

2016 YEAR END

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF
Neve Shalom  *Wahat al-Salam*
נְשֵׁי שְׁלוֹם  واحة السلام
O A S I S O F P E A C E



Innovation Fuels our Future

The Oasis of Peace is an incubator for peace entrepreneurs where growing numbers of program graduates become agents for change and voices for a durable, lively and engaged peace.

Americans care a lot about what happens in Israel and Palestine, most especially about the people themselves and we find ourselves discouraged by the increasing mistrust, intolerance and violence.

If we saw this as a disease, we would put our resources to work in the most promising laboratories staffed by highly skilled researchers and clinicians with a history of successful targeted treatments. So, what's the good news? That laboratory already exists, it's already experimenting with treatments and potential cures and it has had an exciting year.

Peter Drucker, the internationally known management genius, said that "real entrepreneurship is a practice of purposeful innovation...normal, steady and continuous in our organizations ...and our society." Drucker never knew about Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, but he would have recognized it as a peace-building entrepreneurial zone!

Identity formation and expression in dialogue, research capacities that flow from full-spectrum (academic, artistic, spiritual, cultural, multi-age, theory-into-action) programs and the creation of avenues for shared problem-solving are innovations that have emerged from the work of NSWAS. **The community's programs and projects focus on healing the disease: transforming the current attitudes, behaviors and political conversations in communities, policy-making and media, and inoculating citizens with an inclusive vision across Israel toward building a durable and just peace.**

Researchers and peace-builders recognize that failure happens, but that's never a stopping place. It's always a launch-pad for what's next.

Rally at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam for Women Waging Peace!

When Jewish and Palestinian women decided to work together now for the sake of peace, they went to the only place that was big enough to embrace them all: Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam. **More than 500 women met at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam to plan a march, a partnership, of thousands of Palestinian and Jewish women.** As the march began, a stream of Palestinian women descended from bus after bus, from Nablus, Hebron, East Jerusalem, Jericho, Jenin, Bethlehem joining hands with Jewish women from the cities and the settlements. Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is Israel's incubator, the center for discovering peace-building strategies. Many had first come here when they were teens, learning to see each other's humanity and finding their common goals. **Now we are seeing the women united in their commitment to walk and work toward peace.**

Read more about the march in Riman Barakat's own words, at 972mag.com.

The Primary School



Because the Primary School is nestled into the creative soup of the village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, it benefits from the experimental thinking that surrounds it every day. **This is the *only* school in Israel where Palestinian and Jewish children get off the school bus and actually find themselves in a bilingual, bicultural, fully-functioning, egalitarian community!**

While the children study, they see and hear all around them – the voices of two languages sharing walks, visiting their classrooms, discussing curriculum with their teachers. They learn that their own growing bilingualism isn't just a cross-cultural skill, it is a practical preparation for how to live as they grow up together.

Innovation and the development of realistic solutions to very real challenges are at the heart of the Primary School. Students saw their own teachers invited to speak at the Knesset on the country's increase in hate crimes, and they saw their own teacher respond to a personal assault with a message of dignity, respect and non-violence.

Our school's zoo lab and the drama therapy program, designed in response to conflict-traumatized children, are now integrated

throughout the curriculum.

The recent computer coding learn-in (and the Primary School's great success in the national coding competition) was born from the recognition that everyone's intelligence is going to be needed for the future.

Curricular experimentation is seen most recently in the new, school-wide, 'every child is a musician' program, with traditional and contemporary instruments and lessons for each child; it is seen in the new writing workshop built on each child's family stories. It is seen through the growth resulting from a collegial partnership with the Hagar School in Beersheva, where literature and curricula from each are shared with the other, and School for Peace-led teacher trainings are held jointly. Bringing new eyes and different preparation into the innovation laboratory strengthens the process and the outcomes!

Applications to the Primary School continue to increase, especially in Kindergarten and First grade. Principal Carmella Ferber meets with each prospective family, learning about their motivation for applying and their commitment to the school's principles. While the creative bilingual, multi-narrative program is core for the prospective parents, it is the school's commitment to being a laboratory for peace-builders, a home for educational innovation, and the family's desire to expand the peace-building into their wider community that seals the deal.

As our school is **growing steadily**, by an additional classroom each year for the next five years, prospective parents are grateful and getting on board.





The School for Peace: Rededication and Resilience

In September, Nava Sonnenschein, Director of the School for Peace, was invited to the Global Peace Builders Summit in Germany. Peace builders from conflict zones around the world united in a global conversation on the role of civil society in peace processes. Over the course of five days Nava used every opportunity to strengthen the School for Peace's connection to the international peace building community, raise common challenges and build collaborations to increase local impact. Meeting with the others was inspiring and empowering for everyone present and the stories of resilience and personal sacrifice strengthened discussions of common goals and strategies for addressing shared issues on a global level.

