

Winter 2017



## FINDING THE GOOD NEWS

For 40 years, the village of Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam has been making headlines by showing Israel and the world that peace is possible by bringing Palestinians and Israelis together in faith, education, fellowship and dialogue. In a divided country, marking 50 years of occupation, NSWAS is a beacon of hope and a consistent source of good news.

The School for Peace, the Primary School and the Spiritual Center are pioneers of peace and conflict transformation, raising a generation of peacemakers in partnership with you. They are providing a national model for equality in education, community life and professional work and you are helping them make the headlines that keep hope alive.



## MANY PEOPLE, ONE VOICE

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, the community of NSWAS and over one thousand of their friends and colleagues gathered at the village to renew their commitment to peace and bringing an end to the occupation. Their rally echoed the voices of the over ten thousand people who gathered in Tel-Aviv to protest the occupation.

Eli Bitan, a participant in the School for Peace Change Agents course for Up-and-Coming Politicians, spoke at the rally in Tel Aviv, echoing the words and work of NSWAS;

*“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/>





## 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 side.

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.

**Look at what miracles can happen** with your partnership in supporting the work of conflict transformation.

## LEARNING TRUST

The spring session of the School for Peace Youth Encounters program generated so much curiosity and spaces filled up so quickly that the work shop could not accommodate everyone who wanted to participate!

After many years of working with Jewish Givat Brenner High School and Palestinian Orthodox Nazareth High School, the Youth Encounters program is...popular. 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, learn about the conflict on a personal level and create small steps forward into their future together.



*"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 inspiring. Through this workshop they have experienced what is possible when Jews and Palestinians work together. They understand that their future hangs in the balance.

If you can't be "in the room" with Yael and Roua, you can make it possible for them to be there. Your support will have you standing with the students, who believe in the possibility of a peaceful future together and who desperately want to learn how.



## A NATURAL RESOURCE

In May, 30 Principals from local schools in the Mateh Yehuda council district visited the Primary School to learn, first hand, how this uniquely successful school works. Why the sudden interest? The council has decided to become a 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.



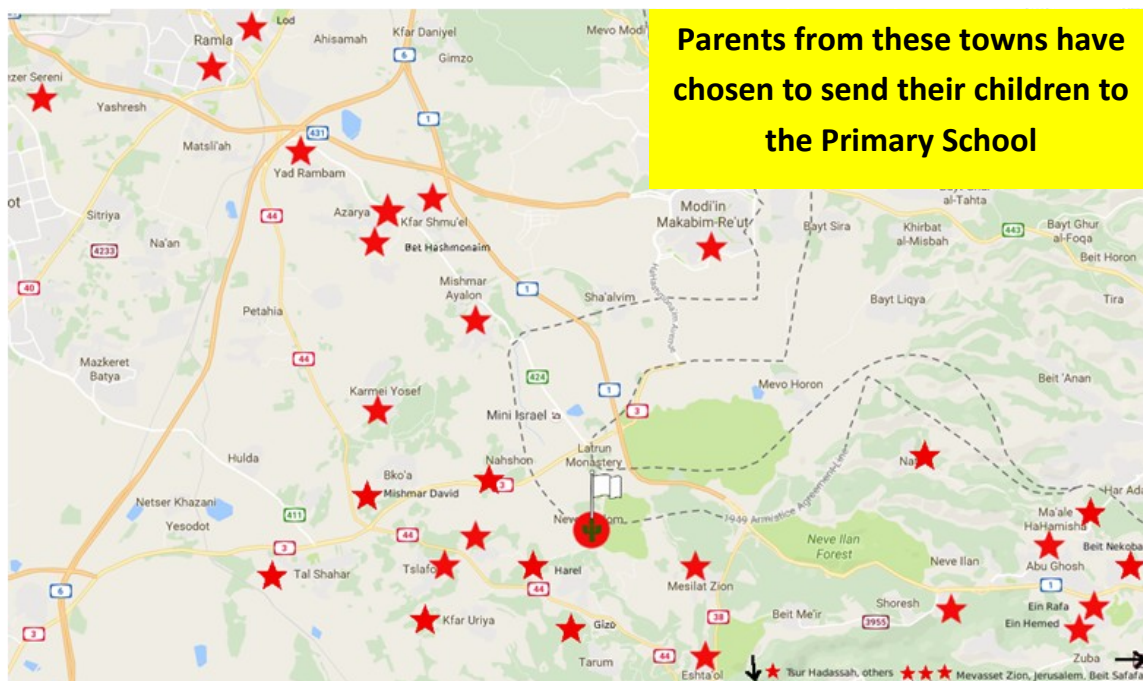
Students guided the principals as they toured the campus and asked questions. The principals visited classrooms to observe the teachers and students engaged in bilingual lessons and bicultural narratives. After the tour, they attended a special presentation about the school and its unique, integrated program.

