



Year End Report

The Primary School

Violence and Healing

In May, one of our Primary School teachers, Nadwa Jabar, and her three children were victims of a racist attack. They were unharmed, and because of the strong, supportive, multicultural, community of the village they didn't have to face the aftermath of this attack alone. Nadwa's daughter, a 1st grader at the Primary School, was fearful after the attack but Nadwa reassured her, *"We must be ambassadors of peace. We can live together and do a lot to change this reality."*



Nadwa Jabar

Nadwa and her colleagues were able to use the story of the attack as an opportunity to teach the larger society about what is possible when a community chooses to live in peace. Nadwa, Principal Ferber and two other Primary School teachers were invited to the Knesset to attend a special meeting on hate crimes and to discuss the promotion of bilingual education. Nadwa had an opportunity to speak to the leaders of the country about the attack. The official, public recognition of Nadwa's experience as a racist attack is a concrete step toward justice and equality in a divided land.

Last Days of the School Year



Coming together to celebrate the end of another school year is another opportunity for the families of Primary School students to experience the fellowship that can exist between Jews and Palestinians. Students shine in musical and dramatic performances. Families, teachers and students revel in the accomplishments of the school year as another milestone is passed. Graduation is always bittersweet for the 6th graders, as they take their first steps out of the Primary School and into different middle schools that won't have the same egalitarian, multicultural foundation. But with the values that have been instilled at the Primary School, they have the tools they need to be ambassadors of peace.

The Primary School



Before the school year concluded, the students of the Primary School were paid a heartfelt tribute of appreciation by the Italian Association for Jewish and Christian Friendship to commemorate the 20th year of Bruno Hassar's passing. They received over 200 messages of peace from Italian students in a show of support for their dedication to the art of peace. The Primary School students caught a glimpse of how important their work toward peace is in the world and reciprocated with their own messages of peace.

A New Year Begins

The students and faculty were excited to kick off the 2016/2017 school year with a 24.5% increase in enrollment! The majority of students that attend the Primary School come from nineteen different locations in the surrounding area with 8% coming directly from the village. The Brothers of the Latrun Monastery, which donated the land of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam over thirty years ago, attended the first day of school celebration. The new school library will open soon and work on the new music room is underway. These updates are so important as the continued growth of the Primary School requires an investment in modernization of the facility. Made possible by donations from our American, Swedish and British friends, these improvements enable the students and teachers to access resources more effectively.



This year, the Primary School and the bilingual Hagar School in Be'er Sheva have formed a continuing partnership to promote cultural awareness through literature. Every year the Primary School commemorates Holocaust Day, Memorial Day and Nakba Day with presentations by students, music and historic photographs. *Sweet Tea With Nana* and *I'm from There and Other Stories* are specialized schoolbooks that paint a personalized picture of these holidays and are filled with accounts of families affected by personal and national tragedies. By using these particular books, students not only learn the lessons of history, culture and religion, they have the opportunity to connect those events to personal stories. That personal connection to the other culture and religion is a key element in the peace building work students engage in at the Primary School. *"I was very moved by all the lovely stories connected with the various religious holidays. It's great that these are written in both Hebrew and Arabic, so I can use them in the lessons where we teach together."* - Lutfiya, 1st grade teacher

News From the Village of NSWAS



The Village is pleased to introduce you to the first executive director of the association of educational institutions in the village, Elinor Sidi. Using her experience in organizational work, Elinor's role is to improve the efficiency and facilitate the expansion of village educational projects. She will work directly with the board and the friends associations to develop new strategies to strengthen operations of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam's educational institutions.

Elinor was born to a conservative Jewish family. When she became involved in activism for LGBT, feminist and Mizrachi causes she quickly made the connection that the struggle for equal civil rights among minority groups is inextricably linked to the Palestinian struggle. *"I believe in the power of education, particularly anti-racist education, to bring about change. One of the things I would like to advance is the opening of a bilingual, binational high school, that would work at a really high level."* Welcome Elinor!

Palestinian Summer Camp: Building Trust Across Borders

Every summer the village hosts a summer camp for Palestinian children living under occupation. This year the village hosted a group of 35 children, their mothers and three fathers from the village of Bil'in in the Ramallah district for a day of fun and relaxation. After the arduous task of obtaining the necessary permits allowing Palestinian Nationals to leave the West Bank for just one day, members of the village picked up their guests at the Bil'in Crossing and embarked on a day of fun and fellowship. The group met with members of the Nadi youth program,



toured NSWAS and got to witness that peace and coexistence is a real and viable possibility. Although the original plan was to have a summer camp for the kids, the parents wouldn't agree to it for fear of something bad happening. On hearing this one of the kids from Bil'in exclaimed, *"What? You want to tell me that we were supposed to come to this amazing place for a longer period of time and you were worried? I can't believe it. What is more frightening; the army and the demonstrations at the wall every week, or being here? Next year we are coming for longer!"* On the way back to Bil'in the group visited the beach. No visit beyond the controlled borders of the West Bank would be complete without a swim in the Mediterranean.

Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center

The Peace Museum: Sharing the Journey Toward Peace



With generous support from our friends around the world, The Peace Museum is set to open by the end of 2016. The updated facility will be a place for local and international groups to experience NSWAS's thirty-year journey toward peace through art, text, film and photographs. The Peace Museum's transformation into a living archive for the village reflects its vision of diversity as a source of personal enrichment, strength and, above all, peace. The history of Neve Shalom/What al-Salam, its ideology, cultural roots and vision for the future

serves as a model for peaceful coexistence and respect of human rights. The museum is being renovated and fitted to house art and archives, both temporary and permanent, representing the multi-cultural community of NSWAS and similar communities from around the world.

The Forest of the Righteous: Establishing Roots

The Forest of the Righteous celebrated its inaugural inductees with a special event honoring the Circassian Muslims who saved the lives of thirty-two Jewish children at the height of WWII. The memorial will grow to represent the personal sacrifice and bravery of people from around the world who took action to save fellow human beings during times of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Dr. Yair Auron, resident of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, scholar of genocide studies at



Dr. Yair Auron and Dyana Rizek



The Open University and co-chair of the project, spoke at the ceremony. *"Anyone who risks his life to save another human being, and it doesn't matter who that human being is, for me that is the ultimate act of grace. Such individuals must be honored."* The Forest of the Righteous is connected to a worldwide network that has similar projects in Rwanda, Armenia and Poland.

Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center: Soul Food



Muslim, Jewish and Christian community members continued the tradition of sharing weekly pot luck Iftar Jamaie meals at The PSCC during the month of Ramadan. This year, the meals were used as an opportunity to express appreciation to fellow community members for their dedication to the village. Every contribution of time and resources to Neve Shalom/What al-Salam and its programs is a participation in peace. While religion can be a cause of conflict, spirituality can be used as a tool for peace. At the Pluralistic Cultural Community Center, the absence of a religious affiliation allows a person of any

religion to be viewed as an individual, and not as part of a separate group. Food for thought? If you are hungry for more you can read Annalena Groppe's thesis (available on wasns.org) based on her research conducted at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam's Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center.

School for Peace

Changing Lives

Dr. Nava Sonnenschein, Director of the SFP, has written a book profiling Jewish and Palestinian graduates of training programs at the School for Peace. Currently awaiting publication, [Conflict and Conscience: A Personal Journey to Public Action](#) contains 20 interviews of individuals whose lives were changed through a SFP course. ***"At Neve Shalom, I finally understood my connection to all the conquests and expulsions: not a legal connection, but one of silence, of acquiescence, of resigning myself to let it happen. It's about responsibility."***-Michael Sfrad, human rights attorney and SFP course graduate. Each interview chronicles the impact that the SFP courses have had on participants and those around them, distilling the experience of over 65,000 participants in the past thirty-seven years. It is a powerful reminder of the accomplishments of the SFP and a determining motivation to persevere for peace.



Change Agents in Action

The School for Peace Environmental Change Agents visited the 60 year-old Bedouin village of Umm al-Hiran, currently under threat of destruction, and spoke to the residents about their plight. They learned that the village was in need of a library. In solidarity with the struggle to prevent the planned destruction of the village by the authorities, the course participants and facilitators were able to establish a library for the village. Participants in the Environmental Change Agents courses partner with organizations, like COMET-ME, that work to provide green energy and water to unrecognized Palestinian villages in the Hebron Hills. These villages have established and sustained themselves for over half a century while unrecognized settlements less than half a mile away receive electricity and water. Now many of them are faced with the threat of destruction to accommodate new towns and settlements.



School For Peace: Shared Cities



Participants in the Shared Cities Change Agents course organized trips to the shared cities of Haifa, Be'er Sheva, Ramle, Lydda, Nazareth, Jaffa and Acre. An important part of SFP courses is taking the study of the group dynamic outside of the safety of the village and placing it in the real world. In Nazareth, participants had the opportunity to speak with deputy mayor Yousef Iyad and the Upper Nazareth city council. Every angle of the challenges of living in a shared city is explored to gain a greater understanding of the many obstacles and roads that lead to peaceful coexistence between Jews and Palestinians.

Participants in the UN sponsored Up-and-Coming Politicians course conducted a study tour in Jerusalem through the Ir Amim Association. They discussed social, economic and political issues impacting life in the city for its multiple religious, cultural and national groups as well as Jerusalem's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

NADI

International Ambassadors of Peace



For the ninth consecutive year, NSWAS youth participated in a three-week intercultural youth leadership program at the Artsbridge Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Nadine Nashef and Karin Shbeta used their experience and knowledge as youth leaders at the Nadi to help guide 30 Israeli, Palestinian and American participants through an intensive leadership program aimed at building partnerships and overcoming cultural differences. Using art and open dialogue, the program challenges preconceived notions of culture, religion and friendship.