



# Oasis of Peace

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

FALL 2021 Newsletter

## “New Beginnings at the Oasis of Peace”

“The Sukkah was originally built with straw left from the harvest, and all those in need were invited into the Sukkah to partake of the feast,” said Rita Boulos, Chair of the Municipal Society. With that, members of Neve Shalom Wahat al Salam (NSWS), Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, raised a glass of wine or lemonade and toasted to the opportunity to be together.

Many of the pandemic concerns remain and the specter of the Spring and Summer’s violence has ongoing consequences. But at the Oasis of Peace, people come together to build sustainable peace as they have done for decades, as they will continue to do. It has been a summer of bustling activity as people of the Village emerged from lockdowns to renew their multicultural struggle for peace.

We are the American Friends of NSWAS, and together we can play an integral part in making possible the Village’s programs and activities. Please join us in supporting the unique and remarkable peace-building project of Neve-Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, the Oasis of Peace.

## Back to School with a Renewed Commitment to Peace

On September 2nd, the new school year began. With masks and books in tow, students of the Primary School were reunited with their friends and teachers and greeted their new principal, Neama Abo Dalu, an educator and guidance counselor with 16 years of experience teaching multicultural, bilingual material.

Students look forward to another year of the ground-breaking HOTAM (Education, Culture, and Tradition) curriculum, created at the NSWAS Primary School to meet the needs of a multicultural, bilingual student body.



Older PS students welcoming the new.



“ALL MY LIFE, I HAVE BELIEVED IN SHARED LIVING, BUILT ON HONEST RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARISE FROM VALUES OF RESPECT, EMPATHY AND DIALOGUE,” SAYS NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, NEAMA ABO DALU.

“I BELIEVE THESE VALUES ARE IMPORTANT TO ALL EDUCATION, AND THEY ARE CRUCIAL TO OUR SCHOOL.”

## Teaching Peace for a Lifetime

Throughout the summer, teachers took part in expanded training, made possible in large part by your support. In addition to receiving training and practice in teaching HOTAM, lesson planning, and bilingual education, teachers also took part in a Bi-National Educators Forum with a group of Palestinian-Jewish educators from the Village and other mixed cities, in service of building cohesive classes with students who not only speak different languages but come from widely disparate backgrounds. Teachers emerged

from this training equipped to facilitate student discussions of current events when/if rioting erupts in their cities, or external conflicts disrupt their lives. Mutual understanding and kinship are the true seeds of peace in the hearts and minds of these young people. Their teachers work every day to nurture these seeds, to help each student grow and thrive.



## Let the Children Play



It is likely that you saw news of the violence and riots that broke out in Israel's mixed cities this past Spring and Summer. But behind the slogans and news clips are women, families, and children who were born into a harsh reality. It is difficult for them to lead "normal" lives in the shadow of such turmoil. Bissan Tibi, a village member,

suggested doing something fun for the children- and with the support of the American Friends, they accomplished exactly that.

Strengthening relationships and fostering peace for the next generation, 73 children - from two Jerusalem neighborhoods and NSWAS - and 10 counselors participated in five days of summer camp, including a trip to the water park, video production, and crafting. Another day of building relationships between children of NSWAS and these two Jerusalem neighborhoods is planned for the future.

## An Unmatched Educational Opportunity

There is more good news to share: the Primary School is growing! A second 1st grade classroom has been added to accommodate more Palestinian and Jewish students. Financial constraints burden many families, and both tuition and transportation costs present a hardship for some. These young people, and indeed the larger project of peace, need and deserve the binational community-building education that takes place in the Primary School. The Adopt-a-Class initiative was started to ensure none of these young people are left out. Please consider a donation to enable them to take part in this educational opportunity.



Welcome to the new students.



Getting ready to learn.



Saying goodbye, so the adventure can begin.

