



American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam Mid-Year Impact Update 2018



How can we tell you, in a few pages and only a few more words, about the remarkable year so far? As you read the update, make a picture of the innovative and sometimes courageous things being done, every day, at this remarkable community built on equality, mutual respect and the certainty that each person's efforts can bend the arc of the future toward a durable and just peace.

The Pluralistic Spiritual Center

The Spiritual Center has always been the home for multi-faith and interfaith holydays and celebrations. As a way to expand understanding, the Center has held a series of successful events around social and cultural issues, such as mobilization to prevent the deportation of Israel's nearly 30,000 asylum-seekers and refugees from Sudan and other African nations. In offering these activities for the wider community, the Center has attracted a steadily rising number of participants from nearby towns who had never visited the Spiritual Center before. In recent months, the focus has been on the works of Arab and Jewish authors, and film directors, with the launching of books and the screening of films, mainly on the subject of relations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Recently, the audience screened the film "**In Her Footsteps**" about a Palestinian Bedouin family inhabiting a Jewish town in the Negev. Although the family has lived there peaceable for 20 years, the municipality refuses to grant permission for the mother, a cancer patient, to be buried there. The screening was followed by rich conversation with the director, Rana Abu Frecha.

The Center hosted an evening to launch the new book, "**Rescuers of 1929: Stories of Rescued Jews and Palestinians in Hebron and Jerusalem**" by Prof. Yair Auron, telling stories of heroic acts of 1929, where Palestinian and Jewish individuals risked their lives to rescue the other. The evening was attended by community members and residents from surrounding area and included remarks by a member of the Palestinian Authority, by the Director of the Cherrick Center for the Study of Zionism at the Hebrew University; and by Prof. Auron an expert in the fields of genocide and genocide education. The evening was particularly special because it opened with the testimonies of Rachel Admoni, who was saved during the 1929 riots.

A special evening to launch Manar Hassan's book "**Hidden from the Eye - Palestinian Women and Cities**" was held at the Spiritual Center in partnership with the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. Dr. Hassan, who is on the faculty of Ben Gurion University, drew an audience from all over the country. In the book, she was able to "bring to life" a world that disappeared from memory after 1948.

In April, a collaborative project with VanLeer Institute on Arab-Jewish Literature will encourage the reading of texts in Hebrew and Arabic, exposing participating families to the language and culture of the other. As part of the project, texts will be translated and "Talking Circles" will be held relating to literature under the shadow of the national conflict.

School for Peace

Investing in the work of the School for Peace is investing in building a successful, shared future for Jews and Palestinians both within and across the borders of Israel. Be amazed by what you read below!



The School for Peace continued to expand its offerings of Change Agents courses supported by USAID. These long-term, cross-border courses for Jewish and Palestinian professionals are currently offered in the field of Mental Health, and in Social Work. Courses recently completed or set to re-open include Women in Social Media (funded by Friedrich Ebert Foundation), Journalism and Urban Planning and plans to open another cohort for Environmental Protection. Each course is made up of equal numbers of Jews and Palestinians who are from within Israel and the West Bank.

The EU-funded, second cohort of **Up & Coming Jewish and Palestinian Politicians** is developing projects. By analyzing the current leadership in the government, in political parties, and civil society organizations, the School for Peace identified those who will move in to key roles in

politics and in the next decade and is providing this next generation of Palestinian and Israeli politicians the tools and attitudes needed to promote a sustainable peace between Israel and Palestine, making a broad, positive, and long-term change in their society.



The **Leaders in Mixed Cities** Course visited the Naqab/Negev to learn about Jewish-Arab relations in the south, the unrecognized villages' struggle to gain recognition, the displacement and settlement of Bedouins and the quality of the services provided, the frequent and repeated demolitions and expulsions of family homes and schools in 'unrecognized' villages and the construction of new Jewish towns. The leaders of "mixed" cities are committed to finding equitable, just and sustainable ways forward in urban development. This year and a half course gives them the time needed.

The School for Peace impacts life on the ground every where you look!

