



## 2017 Year End Impact Report

### The Primary School

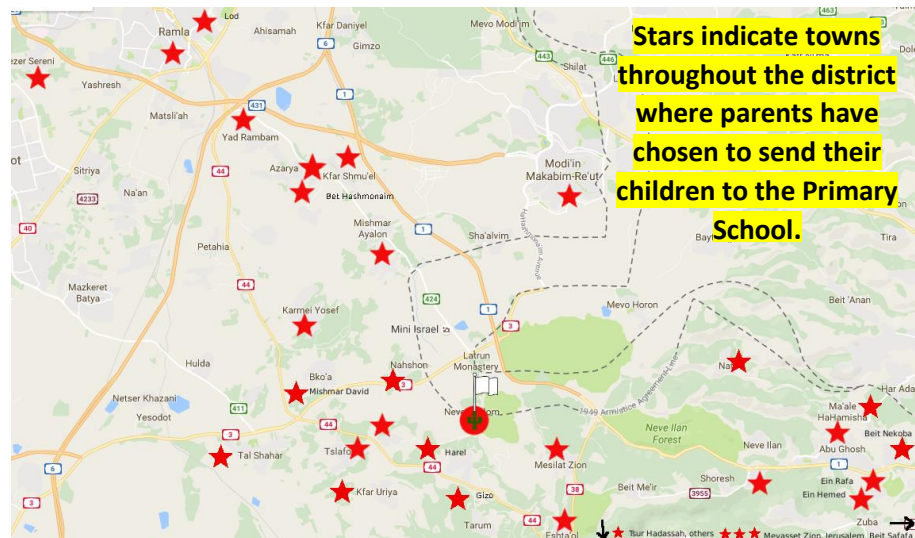
#### UNDENIABLE SUCCESS

It's hard to deny success, especially when it effects the bottom line. When schools throughout the Mateh Yehuda council district realized they were consistently losing students to the Primary School, the council sent 30 principals to visit the school and learn, first hand, how this uniquely successful program works. Recognizing the needs of its constituency, the council has

committed itself to becoming leader in innovative education. Since the Primary School is largely populated by students whose parents chose this school over their local schools, the council understood it was time to learn what makes it so successful and desirable.

Primary School students guided the

principals as they toured the campus and asked questions. The principals visited classrooms



The Mateh Yehuda council is part of the Jerusalem district and serves approximately 10,000 students from a diverse population of small towns, moshavim, kibbutzim, Palestinian and Jewish villages and rural communities. While many of the Jewish communities in the Mateh Yehuda district were established by immigrants from India, Yemen, Iraq, Iran and countries in Eastern Europe, most of the Palestinian communities have been there for generations.



to observe the teachers and students engaged in bilingual lessons and bicultural narratives. After the tour, they attended a special presentation about the school and its unique, integrated program.

Although the program is unique, it is not the goal of the Primary School to remain that way. They would like to see their program adopted and replicated nationally. To that end, in addition to hosting other educators interested in

learning about the program, the Primary School now has a fully articulated, documented and published curriculum in Hebrew and Arabic (of course!). The Primary School is constantly looking for ways to give more students the chance to learn and grow as equals in a shared environment.

## ROOM TO GROW

In the past year, several young families have become village members and for the first time in many years there are enough preschoolers in the village to reopen the preschool program! The village came together over the summer to bring the Early Childhood Center up to code and get it spruced up for the six incoming students. Of course, a new class means new teachers and the school was pleasantly surprised to find out that one of the new preschool teachers was a former



student. Marwa graduated from the Primary School 25 years ago and is so excited to be back at the school that made such a difference in her life. More importantly, Marwa's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade daughter is enrolled in the school and now she will get to experience the same community and education that inspired her mother to come back and make a difference.

The Early Childhood center won't just be for kids, though. Throughout the year the center will host parents' meetings, lectures, and activities focused on early childhood in a multi-cultural educational setting. These events will be a huge resource for parents as their children graduate into the Primary School.

## ANOTHER PEACEFUL VICTORY



While the Mateh Yehuda district was getting on board with its constituency's desire for an integrated education, one local council's decision almost cost the Primary School an entire class of first-graders. The local council of Gezer (part of the Mateh Yehuda district), has long been opposed to allowing its Jewish students to attend the Primary School. This year,

however, the council flat-out refused to grant 19 Jewish families permission to attend the bilingual, binational school. The council's unprecedented decision would not only cost those Jewish students the opportunity of an integrated education, it would also prevent the same number of Palestinian students from enrolling because there would be no Jewish students to create the necessary balance.

