



## Primary School: 31 Years of Extraordinary Education



As the Primary School opened its doors for the 31<sup>st</sup> year, the Village along with the students welcomed a new principal, Ms. Carmella Ferber. Children filled the schoolyard with laughter, excitement, anxiety, and positive energy as friends reunited after the summer vacation. The Village expressed its appreciation for departing Principal Anwar

Dawood for his dedicated service for the past many years. Anwar conveyed his enthusiasm to his successor, wishing her luck as she continues to “develop this jewel in the crown.”

Ms. Ferber was a principal at Ben Gurion Primary School in Bat Yam, has an MA in history from Tel Aviv University and over 20 years of teaching experience.

*“I believe that a good school is the beating heart of the community in which it sits, and which it serves, and in such a complex community like Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, the school must be maintained as a microcosm of coexistence.” -Carmella Ferber.*



This year, the school continued its proud tradition of asking each sixth-grader to accompany, introduce, and present a gift to every new first-grader joining the Oasis of Peace Primary School family. These gifts are shared in “Little Lori's Playground” at the school, in honor of the groundbreaking efforts that have been made in comfortably learning to cross language and culture barriers. This unique teaching and learning style with two teachers in each classroom, one speaking and teaching in Hebrew and one speaking and teaching in Arabic, has made a significant impact for more than three decades on the lives of the children and their parents.

“Thirty years ago, we were very daring, and we gathered 11 children, ages 4 to 8, and opened the first bilingual, binational school in the country,” says Ety Edlund, who attended Opening Day to see her grandchildren enter the Primary School. Today, the school can boast of thousands of graduates who have learned the value of peaceful coexistence and meaningful dialogue between Palestinians and Jews.

## Primary School: Looking Ahead

This year there is an enrollment of 180 students, 24 of whom come from the Village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam. Their parents are attracted to a school where children learn the lesson of mutual respect and equality and then see those lessons practiced daily by the Village



residents and reinforced by Parent-Teacher trainings facilitated by the School for Peace. It's clear proof to the parents and to the students that coexistence and mutual respect are not just good ideas, they're true values. We wish the students, staff, and principal all the best for this coming year.

Building on prior outcomes and newly strengthened goals, the 2014-2015 school year will see

- Teaching Jewish and Arab students together in all classes in order to strengthen language learning and social integration
- Teaching subjects with teachers, teaching in their native language
- The implementation of the Science department's space studies program
- Greater involvement in each class by the school counselor
- Increased support for children who need extra attention
- Communications courses for higher grades
- Enriched In-service for teachers on ever present issues of coexistence, identity and bilingualism with support from a national bilingual specialist and the School for Peace,

### *Goals for the future:*

- Building a science lab to improve the school's science education program
- Building a network of bilingual schools
- Increase parental involvement where possible
- Researching graduates and building an alumni network
- Extending the school through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade with the option of having it develop into an international school

## NADI: Youth in Charge

Many of the youth from the Village have considered the NADI Youth Center a second home, a relaxed and safe place to meet and reflect on the conflict around them. The Nadi is part of the Village's work in giving the youth the ability and confidence to articulate their experience and to respond to the world that will be different in the future from the one in which they have grown up. The youth are taking more of a leadership role in managing their own organization with the guidance of other village members.

The initial meeting blossomed into a discussion of what expectations and suggestions the youth had for the NADI. The feedback has resulted in more planned activities, meetings, and excursions together outside of the Village. One note-worthy trip was an overnight trip to Rama up north and a tour of Ikrit and Bir'am at which 20 youth from the Village were in attendance. The trip was a great success as it resulted in strengthening group relations which opened doors to hold youth leader facilitated meetings that addressed the concerns of returning to school after the war period. Together, they watched a film about the issues some Arab children experience while attending Jewish High Schools.



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They see that the skills they develop through their Young Leaders Course, which enables them to facilitate activities with children in grades 1-6, will help them to create a nucleus for a future network of young leaders, beginning in mixed cities and with partnerships like Open House in Ramle.

## School for Peace: Expanding Partnerships

The SFP has been working with Arab Student Unions, providing them with tools to deal with racism and hostility in today's society while increasing the number of courses at Ben Gurion University in the Negev. With the goal of influencing those with influence, the SFP is continuing its Change Agents courses directed at key sectors; Leadership in Mixed Cities, City Planners, Environmentalists, Young Politicians, Finance, Educators, Mental Health Professionals. In addition, the SFP has created workshops for youth, teachers and parents of WAS-NS Primary School.