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.

### Primary School Growth

#### At-A-Glance

- **4 new STEAM programs: Coding, Robotics, Science & Musical Instruments.**
- **24 teachers, Palestinian and Jewish.**
- **33% growth over the past three years.**
- **New Early Childhood Education Center.**
- **Published curriculum in Hebrew and Arabic.**



**Parents from these towns have chosen to send their children to the Primary School**

**The vitality and opportunity provided by such a diverse constituency is given room to grow at the Primary School. Come and see it for yourself! Knowing that you are part of it will give you renewed hope and courage.**

## 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 24-hour news station located 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!



The Spiritual Center reaches across cultures, religions and borders. In solidarity with the residents of Gaza who live in a continuous humanitarian and economic crisis, the Center recently spent an evening renewing their 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 this 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.

## REMEMBERING HOPE

## FULL MOON FRIENDSHIP

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.



## Hijazi Art



## SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

From activism to yoga, the Spiritual Center is always busy. Inter-religious groups, educational groups, artists and NGO's recognize the power of this 'free space' to amplify their message. The Museum complements the center as an archive of art and literature that reflects a shared humanity and celebrates the diverse cultural and religious landscape.

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 Cnaan 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. Art is a powerful tool of communication that speaks not only to other artists, but to the community at large, sparking dialogue and empathy. In October, the Museum will hold an exhibition to display the cumulative work of participating artists.

You too can be a part of the activity by donating to the Spiritual Center. Your gift will nurture the art and opportunity that will spark the conversation that leads to connection, understanding and inclusion .

## LANGUAGE MATTERS

On July 11<sup>th</sup>- Arab Language Day- three 4<sup>th</sup>-graders from the Primary School went to the Knesset to address members of the Knesset, Arab leaders, school principals, researchers and specialists in identity and democracy. Jewish student Roni Gil Reinsreiber had some words of wisdom for her distinguished audience;

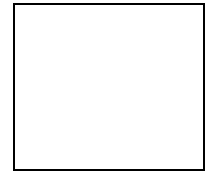
*"Hi, I'm Roni. I'm 10 years old and study at the Primary School of Neve Shalom - Wahat al-Salam. I want to tell you that I speak Arabic and Hebrew. I love to speak with my friends in both languages at my school and I am learning Arabic and Hebrew with two teachers - an Arab and a Jew. My wish is that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

Arabic language is part of the identity of 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the population in Israel. There is currently a new nation state bill that proposes removing Arabic as an official language in Israel. 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.



Because you believe in Peace



The American Friends of NSWAS  
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## BECAUSE TOGETHER WE ARE MAKING PEACE A REALITY

*Supporting the projects of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, strengthening a shared society between Palestinians and Jews through education, engagement and activism.*

**Join us today with your donation.**

### Planned Giving:

Are you dedicated to peace building and the work of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam? Do you want to leave a legacy that continues your commitment? A bequest or a planned gift to AFNSWAS keeps your commitment alive.



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

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