling food and clothing. There are learning tools and interactive games, a performance space and classrooms! Although the center is currently focused on children's language education in Arabic and Hebrew, administrators will eventually introduce English into the curriculum as well as develop language classes and activities for adults who would like to learn.

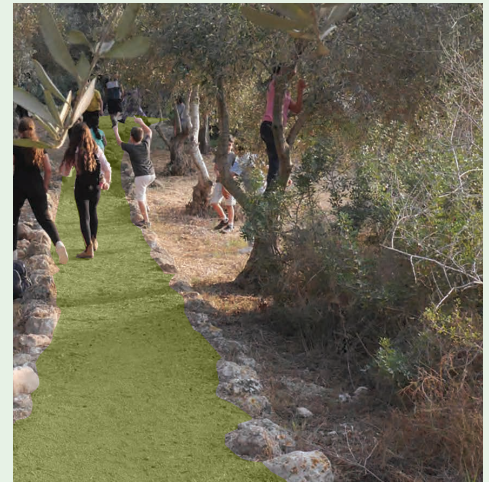
The Village Celebrates Its Founding Women



In honor of International Women’s Day, the Village hosted a special program featuring a few of the founding women of Oasis of Peace. Aisheh Najjar, Dyana Shaloufi Rizek, Ety Edlund, and Nava Sonnenschein shared their memories of helping transform Father Bruno Hussar’s collection of tents and caravans into a legitimate township, complete with homes, paved roads, utilities, and educational and community resources. The group of women also shared the challenges they faced in bringing this radical co-living model into the world during the early 1970s, at a time when Jewish and Palestinian communities had very few touchpoints for dialogue. The American Friends of NSWAS celebrates the courage and resilience of these women, and we are grateful they are able to share their stories with a younger generation who can carry their work forward.

All Abuzz at the Nadi Youth Club

Once a month, Nadi Youth Club members have the chance to don protective gear and learn the art and science of beekeeping—and get something sweet in return! Funded by the German Postcode Lotterie, a partnership with Human Rights Watch, this program enables Jewish and Palestinian children share responsibility for the bees by helping to maintain their hives and safely harvest honeycomb. The delicate work creates camaraderie and a sense of common investment and achievement for teens from different backgrounds and cultures.



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Planned giving is a powerful way to express your enduring commitment to peace while at the same time achieving both personal and financial security. Planned gifts offer substantial tax savings to donors, especially on appreciated properties and securities, and can reduce income tax and avoid capital gains tax.

Make peace a lasting part of your legacy. For more information, contact The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam by emailing afnswas@oasisofpeace.org or calling (818) 662-8883.

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