- * Seventy percent of the lawyers who have attended a lawyer's change agents course now work in human rights law;
- * Graduates have taken on leading roles in human rights, peace and social change organizations including: Gisha, Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, Yad B'Yad Bilingual Binational

Schools, The Arab Center for Alternative Planning and The Parents Circle - Families Forum (PCFF);

* SFP's newest Change Agent Palestinian partner organization, Imnaa, was established in the Palestinian Authority by a former graduate of a Change Agents Course.

* 100 Jewish and Arab graduates established the Jewish Arab Forum for planners which led a petition, signed by 300 planners and architects, against government policy of house demolitions

* Change Agents participants succeeded in connecting a Palestinian town to the national electric grid, are planning 'wetlands' waste treatment projects in towns that lack sewage systems in the Palestinian Territories and are developing organic seed exchanges for Palestinian and Israeli farmers

* In 2016, the SFP launched academic courses in Israeli Universities. The courses enable Jewish and Palestinian students to meet, often for the first time for dialogue sessions and shared study, intended to explore relations between the groups and the processes characterizing the conflict surrounding them. In 2018, these courses are part of the standard offerings in Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion and Haifa Universities.

Primary School



A web of connection is one of the best ways to picture the Primary School and its work. Each child- Palestinian and Jewish – brings parents into the classroom, creates opportunities for

after-school play in each other's neighborhoods, makes neighborhoods aware of two identities sharing time, conversation and play together and ends by brings new conversations to regional gatherings. Every Primary School family is part of that web, living the change that everyone hopes to see in the future. Educate a child, change a community.

The Primary School with its rich curriculum of the arts, academics, three languages and daily learning in traditions, histories and cultures, is really an experimental powerhouse- a laboratory where ideas that work can be spread nationally. In this midyear update, we are focusing on what you might call a 'snapshot' of is likely to be 'an ordinary day' at the NSWAS Primary School.



Along with the extraordinary visit from the Philadelphia Orchestra's String Quartet, under the direction of conductor Yannick Nexet-Seguin and the stage they shared with the new NSWAS Primary School orchestra directed by music teacher Haim; the music lessons now available to every child from grades 3 on; the integration of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) approach into each classroom; the weekly lessons from two local farmers working with the children from greenhouse to growing; the development and presentation of plays, there were the annual celebrations or marking of National Holidays (Holocaust Day, Remembrance Day for Israel's fallen soldiers and Nakba Day marking the catastrophe for the

Palestinians). Holocaust Day is commemorated with a whole-school program led by the fifth graders. Remembrance Day and The Nakba commemorations begin with Jewish and Arab children learning together, with Jewish and Arab teachers in the same classroom facilitating discussions. The two groups then separated, enabling each national group to reflect on their national identity and history and both days end with shared activity, marking the continuation of shared living and coexistence.



Curriculum Development and Impacting Global Education

The school has been developing, experimentally and experientially, a curriculum that could be widely adaptable. The first draft of the bilingual binational comprehensive curriculum for each grade is available now in Hebrew (and is being translated into Arabic) for our teachers to pilot in the classroom. This interdisciplinary curriculum, built around the yearly cycles and an emphasis on history, culture, and heritage of Jews and Arabs, combines geography, heritage, history, and current events to foster young scholars who are both connected to their identities, and simultaneously tolerant of world cultures.



As part of the 'global' vision, the school is building a relationship with an international school in Cyprus, close to the Greek/Turkish border with children from the Greek and Turkish sides of Cyprus as well as children from across the globe. Locally, bridging two separate institutions, the Primary School is working with Seminar Kibbutz and Machlelet Quassimi to create a shared teacher training track for Jewish and Arab teachers who work in Hebrew and Arabic and who will benefit from this program.



Making an Impact Going Forward:

Earlier this year thirty principals from the Mateh Yehuda Regional Council spent a day visiting the Primary School which is on track to be recognized as a unique experimental school, and is seeking status as an "extra-regional school". A Science Laboratory for all grades is going from plans to reality and finally, the school is one of five schools (and the only primary school) selected as incubators for new pedagogical approaches that can develop a curriculum to be applicable to any school in the world.