# The School for Peace Endures and Rebuilds



*Learning together in the Library, in person! SFP youth encounter group with facilitator.*

Since 1979, the School for Peace (SFP) has been an internationally renowned center of peace studies, offering workshops and training programs built to promote and sustain peace. Their work has been unceasing through the pandemic and even last year's arson attack that largely destroyed the facility. Even as they rebuild, new workshops and programming have been successfully implemented, including Change Agents course for Performing Artists, a binational forum for Jewish and Palestinian educators

(in which Primary School educators played an important part), and plans for a new Change Agents course for Social Workers. In the wake of violence in the Spring and Summer, the SFP was also able to lead 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. Completion of the SFP's new facility will help them to further expand their impact by hosting more workshops and conferences and offering more robust programming for graduates to put what they've learned into action.

## YOUTH ENCOUNTERS

### Jewish Participant

"A DOOR TO A NEW REALITY WAS OPENED FOR ME. SOME OF MY OPINIONS HAVE CHANGED, WE MUST CHANGE AND COMPROMISE, WE CAN REACH PEACE TOGETHER. I FELT BLAMED SOMETIMES BUT I COULD UNDERSTAND YOUR PAIN. I FEEL I WANT TO CHANGE THE REALITY WE LIVE IN".

THE MEETING GAVE ME THE FEELING THAT I WANT TO KNOW YOU BETTER. I WANT TO MEET ON A REGULAR BASIS AND I WANT US TO ACT TOGETHER. THE PERSONAL STORIES YOU TOLD WERE VERY MOVING. I'LL PASS THIS MESSAGE ON TO PEOPLE AROUND ME. I WANT TO WISH YOU LUCK FOR YOUR FUTURE."

### Palestinian Participant

"IT WAS A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET EACH OTHER ON AN EQUAL BASIS AND BEGIN TO DISCUSS ALL THE SENSITIVE ISSUES"

"IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR ME TO SEE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND OUR PAIN AND ESPECIALLY THE PAIN OF THE CHILDREN IN GAZA. I SEE YOU AS A FUTURE SENSITIVE AND CREATIVE LEADER WHO COULD LEAD US TOWARD PEACE".



*Youth Encounter Workshop.*

## Finding Peace Through Art



Director Diana Rizek with Primary School students.

Also damaged in last year's arson attack, the Art Gallery has successfully rebuilt and is hosting in-person art exhibits and events once again. On view since August 1, "Confusion," is an exhibit of art pieces created to "attempt to discern reality in an era of 'fake facts.'" Palestinian and Jewish artists featured in the show are from Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Nazareth, and Tira. In November, the Art Gallery will present "Global Climate Scream," also featuring Palestinian and Jewish artists. This year, the Gallery will host youth workshops in collaboration with the Primary School, the NADI youth group, and the Tel Aviv Museum, and, as always, invite the wider community to engage with current events through art, conversation, and cultural sharing.



Visiting Artist with Director Rizek.

## Events of the Spirit

Through Spring and Summer, the Pluralistic Spiritual Center hosted a series of interfaith meetings between Jewish and Muslim leaders, with the assistance of Rabbis for Human Rights. The Spiritual Center also hosted the wider community for an iftar meal during the holy month of Ramadan. Following the meal, the women, men, and children of the village celebrated with a drum circle. In May, the center celebrated the book launch of "A Multicultural Entrapment: Religion and State Among the Palestinian-Arabs in Israel" (Cambridge University Press, 2021) by Prof. Michael Karayanni, a member of the Village, with a panel discussion that included Rabbi Dr. Daniel Hartmann and Adv. Shirin Batshon.



The Pluralistic Spiritual Center hosted leaders of the three religions to kick off its series of interfaith meetings.

"Dani Karavan," Barak Heymann's biographical film about the internationally acclaimed Israeli sculptor, was shown in a special screening on June 6. Karavan was a friend of NSWAS, and the village honored his passing with the screening of the film at the Spiritual Center.

BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IN PEACE



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American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

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## Leave a Legacy of Peace

Consider supporting Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam through planned giving. Even the smallest gifts have a big impact over time. Choose to support the areas that mean the most to you—Israeli Jewish/Palestinian conflict transformation, youth leadership, arts initiatives, spiritual encounters, humanitarian aid, and more. Your generosity will sustain the Village's inspiring work for decades to come.

### THE OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- Bequests
- Outright Gifts
- Life Insurance Policies
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- Life Estates

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](mailto:afnswas@oasisofpeace.org) or calling (818) 662-8883.

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