Luckily, the Jewish families were fiercely dedicated to the idea that an egalitarian, binational, bilingual education was important, not only for their children, but for the children of the Palestinian families as well. They mounted a legal challenge to the council that gained support and popularity through media outlets and local pressure and it worked! The council backed down from its decision and the Primary School began its 2017-2018 school year with the two first grade classes as originally planned.

In a way, it's a fitting start for those students and their families. At the Primary School, it's not just the students who learn how to coexist and cooperate, the families learn too. Before school even started they learned that together, they can create justice and awareness for Jews and Palestinians and that they can change the landscape of their country to reflect their values and ideas. As a donor to this program, you can do that as well. Your contribution represents your stake in the peaceful victories to come. When you donate to the Primary School, you stand with those students and parents who are dedicated to a peaceful future for everyone.

## LANGUAGE LESSONS

Currently, a new nation state bill proposes to remove Arabic as an official language in Israel. Since 1/5<sup>th</sup> of Israeli citizens are Palestinian, it doesn't take a scholar to understand what this proposed bill means for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Students at the Primary School have learned that language is a special part of who you are. So, on July 11<sup>th</sup>, the Primary School sent three of its 4<sup>th</sup> graders to the Knesset to share some words of wisdom with a panel of Knesset members, educators and scholars who were gathered to commemorate Arabic Language Day.

Jewish Student Roni Gil Reinschreiber gave a short statement to this distinguished audience; ***"Hi, I'm Roni. I'm 10 years old and study at the Primary School of Neve Shalom - Wahat al-Salam. I want to tell you that I speak Arabic and Hebrew. I love to speak with my friends in both languages at my school and I am learning Arabic and Hebrew with two teachers - an Arab and a Jew. My wish is that all students will learn Arabic and Hebrew like me, so they'll live together and understand one another, and then there will be peace."***

Roni's words are simple and beautifully express what happens when the two cultures embrace their differences. The Primary School at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is a place where language, cultural identity and history is always considered and respected. Outside of the village, however, the status of the Arabic language is precarious.



NSWAS education board member, Samah Salaime, spoke about the proposed bill to HBO's Vice News on May 25<sup>th</sup>. She explained what the bill means to the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who already face discrimination; ***"It is not about the language. It is about status. It's about my identity, my religion, my traditions. In order to have a democracy, you have to have equality and justice."***

Roni and Samah understand that the path to peace is inclusive, not exclusive. They see the proof every day at school and in the village. The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam are proud to include you as a partner in their commitment to peace, justice and equality.

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## The Pluralistic Spiritual Center

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### COMFORT FOOD

Imagine if sharing a meal with your neighbor made the evening news. At the village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, it did!

For decades, Jewish and Palestinian residents of the village have been coming together at the Spiritual Center during Ramadan to celebrate the Iftar or 'break-fast' meal as a community. This Ramadan i24 News, an international news station in Tel-Aviv, visited NSWAS to marvel at how this 'famous' village has been living in peace for 40 years.



Village resident Rita Boulos explained the simple, foundational goal to which the village is devoted when i24 News interviewed her at the Iftar meal, ***“We all dedicated our life to find a peaceful way to live together and the idea of Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom is to give an example to the people in the country and to the world that this is possible... Violence is not my way.***



***Violence brings more violence and hate brings more hate.”*** Sharing a meal, sharing faith and sharing hope for a peaceful future together is a powerful statement in a divided land. It is an act of protest that defies the status quo that separates Palestinians and Jews. And you can bet the food is delicious!

## REMEMBERING HOPE

For 40 years, the Spiritual Center at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam has reached across cultures, religions and borders to show Israel and the world that peace is possible by bringing Palestinians and Israelis together in faith, fellowship and dialogue. In a divided country, marking 50 years of occupation, the Spiritual Center held an evening in solidarity with the residents of Gaza who live in a continuous humanitarian and economic crisis. The evening was spent renewing the commitment to helping those people living under siege.

Village resident Dr. Raed Haj Yahya and activist Roni Keidar both spoke at the event. Dr. Yahya travels to Gaza every two months as a volunteer doctor for Physicians for Human Rights and Roni is a member of the NGO "Other Voice" and maintains contacts with residents of Gaza. Their stories of what life is like for those living under occupation serves as a reminder of the suffering and injustice that results from the occupation, but it also serves as a reminder to those in Gaza that there is hope. By supporting the efforts of people like Dr. Yahya and Roni through programs at the Center, you help them continue their work in Gaza, bringing hope and healing to people who have little else.

## PICTURING LIFE TOGETHER

Thanks to the generous donations from a long-time American Friend, the latest addition to the roster of activity at the Spiritual Center/Museum is the Artists Hosting Artists series of workshops. Eighteen Palestinian and Jewish artists from all over Israel came together for the first workshop and were welcomed by hosting artists Ahmad and Malaka Canaan at their gallery in Tamia in Western Galilee.



