



A New Year: Renewed Commitment 2022 Year-End Impact Report

It would be understandable for the current political situation in Israel to produce fear and uncertainty for the inhabitants of the Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (NSWAS) and their American Friends. But the past six months of growth and preparation across programs, building upon decades of work, fill us with hope for the future. We have weathered challenging times together before and we have done it again.

As we enter 2023, NSWAS recommitted to the larger project of a lasting peace through multicultural, bilingual education at the Primary School, the enrichment of youth and young adults with the NADI Youth Group, the dozens of training and alumni programs for students and professionals at the School for Peace, the powerful art exhibitions at the Oasis Art Gallery, the interfaith community-building at the Pluralistic Spiritual Center, and the essential contributions of the Humanitarian Aid Project.

The Oasis of Peace does the essential work of building tomorrow's foundations toward equality, mutual respect, justice, and nonviolent conflict transformation. The American Friends of NSWAS (AFNSWAS) is a vital part of that mission, without whose support the Oasis of Peace would not continue to thrive as it has for decades. Read on to learn more about the Oasis of Peace's accomplishments in 2022 and the AFNSWAS' funding focuses for 2023.

PRIMARY SCHOOL: BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

"I really love our school, because I love peace. I think it is really nice that we Arabs and Jews learn all together. I think I would like to try to be prime minister one day, and to make peace." Ya'ara, Primary School Student

Many Americans are shocked to discover just how much of an outlier the NSWAS **Primary School's** bilingual, binational education is in Israel. Most

education in the country is separated, much like the newly-opened local/regional (no tuition) school for Jewish children (resulting in a one-time reduced number of Jewish students in the Primary School). Applications for next year show signs of rebound, but it has impacted the current year's Arab/Jewish balance. There are 36 students who live in the Village and 175 students come from 21 different communities in the area-an unusual and valuable diversity for a regional school.

Bilingual, multicultural schools do not receive the same government support as more traditional schools. Their bilingual and culturally competent HOTAM (Education, Culture and Tradition) curriculum is not covered in traditional teacher training. It is an important part of the NSWAS mission to help change these realities. To that end, NSWAS Communications and Development head Samah Salaime, school principal Neama Abu Delo, alongside several teachers, parents and students attended and spoke in the Knesset for a special hearing on the subject of binational education.



NSWAS Primary School students, administration, and faculty in the Knesset.

Growing teachers: The American Friends funded two rounds of intensive teacher trainings this year. In four bi-weekly meetings, facilitators from the School for Peace led the Primary School teaching staff through their dialogue-based teacher training program in preparation for Ministry of Education presentation and recognition. Then it will be reproduced for other binational schools.

Furthering bilingualism: Offering multi-mode learning experiences, small group and community-building for all grades, American Friends funded the newly designed and refurbished Language Center opened this year. The years-long design process of the new Language Center included the PS

Principal, Educational Directors and Educational Board chairpersons, the Mandel Leadership Institute, the Hand-in-Hand high school, and Kedma, a social-educational non-profit that works with marginalized communities. The intensive curriculum (HOTAM) designed by Primary School teachers served as the core.

Building school community: At the beginning of the school year, Principal Abu Delo identified the following goals, incorporating the Language Center into all parts of learning.

1. **Create a school community** in which every child feels they belong by
 - *Strengthening ties between Arab and Jewish students, engaging in group challenges and multigrade/multicultural/bilingual activities;
 - *Using the school's unique extracurricular activities to foster durable connections and community;
 - *Widening the Parents Community which has a crucial role in organizing extracurricular events including the new peace-highlighting Festival of Hope, where children, parents and village members share olive picking trip and celebrations marking various religious holidays.



Students celebrate hope and make a joyful noise.

2. **Work on individual identities**, nurture resilience and coping skills by
 - * Prioritizing opportunities to teach/practice the skills and attributes of mutual respect and active listening via

* Incorporating SEL (social and emotional learning) and mindfulness to help students deal with anger and frustration, and life skills classes integrated with the rigorous academic curriculum.

3. *Strengthen connections between individual students and their wider community* by

* Centering the Primary School's HOTAM (Education, Culture and Tradition) curriculum, which reinforces the full range of student identities while developing a sense of respect, acceptance and friendship for their larger community;

* Providing leadership skill-building and practice to grow into the leaders of tomorrow.