Nava returned home in time to present an exciting schedule for the 2016-2017 scholastic year at the annual opening event of the School For Peace. Speaking to a group of program graduates, current participants and village members about the expansion of the change agents program, the further development of university courses and the efforts to reach out to new target groups, Nava was joined by Coordinators Harb Amara and Roi Silberberg. A panel discussion was held with special guests Ayman Odeh, leader of the Arab political alliance known as *The Joint List*, and former Knesset speaker Avraham Burg. As the two politicians spoke of building a more just, equitable and humane society through peace building and economic equality, School for Peace students and faculty were encouraged to remain resilient in the face of challenges, and rededicate their energies for the sake of the future.

The Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center



“We are alike in that we share the same basic belief that peace is possible: it is something that can be achieved. It's sometimes very hard. Sometimes you have to talk with the other; you are angry, argue and shout, but you never, never give up.”-Samah Salaimé

Events held throughout the year at the PSCC have brought hundreds of Jews and Palestinians together in peace. Whether through longstanding programs, like the Masa/Masar “Journey” program, or the newer “Honoring the Righteous” and “Forest of the Righteous” projects, the PSCC tirelessly seeks opportunities for Palestinians and Jews to come together and honor each other’s sincere desire to find a path to peace.

In the moments spent together, Jews and Palestinians can experience peace between the two peoples and imagine the possibilities for peace outside of the PSCC.

“The message is that we can dare to create structures that can bring people together in equality.” -Dafna Karta Schwartz

Serious About Peace

In October, the **Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center** was *honored* to host a special meeting of the **Women Wage Peace** organization. **Samah Salaimé**, a village member and member of Women Wage Peace spoke at the meeting about why she joined Women Wage Peace and the commonalities that exist between the village and the organization. As a village member, Samah knows that peace is the product of action. She decided to join the organization because she was impressed and inspired by the women who wanted an end to the violence and bloodshed and were willing to work for it. **Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee of Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace** was a guest speaker at the event. She emphasized that a commitment to peace is not to be taken lightly, *“If you’re not serious about peace, stop it... if you’re not ready, don’t start - this is not an easy process. When you decide to wage peace, you must go all out.”* Leymah urged women to persevere and press the government to begin a conversation about peace. Through the support of the **Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center**, organizations like Women Wage Peace can *inspire* more people to become involved in the pursuit of peace. The PSCC actively engages in unifying people through a shared desire to forge a viable peace between Jews and Palestinians.

Finding A Way Profile: Dr. Raid Haj Yehia



“I’m generally optimistic. But when you see the huge number of war casualties; when you meet people who have lost their entire families – or witness the terrible conditions under which they are living, from year to year, it does sometimes affect my optimism. The people in Gaza are in a kind of jail. They suffer all the time. They want to live and study, but they’ve been living like this for eight years or more.”

Dr. Yehia

Dr. Yehia was born and raised in central Israel. After high school he studied medicine in Warsaw, Poland and obtained his medical degree. He went on to specialize as a pediatrician and neonatologist in Jerusalem, at Bikur Holim and Hadassah hospitals. After his studies he spent a year in Equatorial Guinea, where he was the medical director at La Paz Hospital. He worked for the General Health Fund (an Israeli HMO) and today he manages three medical centers in East Jerusalem.

Dr. Yehia also studies Law and obtained his LLB degree in 2012.

Village member and pediatrician Dr. Raid Haj Yehia has dedicated his life to helping others. **Through his work with the Physicians for Human Rights organization and his commitment to the Humanitarian Aid Program (HAP) at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, Dr. Yehia has helped hundreds of children in the West Bank and Gaza receive critical medical treatment.** For many years Dr. Yehia has made weekly trips to remote West Bank villages and refugee camps to treat children who cannot get access to needed medical care. Three times a year he goes through the difficult process of obtaining the necessary permits to travel to Gaza, providing medical care in hospitals with very limited electricity, supplies, staff, equipment and medicine. Through the Humanitarian Aid Program at NSWAS, Dr. Yehia

is able to bring more than just his medical skills to his patients in the West Bank and Gaza. Thanks to donations from our friends around the world, Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam’s Humanitarian Aid program provides life-saving medicine and equipment for Dr. Yehia to deliver to hospitals and clinics in the West Bank and Gaza. Having these necessary medical supplies, particularly in Gaza, makes it possible for Dr. Yehia to provide support to Palestinian physicians who cannot routinely access what is so vitally needed. Helping more children recover from injuries and life-threatening illnesses gives them and their families hope for their children’s future. Dr. Yehia’s motivation to volunteer his time and talents is simply to help. ***“There is always hope. The spirit of humanity will come through. The good, human side will win.”*** In his tireless efforts to help children with limited access to medical care, he embodies the spirit of activism upon which Neve Shalom/What al-Salam was founded.

Women On Tour!



Samah Salaime

Meet Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (NSWAS) member **Samah Salaime**, a Palestinian social worker, community activist and mother of three boys who came to NSWAS to raise her family. At NSWAS, this extraordinary laboratory for peace-building, Samah sends her children to the NSWAS experimental Primary School and, in addition to working outside the village with abused women and traumatized children, Samah chairs the NSWAS educational association.

Join us on Facebook or in person if you're able between **November 28 and December 5th** when Samah will be meeting and speaking with groups and individuals. **Samah will return in February 2017** joined by Noam Shuster-Eliassi, a young adult from the village who works across boundaries with settlers and others who are usually excluded from the peace conversations.

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

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