In order to ensure steady growth of the SFP and its networks, it is holding regional forum meetings for past graduates in Nazareth, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem. Resulting projects include working with young Arab women as they transition from village to university life, and empowering Arab student unions.

The School for Peace has also developed a Strategic Committee to Promote Peace and Human Rights, a strategic committee for Israel's left wing and partners in Palestine; hosting meetings and planning on the ground activities. The first meeting resulted in a very successful demonstration in the Arab town of Tira, at which hundreds of Jews and Arabs attended. Along with key figures of the progressive peace movement in Israel, the demonstration included speeches by members of the Knesset: Muhammed Barcha and Dov Hanin.

*Announcing new partnerships with:*

- ***The Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation (AJEEC):*** an Arab-Jewish organization dedicated to strengthening active citizenship through education and economic empowerment.
- ***The Arab Center for Alternative Planning in the Galilee (ACAP):*** A national organization that represents the genuine needs and interests of the Arab citizens of Israel on issues of planning, land, housing, and development.
- ***INMAA Palestinian Center:*** Located in Jenin, INMAA is a Palestinian organization established in 2010 in order to contribute to, and participate in the building of a democratic Palestinian society in which young people practice an active role in community development and promote the concepts of citizenship.

For the future Dr. Sonnenschein has set in motion a developing global peace initiative for 24 women from Turkey, Palestine-Israel, India, and South Africa.

## Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center: Healing Wounds

The activities at the Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center faced many logistical challenges throughout the year due to the conflict. However, the message is clear when those who believe in peace are determined to come together, no matter the circumstances.

The forty Massa-Massar members had difficulty determining the most convenient meeting times for everyone. As a result the program will be split into two groups, one for 10<sup>th</sup>-graders and another for 18-to-24 year-olds. The PSCC will continue its connection with Open House Ramle, creating a series of 12 weekly encounters and one two day encounter for the 10<sup>th</sup>-graders of the Jewish Givat Brener High School and the Arab Orthodox School in Ramle. The 18-to-24 year-olds will take part in two-day workshops taking place once every five weeks.

Most recently, 38 youth participants (half Beduoin and half Jewish) from southern communities close to Gaza have kicked off their year of volunteer service work with the AJEEC organization at the PSCC where facilitated meetings, art, storytelling and nature workshops helped to solidify strong relations for the upcoming year.

In the near future, and in collaboration with Open House Ramle and the Kehilat Birkat Shalom Congregation, the PSCC is planning a four month long program for 16 to 20 women in the area of Ramle-Lyddda with the goal of creating lasting bonds between women.

In order to create bonds of reconciliation between different worlds, we require the creation of new tools; a fresh concept of self as it relates to the other. How do we conduct ourselves in separation? How attuned are we to unity? To what degree can power relations of “me or you” make room for “me AND you.”



## Humanitarian Aid to Gaza: Assistance Program

The Oasis of Peace Village and its International Friends ran their Humanitarian Assistance Program to provide equipment and supplies for primary care assistance to Al-Shifa Hospital, the largest, oldest and most central medical complex in Gaza. Al-Shifa is supported by a base of volunteer medical professionals from around the world, including Dr. Raed Haj Yahiya, a physician from the Village who went to the humanitarian aid committee with an opportunity for the Village to help. A list of priorities was compiled from Al-Shifa and the committee immediately began to receive donations from the village residents, raising \$3,000 to which the Friends Associations abroad added \$50,000.

Purchased from the Nablus Medical Appliances Company in West Bank:

- 3 Emergency trolleys
- 20 Emergency kits for ambulances
- 10 Surgical sets
- 3 Stainless steel trolleys
- 3 Doctor's chairs
- 1 Halogen lamp
- 3 Surgical knives and blades
- 2 Ultrasonic cleansers (at 20 and 9.5 liters)



Additionally, Village member Suad Haj Yahiya and her sons donated 3 beds, an emergency trolley and an emergency kit for an ambulance from their own clinic:

All the equipment arrived safely in Gaza.

The NSWAS Humanitarian Aid Committee plans to continue its work with Al-Shifa (and other hospitals).

