



# Oasis of Peace

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

SPRING 2021 Newsletter

## A message from the Board of Directors:

As the world begins to reopen after a difficult and traumatic year, we are inspired by the resilient example of the young people of Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom. Along with all those in the Village, we are so grateful for your support and friendship. We have much to share about Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom's recent accomplishments and exciting future. If you have not yet done so, now is an excellent time to join our cause.

## Back to School - In Person!

The Primary School is an exceptional place. As you may already know, it is the first school in Israel where children learn together in Hebrew and Arabic, and models a successful bilingual, binational approach to education for equal numbers of Palestinian and Jewish children ages kindergarten through sixth grade. What you may not know is that 90% of the school's students arrive from more than a dozen communities in the region to join the eligible children from the Village itself. As students return for in-person learning, the Primary School is also growing as a learning community.



THE SCHOOL STARTED ITS RECRUITMENT DRIVE FOR NEW STUDENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF 2021 WITH TWO VIRTUAL OPEN-HOUSE DAYS THAT WERE ATTENDED BY THIRTY FAMILIES. SIGNIFICANTLY, CHILDREN FROM THE 6TH GRADE HELPED EXPLAIN HOW THE SCHOOL WORKS AND THOUGHTFULLY ANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM PROSPECTIVE PARENTS AND STUDENTS. PARENTS WERE ABLE TO VISIT THE SCHOOL IN PERSON; TOURS WERE ARRANGED IN CAPSULES AND TOOK PLACE ON A DAY WHEN THE SCHOOL WAS CLOSED, TO MINIMIZE CONTACT.

## Learning & Celebrating

In March, the children celebrated Purim. In accordance with COVID regulations, each class celebrated the holiday in separate capsules. Currently, many students are observing Ramadan, and their teachers ensure these students are supported throughout this special period. Whether or not children are fasting during Ramadan, the Primary School also celebrates Girgian. This festival is celebrated halfway through the Muslim holy month to reward children for observing Ramadan, though all students participate in the festivities.



From our Purim celebration

## A Renewed Focus on Teacher Training

While school continued at a distance through 2020 and into early 2021, teacher training sessions continued over Zoom and focused both on online pedagogy as well as the unique bilingual, binational curriculum of the Primary School. As



students and teachers make their way back to campus, the school's administration is turning their focus to further updating and refining the curriculum, which has been shared with schools around the world. There has also been considerable energy spent attracting and hiring more teachers who are native Arabic speakers - each classroom always has a Hebrew-dominant and an Arabic-dominant teacher, to best support students in growing up bilingual. Although some trainings were paused due to the pandemic, as the school reopens, so too does its innovative teacher training.

## Who's Ready for Recess?!

Another cause for celebration during this period was the installation of a second piece of playground equipment. It has, unsurprisingly, proven quite popular with the children during breaktime. The American Friends continue to fundraise to complete a planned 5-piece playground. At the recent online Q&A event hosted by the Primary School, Vice Principal Reem Nashef noted that several children read the plaques on the playground and told her how special they felt knowing that people all over the world care about them.





## Rising From The Ashes

Throughout the pandemic, the School for Peace has kept up an impressive slate of University course collaborations and trainings for professionals ranging from lawyers to city planners to those in the entertainment industry. Even the arson attack which destroyed much of the main SFP building has not slowed them down in the slightest. The work of rebuilding has been taken as an opportunity to redesign the facilities of the SFP to further enhance programming - and we are proud to announce that approximately 75% of the needed rebuilding funds have already been committed or pledged!



IF YOU ARE ABLE, PLEASE HELP THE SFP REACH THEIR GOAL BY JUNE OF THIS YEAR. THIS FUNDING WILL ENSURE THAT THE SFP'S UNIQUE, GROUND-BREAKING TRAININGS MAY CONTINUE TO CHANGE LIVES ACROSS THE REGION AND THE WORLD.

### UPDATE ON REBUILDING THE SCHOOL FOR PEACE

FUNDRAISING TARGET: \$329,354 by JUNE 30TH 2021



## Delivering Needed Aid

The Humanitarian Aid Project continues to deliver essential aid where it is most needed. In March, a delegation of doctors received permission to enter Gaza after being blocked from entry for a full year. Dr. Raed Haj Yahya, a member of the Village who volunteers with Physicians for Human Rights, was among the doctors who successfully set up mobile emergency rooms, treated thousands of patients, performed dozens of operations, and helped train local doctors living in Gaza. The medicines and masks generously purchased by Italian, American, and other friends from around the world reached Gaza, and our hope is to deliver even more aid with the next delegation in May.





## Making Connections, Making Change



The reopening of the NADI youth group is consequential not only because of the leadership training for the Village's youth and young adults, but also because of the opportunity to create lasting connections within and beyond the Village. Young people returned to the theater workshop group in February and now meet weekly to practice. The workshop will culminate in a production at the end of the year. Art activities were also organized in partnership with the Oasis Art Gallery.

In March, the Nadi conducted a three-day Superhero Camp for 4th-6th graders. The children found their inner superhuman strength, had outdoor exploration activities, cooked dinner in the woods, and watched a late-night movie together.

*A new counselor, Yuval Shunri, has joined the Nadi for six months to work with high school students. We look forward to updating you on all their activities through the summer months.*





## Honoring the Rescuers



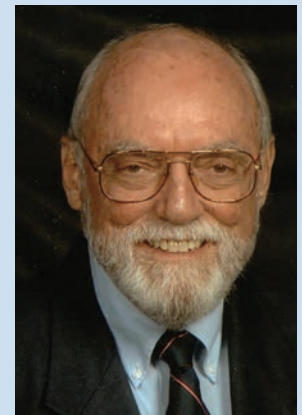
In early 2021, an upgrade to the Garden of Rescuers was completed. Among the improvements are a handrail for the stairs, gravel paths, a raised platform for the explanatory plaque, a stone dais for speakers, and benches for the audience.

## In Memoriam: A Legacy of Peace

With sorrow for his passing and with enormous gratitude, we are pleased to announce that the late Hon. Sam Lewis, Ambassador to Israel and founding member of the US Institute for Peace, honored us with a bequest. His generous gift will do much to sustain the work of those in the Village for years to come. Sam visited the Village often, frequently in its earliest days and then when possible in later years.

Sam saw the true impact of small grass-roots projects like ours and the outsize influence they can have. He saw the early Primary School changing the nature of Israeli schooling- slowly at first, and now with increasing speed. He saw the power of the School for Peace's strategies to change the way Israelis and others understood human rights as a local, as well

as national and international, concern. He saw the increasing generational impact of all of the practical programs and skills that the schools were teaching.



Everyone involved with the Oasis of Peace has been inspired and uplifted by Sam throughout his life, and we all miss him. If you or a loved one is interested in naming the American Friends of Neve Shalom - Wahat al Salam in estate plans, please do not hesitate to contact us. It is a beautiful, comforting thing to know that one's commitment to peace, justice, and equality can live on.

BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IN PEACE



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## Planned Giving

Will your legacy continue your commitment to the work of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam?

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 2021 calendar year. The new CARES act allows all taxpayers to take a charitable deduction of up to \$300, even if you do not itemize.*

### **The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam**

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