After touring the gallery and learning about Ahmad and Malaka's work, the artists went to work on projects in mixed pairs. Several of Ahmad's students were on hand to observe the process of collaboration and the event was covered by journalists from a few different publications.

***Our feelings as we painted were warm and gentle. One brush connected us, and***

***we found a way to express ourselves in vibrant colors. In this first meeting at the studio of Ahmad Canaan we met Jewish and Arab artists from all over the country. It was truly a special day. Thanks to this wonderful lady [project coordinator Dyana Shaloufi Rizek] for making a formidable effort to bring us together, with love, respect... and freedom.***-Sahar Bdarneh, participating artist.

In October, when all of the workshops are complete, the Museum will hold an exhibition to display the cumulative work of participating artists.

Your support of the Spiritual Center Centers nurtures opportunities for conversations and collaboration and that lead to connection, understanding and inclusion.

## CELEBRATING FELLOWSHIP

At the Spiritual Center, celebrations are an important component to community building. Creating opportunities for fellowship between Jews and Palestinians helps to bridge



over the difficulties they must surmount to come together. On August 10<sup>th</sup>, children and adults were treated to an evening of celebrating the full moon. A story teller entertained the children with tales about the moon in Arabic and Hebrew and the adults learned about the significance of the moon in Sufi philosophy and Islamic culture. Everyone enjoyed music courtesy of the young members of the Makmat Music Conservatory from Nazareth as they mingled under the

stars. To cap off the evening, as the moon rose in the sky, they ventured into the forest for a drumming workshop. The Spiritual Center at NSWAS is the heart of Palestinian and Jewish fellowship for the village and its surrounding communities. Your support keeps that fellowship growing.

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# The School for Peace

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## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The School for Peace's Up-and-coming Politicians course is making headlines at home and internationally. For their May 23<sup>rd</sup> episode, HBO's Vice News interviewed SFP Director, Nava Sonnenschein, who described this wave of new politicians as having a deeper understanding of the conflict and being better



equipped to develop support for strategies more inclusive of justice and equality. When all three courses are complete, a total of 120 aspiring politicians will enter the political arena able to collaborate and be partners in peace with the other.

This final course includes the most varied group of participants yet including long-time residents of Israel and newcomers, secular and orthodox, with party affiliations as diverse as Likud, Meretz, the Zionist Camp, Yesh Atid, and the Joint Arab List all represented.

Eli Bitan, a participant in the School for Peace course for Up-and-Coming Politicians, spoke in front of a crowd of 10,000 people at a rally to protest the occupation in Tel Aviv, echoing the words and work of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam;



***“Fifty years of occupation, of an enormous, never-ending injustice, forces us to stop working within our comfort zones, to join new groups, and to let Palestinians lead the struggle. As the Right divides us, it is incumbent that we make connections. As the Right incites, we must meet and talk. As they try to put up walls to divide us into classes, tribes, and sectors, we must break through the***

***differences they invented and join together. As the Right celebrates 50 years on the deck of***



***the Titanic, we must shine a light on the occupation and say, without fear: these have been 50 years too many.***”-Eli Bitan, journalist, ultra-Orthodox Jew, SFP graduate and speaker at the Tel Aviv rally. His full speech is available on +972 Mag’s website: <https://972mag.com/50-years-of-occupation-is-50-years-too-many/127606/>

## A GOOD REPUTATION

After many years of working with Jewish Givat Brenner High School and Palestinian Orthodox Nazareth High School, the School for Peace Youth Encounters program is...popular. The spring session generated so much curiosity and spaces filled up so quickly that the workshop could not accommodate everyone who wanted to participate.



The reputation of the SFP’s highly trained facilitators who run the program is well known among faculty and students. More and more students are willing to leave their comfort zones and really learn about the conflict on a personal level.

***“The conflict is far from solved, but I think that with meetings and actions like this we are getting closer and closer to making change. I understood that for the truth to reach a certain place both sides have to give up and compromise and sometimes even the more powerful side is the one which needs to give up more.”*** -Yael Golombo, Jewish participant

***“Peace in this country is important; we have to have mutual respect and sympathy toward the other people. ...In the end we will remain two peoples in one country. We have to live together. I met people who believe in this and I can live with them. I mean, we are all one people, we have to live together and it does not matter if it’s our right or yours.”*** -Roua Dujan, Palestinian Participant

These powerful and hopeful words from the students are so inspiring. Through this workshop they have been shown what is possible when Jews and Palestinians work together. They understand that their future hangs in the balance. By supporting this program, you can help bring hope to students, like Yael and Roua, who believe in the possibility of a peaceful future together.