* Engaging students in public advocacy for spreading bilingual/multicultural learning

THE SCHOOL FOR PEACE: WE ARE ALL CITIZENS OF MIXED CITIES

The School for Peace (SFP) has been conducting courses and seminars for Arab and Jewish youth and adults in Israel and territories of the Palestinian Authority since 1979. The School for Peace spent 2021 continuing its work while rebuilding after a terrorist attack on the school. The American Friends supported the literal rebuilding and the on-the-ground, multicultural, community-focused work and organizing so desperately needed in the region. And while rebuilding continues, this year's outcomes included

***Expanded SFP University Courses** which, in 2022, were taught at the School for Psychological Sciences of Tel Aviv University, the nursing school of Tel Aviv University, the department of Political Science at Hebrew University, the department of Education at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the Teaching Certificate Training Program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the Faculty of Social and Community Sciences at Ruppin Academic Center, the Department of Architecture at Bezalel Academy for Arts and Design and the Baruch Ivcher School of Psychology at Reichman University.

*For 2023, five departments in three schools have all scheduled sessions in 2023, with more coming.

***Expanded numbers and focus for Change Agents** Courses for Professionals

Change Agents courses included:

A Change Agents Course for Spatial and Historical Justice in the Israeli-Palestinian Context course, the first offered by the School for Peace for tour guides and facilitators. In collaboration with Zochrot, the SFP developed a new tour program that included four 'disappeared' Palestinian villages, from the Carmel to the Negev. Their work integrated peace-building, heightened awareness and understanding impact.

The Climate and Environmental Justice Course looks at the conflict-related environmental and human damage and restoration, and the solutions for both. Although frequently offered, the course continued to be fully enrolled, a testament to both the importance of the field, and the SFP's success in reaching the active professionals.

A new course for the School for Peace is currently in session. Recognizing the need for high-level concurrent translation during trainings and dialogues (and the chronic shortage of qualified translators), this course is built around professionals who have bilingual proficiency, deepening the experience for all SFP students.

***Extended development of alumni networks** and services, supporting SFP students as they put their skills into practice.

Ten graduates of the University Courses at Ruppin Academic College, Ben Gurion University and Tel Aviv University met at NSWAS in September for two days of intensive dialogue and goal-setting.

Preparations are underway for the second annual School for Peace Alumni Conference in the Spring of 2023, a culmination of the organizing work done by alumni with support and guidance from the School for Peace. A few highlights of alumni achievement and the high profile of their work include

The first meeting of Jaffa Horizon / Ufuq-Yaffa, a group founded to organize around social issues in Jaffa, supporting and coordinating local activism.

A recent documentary film, "Living in the Shadow of Death," by Bilal Yosef, a graduate of the Change Agents Course for Stage Producers, was featured in the Jerusalem Film Festival. In this personal and moving work, he directs and steps in front of the camera to share his own story as a Palestinian man in Israel living in the shadow of violence. Haaretz wrote, "In scene after scene, he opens a window into the stories of the dead – some of them killed by a stray bullet – as told by the victims' bereaved loved ones."

Bustan Nof Hagalil includes Palestinian and Israeli activists creating cultural encounters in the Mixed City of Nof Hagalil through community outreach and work with the municipality. Gathering working groups of Palestinian and Israeli activists in mixed cities of Lod and Jaffa, participants created and delivered plans/procedures to address central issues in "Mixed Cities."

Gilad Mulyan gave a speech in the Knesset on granting recognition to the bilingual schools in Haifa. A School for Peace alum of the Leadership Course for Change Agents in Mixed Cities, he is an activist for Haifa's bilingual school and an example of the difference SFP alums are making in Israel.



Gilad Mulyan speaks in the Knesset

THE NADI YOUTH GROUP: THE POWER OF PLAY

American Friends support youth both in their academic work and their community-strengthening extra-curricular activities. The NADI Youth Group provides young leadership development through after-school and summer enrichment for tweens and teens living in the Village and surrounding communities.

American Friends focused on the summer theater program, which took place in the newly-renovated clubhouse. During the summer theater camp, they received instruction from Yasmin Bar Shalom Agmon, an actress and "daughter of the village," and Nur al Mughrabi, a Palestinian theater professional from Jaffa. By offering opportunities for creative expression and performance as a committed team, powerful bonds are built between these young people as they build the tools to communicate across cultural barriers.



