



# Oasis of Peace

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

Year End 2020 Newsletter

## A message from the Board of Directors:

We wish you peace and joy this holiday season. If there is one thing we've learned in 2020, it is that when we come together (even digitally!) we are powerful beyond measure. Our Board of Directors is so proud of the work that has been done and the milestones reached by every programming aspect of Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom. As we send you our good will for the coming year, we are also excited to invite you to join our cause. Read on to learn about what we've accomplished and what this community has planned for the future. Hope is alive and well in Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom. We are grateful to share that hope with you.

“ I HAD HEARD ABOUT THE SEPARATION WALL BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HOW BAD THE SITUATION IS. I TRIED TO PUT MYSELF IN THE SHOES OF THE PALESTINIANS...[AND CONSIDER] OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS HUMAN BEINGS. ”

— *The School For Peace*

## A New Director, An Ongoing Mission

“I was on track to working as a neurobiologist but I realized that if I am “here” (Israel), I need to address the issues of “here.” I realized have responsibilities to my unborn child. My child will ask me- “so you understood the issues, the problems - what did **you do**?” – *Roi Silberberg*

We hope you will join us in congratulating Roi Silberberg as he begins his new position as Program Director of the School for Peace (SFP). With an MA in Human Rights from the University of Malta and a PhD in Philosophy of Education from Haifa University, Roi became a facilitator for groups in conflict in 2016. Under his guidance, we anticipate great accomplishments for both the curriculums developed at the School for Peace, and for our many dedicated graduates.



In addition to continuing the successful peace-building training projects for which the School for Peace is internationally renowned, the main focus the year ahead will be finding ways for the SFP to work relationally with NGOs in Israel. In this way, our essential cross-cultural work can have a systemic impact in the wider NGO world. We are lifting up voices and leaders which have been sorely missing from the national and international conversations. Pushing for systemic change in addition can only deepen our success.

“When I am called by the SFP to facilitate a Youth Workshop, I feel as if my life has meaning.”



## Rising From the Ashes

The community is committed to rebuilding the School for Peace buildings destroyed in the September arson attack. In fact, graduates of the Architects and Urban planners SFP course are working on creative designs that will accommodate new ways of holding both youth and adult workshops in spaces near each other. Both the workshops and the buildings are being redesigned to accommodate this priority of holding adult and youth workshops in parallel, creating opportunities for mentoring and networking. Truly, the SFP is rising from the ashes even stronger than before, and this is in no small part due to the strength of our cross-cultural relationships, and our international support network.

“ WHEN THE VILLAGE FOUND ITSELF UNDER ATTACK (BY ARSON), I LOST HOPE FOR A MOMENT BUT THEN I SAW THE COMMUNITY SHOW UP FOR A DAY OF SOLIDARITY... I SAW THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE. WE FOUND HOPE. ”

- Samah (Communications and Development Director)



## Creating Positive Impact by Activating Leaders

Despite the social distancing measure required for the safety of those who participate in the School for Peace programming, and the challenges presented by the arson attack, the School For Peace successfully activated new and ongoing programs. With your support, we will continue to launch training courses and create change agents. For over thirty years, the School for Peace has developed a model for raising awareness, promoting reconciliation and understanding, creating dialogue, and motivating individuals towards social action that strengthens human rights and equality.

Through SFP programs, Jewish and Arab people in Israel and Palestine build groups to enact social change and strengthen equality and democracy in the region and beyond. In 2020, programming included trainings created for lawyers, city planners, theater and film artists, leaders in “Mixed Cities,” and more. We continue to learn that every person has the power to turn those around them toward peacemaking and justice - but they must receive ample support and training to effectively do so. Together, thanks to your remarkable generosity, we continue to make incredible strides in building the better world our children deserve.

## Making a Difference in Student Lives

As is true for all educators and students, the struggles of distance learning at the Primary School have been difficult to overcome. It is a testament to the commitment and skill of our teachers that students remain engaged. Students can be observed working together and communicating bilingually, despite being in a “digital” classroom. But in spite of our best efforts and the gifts of our remarkable community, some students still struggle with access. We’ve discovered that some parents felt embarrassed to ask for the help they needed to procure computers and/or internet access. But now that the ongoing necessity has become clear, these parents have come to us asking for help and we must show up for those students, all thirty-five of them. That’s a \$35,000 commitment to educational equity. But it’s the start of building the future together.

Additionally, our expanding teacher staff requires further training to best serve our multi-cultural and multi-lingual students. With your support, we can provide the assistance veteran teachers need to better mentor and train our new teachers. Our goal is, as always, to create a supportive and nurturing learning environment for every student, every day. This remains true whether students join us on campus or log in to a zoom meeting. At the end of this winter term, we can look forward to showing you the work and telling you the stories of our great digital learning adventures.

