

*Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom*

# *Primary School Newsletter*

*Winter 2014*

Dear Friends,

Starting the year as principal of the Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom Primary School has been very exciting and the first half of the school year has flown by, filled with activities and joyful events. With the opening of the New Year, I want to personally thank all of you for your support and love, which embraces the primary school, the students and the staff, giving all of us strength and hope for the future.



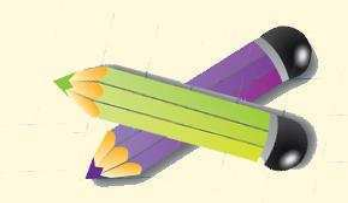
We want to up-date you on what has been happening at the school this year and have put together this newsletter to keep you informed. We hope you will enjoy it and share with us the excitement of the school year.

I'm also happy to inform you that our work with the Ministry of Education is bearing fruit and they are dedicated to work with us as partners to insure the school's future. With this in mind, I have begun recruiting new pupils for next year's kindergarten and first grade with the goal of increasing the number of students next year and 'growing the school' in the years to come.

In the mean time, many thanks for your ongoing commitment and support and best wishes to you and your families for the New Year.

Carmella,

Principal of the Primary School



# 31 years of beginnings



Monday, September 1: The Oasis of Peace Primary School didn't just open its doors to another school year, it opened its doors to 30 years of bringing Jewish and Arab children together getting to know and accept the other in respect and peace .

Among the bright-eyed first graders, some were from Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom itself, the remainder will be arriving every day from some thirteen towns and villages: Abu Ghosh, Ain Rafa, Beit Hashmonay, Gezer, Gizo, Harel, Mevaseret Zion, Karmei Yosef, Mishmar David, Lydda, Ramle, and Modi'in. As the children gathered on the front steps, forming a mini amphitheater, there was a mixed atmosphere of nervousness and excitement among them .

The opening ceremony began with each of the 26 new first graders being led in and introduced to the assembled pupils by a sixth grader. Each sixth grader presented the first grader with a gift and well wishes for the future. Wishes included "You'll experience peace here "and "You'll have fun at break times and make many new friends !"

Carmella Ferber, the new principal, then gave a welcome speech. Carmella joins us after five years as principal of a primary school in Bat Yam, and she brings with her over two decades of teaching experience, serving as a history teacher and department coordinator in various high schools and junior high schools across the country. She believes that a good school "is the beating heart of the community in which it sits, and which it serves, and in such a complex community of Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom the school must be maintained as a microcosm of coexistence." In her speech Carmella praised the 30-year experience of the school, which started a new movement of Jewish-Arab education with its founders Abdissalam Najjar and Ety Edlund, as she turned to Ety whose grandchildren were among the pupils .

## International Day of Peace

Over thirty years ago, the UN declared the third Tuesday of September to be the International Day of Peace, to study and strengthen the idea of peace. In 2001, thanks to the efforts of Jeremy Gilley, who visited WASNS during his campaign, the day of peace was also established as a day of non-violence, intercultural cooperation and global ceasefire and given the permanent date of 21st of September.

This summer, when the Primary School was asked by the Peace One Day Initiative to take part in the International Day of Peace, its first response was reserved and skeptical given the recent war. A situation in which people are suffering the direct consequences of an active conflict requires sensitivity. So when the WASNS School decided to participate, the events organizers, principal Carmella Ferber and homeroom teacher Reem Nashef also started to discuss how to best speak to the children about peace, in the light of the recent war. First, there were meetings with teachers, to instruct them and discuss, how to talk about

the subject in class and what activities could be planned. After that the teachers took a week to explain and talk to the students, why they are going to school in Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom, what stands behind the ideas and symbols of peace and how peace can be enhanced .

So when the 21st of September came, the children watched the movie of Jeremy Gilley of the Peace One Day Initiative ([www.peaceday.org](http://www.peaceday.org)), finding out about all the different peace projects in all corners of the world which were initiated for the International Day of Peace. And of course they sang songs of peace ,which they chose and prepared for in class. The children then painted together on the green grass of the school ground. They drew rainbows and wrote down sayings of peace and formed a dove with their pictures. They also handcrafted windows of peace, in which they wrote down their own ideas for peace and what they envisioned for the future. So when the day came to an end, children and teachers were fulfilled by the joys of the day, proud of the beautiful art and ideas they had created and new roots for peace had been planted.





## Student Elections

Dec. 9, 2014: Pupils of WASNS holding up their voter registration cards as they are waiting to cast their vote at the booth. On the next day, the new chairs of the student committee Ilia Jaber and Yuval Witz-Rabin as well as vice president Kusai Rayahi were announced to serve the students interests for the school year. Their winning promises in the preceding campaign were for more activity breaks and swimming lessons at the village pool, longer recess times and a week of students teaching teachers.

## Creative thinking with your mobile phone..

..that's what Roy Etinger, the school's new visual communication teacher, is calling his film classes for now. He is having the children work with their smart-phone and helps them to see it as something more than an instrument for taking a 'selfie' or playing games.

Roy studied photography and film in Israel and Spain and has been working in the film industry for the past 5 years. He speaks fluent Arabic and often collaborated with Palestinian teams and production companies. He decided to teach at WASNS Primary School, because he saw it as a place where he could help others use the "language of moving images as a bridge or some kind of a mutual territory".

His goal for the school year is for his students to introduce themselves through moving images and to produce a one minute film about themselves and their home, keeping in mind framing, storytelling and editing. But first things first! Right now, the children are playfully learning the basics, like holding a camera, shooting different angles of the same thing and editing, or as Roy puts it: "discovering the magic of putting two shots together and seeing the wonder it creates." So far, the children have already made many funny, scary and nifty short movies, including one about the rain, put together by videos the students shot during the heavy rainfalls in November.



Roy's desire to teach in a bilingual school, in both Arabic and Hebrew, and to expose the kids' minds to other, not necessarily verbal, means of communication, has already given him new optimism about changing something about the political reality surrounding him. He says, he doesn't see differences between his students that are based on nationality, but rather feels, the children in Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom cooperate on the basis of being children. He helps them with this cooperation by introducing a third language: the language of film.

## Reviens Vite! See you again, Ambassador Maisonnave!



On Monday, 22nd of September, we were honored to receive the French ambassador Patrick Maisonnave in Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom. Mr. Maisonnave was welcomed by a group that included WASNS co-founder Ms. Anne Le Meignen, new municipal chairman Mr. Adnan Manaa, Communications office staff Ms. Rita Boulos, Mr. Howard Shippin and intern Ms. Liat Tuv. They were also joined by francophone village members Prof. Yair Auron and Corrine Ben-Shabbat. On the walking tour of the village, they also visited the Primary School, where they were greeted by the principal, Ms. Carmella Ferber. The ambassador asked numerous questions about the school and visited the fourth grade English class taught by village member and teacher Ms. Raida Aiashe-Khatib. Mr. Maisonnave spoke directly with the children, asking how they felt at the school. All those who responded said they were very happy to be at the school, because it enables Jewish and Palestinian students to learn together peacefully and in both languages. Mr. Maisonnave showed great interest in the community and expressed a keen understanding of the issues with which it is engaged. He promised to return to the village for another visit in order to understand our work and goals in more depth. We are very appreciative and happy that the French ambassador chose to visit our village and hope that this will lead to further useful cooperation with the embassy.