Students impress the community with their talents.

THE PLURALISTIC SPIRITUAL CENTER: ESSENTIAL INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER

Interfaith /intercultural dialogue, connection and programming is essential to peace-building work. Happening every day at NSWAS through the public offerings of the Pluralistic Spiritual Center (PSC) American Friends supported the mission of the Spiritual Center as it provided.

***Events**

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women: Maisan (Miso) Samara and Nur Garabil performing excerpts from the acclaimed dance performance, "CHE." Following the performance, Einat Betsalel, Spiritual Center Director, interviewed the dancers, opening up attendee discussion on the arts as a precursor to change.

"Overcoming situations of violence: Sharing our Stories" a panel of women including Development and Communications Director Samah Salaime, Village resident Meital Rosso Guest House and Hotel manager Rabiah Barhum.

Presentation by Orit Sulitzeanu, Executive Director of the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel (ARCCI) on the violence against women throughout Israel across cultural boundaries, social classes, and age

groups, tying the event into a larger conversation about the centrality of women in the work for peace.

International Peace Day was commemorated in the International Rescuers Garden, with Village residents and guests including members of HLA - Holy Local Aliens group, and friends from Ramallah, East Jerusalem. Commemoration was followed by extended/inclusive-community building workshops including Creative Writing and Yoga.

***Screenings.**

Maayan Schwartz, who grew up at NSWAS and now lives there with his own family, screened (at the PSC) his film "Children of Peace," a documentary about growing up at NSWAS. The film, also screened at DocAviv (Tel Aviv's annual documentary film festival) is on its way to international festivals and will be available on public television in the future.

Children who grow up in that climate] are able to grasp complexity and to see things in shades other than black and white. By moving to WASNS, I am imposing on my children a life that is not so simple. I am asking myself what kind of people I want them to grow up to be."

"My hope is that this film may help people remember that no one is going anywhere and that we need to make the first step. This village is a step. In order to stop fighting you need to first try to listen."

Maayan Schwartz



"Children of Peace" director Maayan Schwartz with his son. Credit: Einav Livneh Schwartz

***A community and regional hub** for shared learning and celebration of religious holidays:

Yoga classes, workshops for young adult religious leaders, Purim, the Iftar, Easter, Rosh HaShanah, Christmas, Eid al Adha...every class and event welcoming all (residents, friends, neighbors) to the celebration, the stories and the food...widening the community one group, one holiday at a time.

THE OASIS ART GALLERY: CREATIVE EXPRESSION FOR PEACE

Fulfilling the Oasis Art Gallery's mission, curator Dyana Shaloufi Rizek created a tour and discussion to complement their show Global Climate Scream. Sculptor Nihad Dabeet, from Ramle, and Alex Erez presented their work to the gathered crowd and Dyana talked about the remaining curated pieces.

Village residents led a guided discussion of the art for a courtyard packed with visitors and village residents, focused on the absolute need for everyone's engagement -individuals, community residents, members of activist organizations.

Primary School students access the Oasis Art Gallery frequently. They find that the Oasis Art Gallery centers art as a powerful messenger with a vital message.



THE HUMANITARIAN AID PROJECT: AID WHERE IT IS MOST NEEDED

The cycle of attack/counter-attack continued over the summer, destroying several hospitals and clinics in Gaza. Already an unsustainably-underserved region, millions were unable to access medical care of any kind. The need for medical supplies was beyond imagining. American Friends partnered with global "Friends of" organizations and private donors, enabling Dr. Raid Haj Yehia, a member of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam's Humanitarian Aid Project to deliver antibiotics, serum and plasma substitutes, simple medical equipment and supplies, life-saving medications including heart-regulating, anti-clotting, and insulin, general anesthetics, anticonvulsants, vaccines, immunologics, and more. Having the on-the-ground connections and generously provided donations help make delivery immediate, targeting aid to those who needed it most.



Dr. Raid Haj Yehia

Like Maayan, supporters of American Friends of the Oasis of Peace think about what kind of people we want our children to grow up to be, and what kind of world we are making for them. Support for the projects and programs of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is, each day and each year, one more step toward a durable, sustainable peaceful future. NSWAS' achievements make clear that this is just such a sustainable path. We can walk this path together.