

A M E R I C A N F R I E N D S O F
Neve Shalom  *Wahat al-Salam*
נ וֹשֶׁבֶת שְׁלוֹם واحة السلام
O A S I S O F P E A C E

Impact Report Spring 2019

Each of you reading this has, through your support, has made it possible for NSWAS to sustain and grow its work promoting equality and peace. Throughout the years, you have enabled NSWAS's work in communities, professionals, and schools both local and international. From the national conference stage to the smallest teacher-student lesson, this work is a multifaceted approach to a singular focus, challenging and deeply rewarding. NSWAS thanks you for everything they are able to do— from conferences to connections made, from art exhibits to adopt-a-class— through your generous and vital support. Thank you.



Children and teachers work in the community garden.

The Primary School is Learning and Growing!

The Primary School is growing— in more ways than one! The Community Garden Project, which was established to develop students' understanding of and engagement with nature and the environment, has been an enormous success.



Children demonstrate their academic skills to a visitor from the Ministry of Education.

Students third grade and above participate in maintaining the garden, learning as they do so about the science underpinning the natural world and the importance of preserving their environment. Younger children, meanwhile, assist the older students through monthly nature sessions with their teachers and families.

Activities for every age and stage of development, like nature walks and the annual olive-picking festival, further enrich the lives of students and enhance their appreciation of nature.

Over the past five years, the Primary School has become larger and more diverse than ever. Enrolment rates have increased by 20 percent, while students come from more villages than ever before— 24, as opposed to the initial 17, with pupils from three more towns expected to enrol next year. With these changes come expansions to the Primary School infrastructure. The Primary School will, with the support of donors and the NSWAS community, open up a new grade and hire several more teachers in the coming year. Work is also underway to increase bus services, helping students get to and from school without the fatigue and expense of lengthy



Primary School children dress in costumes for Purim.

Publishing the Primary School Curricula

As the Primary School grows, so does its importance as a pioneer and advocate. Bilingual and multicultural curricula are rapidly increasing in popularity, and as most established and longest-running school of its kind the Primary School finds itself in a position of leadership. To that aim, the Primary School has been developing a presence both in the academic world— as they did when showcasing their curriculum at the Kibbutz College of Education in Tel Aviv— and in the public eye.

This April, one of the most extensive and groundbreaking efforts undertaken by the Primary School received a major update. The Primary School curriculum, developed for grades 1 through 6, has been codified and is on its way to publication! Thanks to the time, money, and effort of many donors and volunteers, curricula for each grade will soon be available for use in schools around the world. This has been a monumental project for the Primary School and its partners, involving countless hours of observing, translating, and revising. The school has begun working with the MATAC Center for Educational Technology, Israel's largest institute for digital learning, which has enthusiastically agreed to create online learning resources and disseminate the curricula in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. Schools around the world can draw inspiration from the materials and the example set by the Primary School, as many have already done, to create a learning environment that supports students from many ethnicities and cultures.

The Primary School will be increasing their social media presence over the coming months in conjunction with building a website devoted to their curricula. In doing so, the Primary School will reach new audiences and foster new understanding of what it means to have an equitable and just curricula.



Students prepare for the Safe Internet Competition.

70,000 Students for Peace: SFP Director Nava Sonnenschein Celebrated in Interview



Nava Sonnenschein

Author, activist, and School for Peace Founder and Director Nava Sonnenschein has led an eventful and impactful life. It is unsurprising, therefore, that her work and life are recognized.

In her recent interview with Lilith Magazine's Ruth Ebenstein, Nava spoke about her decades of peacemaking and dialogue, her recent book *The Power of Dialogue Between Israelis and Palestinians*, and the role women play in forging a peaceful future. "From my vantage point, women seem to have more interactive tools to reach across the divide." Nava said in an interview with Ruth Ebenstein.

Nava, who has taught over 70,000 students at the School for Peace in the twenty-nine years since it was opened, is alarmed by the buzz surrounding increased numbers of female recruits in the Israel Defence Forces. "A border policewoman with an M16 slung over the shoulder frisking an elderly woman at a checkpoint is not the pinnacle of equality between the sexes. Women should strive to promote a different sort of equality in our society: democracy, justice, and peace for all those who live in Israel and Palestine." We at AFNSWAS hope that the interview, which appears in Lilith Magazine's Spring 2019 issue "Unfaithful", brings more attention to the School for Peace and its vital work.



A School for Peace workshop in deep discussion.

Ramadan and the Nadi



Lihi Joffe and Nadi participants deliver sweets to hospitalized children for Eid Al-Fatir.

The holy month of Ramadan brought many festivities for the village! Three Iftar meals organized and prepared by the village brought the community together. Families ate, celebrated, and enjoyed each others' company while learning more about Ramadan as well as the Jewish and Christian holidays that coincide with it. On May 13, a group of over fifty people created a community-wide parade complete with

drums, lanterns and the Jafra folk band. On May 22, a meal at the guesthouse coincided with Lag Ba'Omer, a Jewish festival celebrating the life of Rabbi and sage Shimon bar Yochai. Wildfires in the area, caused by bonfires exacerbated by the extreme heatwave, cut the event short-- but the spirit of both holidays prevailed as the community transitioned from celebration to assisting their neighbors and helping those who were hurt and displaced. Within days, NSWAS had taken in several families whose homes had been destroyed. The Nadi and Primary School in particular stepped up as they agreed to host the Kibbutz Harel kindergarten program after learning that their building had caught fire.

For the final Iftar meal on May 29th, the village had something special planned. The celebration began with a large meal and singing, after which two friars from the neighboring Latrun monastery spoke about the Christian holiday of Pentecost. As soon as the meal was over, several women from the village made traditional cookies and sweets. From there, the Nadi took over! Children and teenagers from the youth club packed the treats in gift bags and took them to Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem, where they handed out the treats to hospitalized Palestinian children. This trip coincided with Eid al-Fiter, the festival that marks the end of Ramadan and the month-long fast.

Many of the children in the hospital would be celebrating this year without their families with them, so the visits and presents were greatly appreciated!



'Building Peace and Resilience' participants listen intently during workshops.

An Update On Building Peace and Resilience

As the second cohort of students in 'Building Peace and Resilience' prepares to graduate, students and teachers alike look back on the events of this winter with both sadness and gratitude. The course, which began in 2017, was designed to help Palestinian and Israeli health professionals develop skills in trauma response and reconciliation— a sorely needed skill-set in an area with an ongoing shortage of medical staff. At the end of January, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced that it would not be giving the program the remaining third of the million-dollar grant it had been awarded in 2017. Without funding from different sources, the program would be left unfinished and the second cohort, which had been halfway through the program, would not get to complete their work.

As soon as AFNSWAS heard the news we responded, getting the word out to donors and supporters as quickly as possible. The response from our donors has been incredible. In just a few short weeks, we were able to raise over 100,000 dollars— enough for the second cohort to finish strong! The final projects, which include a mobile blood bank in Palestine and a support organization for patients from Gaza receiving medical treatment in Jerusalem, have been implemented and are well underway.

Though unable to start teaching the third cohort in the same way as the first two, the SFP plans to run a short training course for facilitators of groups in conflict starting later this year which will draw from the 'Building Peace and Resilience' curriculum. The SFP is continuing to secure funding in hopes of reinstating the full program in the future. Above all, the SFP is grateful for the generosity and dedication shown by supporters of NSWAS and the vital work that the village, the school, and the program's participants strive to do every day.