## Strong Starts & New Beginnings

Even with the challenges of social distancing, the NADI Youth Center still made a marked difference in young lives. The Nadi and the Spiritual Center got together with the film department and student union of Tel Aviv University to host ten volunteer students who taught the young people of the village filmmaking skills. Together, they produced a film in which they interviewed some of the long-term village members. Afterwards, there was a screening of films outside on the Primary School grounds, to which dozens of participants came - a lovely evening during the period between national lockdowns.

In September, the Nadi gained a Palestinian coordinator, Reem Haj Yahya, village member and recent psychology graduate. Reem grew up in the village and attended its school. Later she also studied group facilitation at the School for Peace and worked in the Communications and Development office to successfully coordinate two consecutive Palestinian summer camps. Upon Reem’s graduation and Lihi’s return from maternity leave, the Nadi team reopened the theater club and recruited two young volunteers from the regional council. They have also put together a team of three young guides who grew up in the village.

With your support, Reem and Lihi are producing a full year of activities for the youth. Among the first activities will be a community event to raise donations for children who are in a shelter for battered women, part of a month-long campaign against gender-based violence, leading up to *The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*.





## Moving Forward Through Creation



The Oasis Gallery's 9th exhibition, on display throughout summer, closed on Sept. 27th. The exhibition was devoted to the creativity of the village residents themselves. A multi-generational group including young children as part of after-school sessions gathered on the gallery patio. Several students were surprised to discover works by their parents or other people in the NSWAS community whose creative talents they did not know! The closing event included those from school age to old age, including adults from the village's second generation.

Just two days after the closing event, the second of two arson attacks took place in the village. While less damaging, the fire was directly above the Oasis Gallery. There was no

direct damage to the gallery itself, but there was considerable secondary damage from the automatic sprinkler system. As many artworks as possible were rescued, so now the work of cleaning and restoring can begin.

But with the incredible support of our international community, we expect the Oasis Gallery to move forward and host more opportunities for artistic expression. Already, the Oasis Gallery continues with its other activities, which include meetings in nature, in the studio, and guided visits to view an existing exhibition or collection. In these final months of the year programming will include a meeting to "meet, learn and create" in Ein Hod and Ein Hud, an "artists hosting artists" session, this time on the Gallery patio, including a discussion and lecture event.

THE NEXT, AND LAST, EXHIBITION INTENDED FOR 2020 WILL BE ON THE THEME "LOCAL AND GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE," WHICH WILL SURELY DRAW THOUGHT-PROVOKING AND IMPACTFUL ARTWORKS FROM OUR COMMUNITY. SHOULD YOU WISH TO JOIN US TO VIEW THE WORKS DIGITALLY, MAKE SURE YOU ARE FOLLOWING THE OASIS GALLERY!

— *Dyana Shaloufi, Director*

## Finding Purpose Across Boundaries



The Spiritual Center is collaborating with Israeli Rabbis for Human Rights on a new program. We are working with a multi-cultural group of Israeli citizens, many of whom have personal, family and community experiences of abuses of basic human rights. Taking place at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and at specific locations outside, the program's activities and dialogues are models for integrating pluralism and democracy into Human Rights work – just the sort of combination to which Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is so particularly well-suited and experienced.

The Spiritual Center begins its exciting work with Israel's younger religious (Christian, Muslim, Jewish) leaders, facilitated by an observant Muslim and an observant Jew, both women. Meeting at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam for full days and, when permissible, overnight at the guesthouse, every meeting starts with a sacred text from one of the three traditions giving shape to the day's powerful discussions. The participants are committed to bringing this work into their own congregations, creating positive change in their own communities. With your support, we will continue this work in 2021.

2020 has been a year none of us will soon forget. We have met challenges, both from the international COVID pandemic and a hate-fueled arson attack. But, by coming together as a community, by focusing on the essential tasks at hand, by fully committing to our mission of justice, we emerge stronger and more prepared build pathways to peace in Israel for every citizen, especially for the youngest generation. We must - their future depends on it. It is our great honor to have you as a member of our community. We wish you health, hope, and happiness in the coming year.



**For up to date news, visit our redesigned website  
<https://www.oasisofpeace.org/>**

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American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

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A bequest or a planned gift to AFNSWAS keeps your commitment.

*The new CARES act allows for cash contributions to qualified charities such as AFNSWAS to be deducted up to 100% of your adjusted gross income for the 2020 calendar year. The new CARES act allows all taxpayers to take a charitable deduction of up to \$300, even if you do not itemize.*

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