



Oasis of **واحة السلام** Wahat al-Salam
Peace **נווה שלום** Neve Shalom

Newsletter - January - March 2021

INTRODUCTION BY SAMAH SALAIME, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT



The first quarter of 2021 is behind us. In Israel, if not in other places, the COVID-19 crisis seems to be passing. The country is still waiting for either a new government or new elections. In the Occupied Territories, Palestinians are preparing for their first national election in over 16 years. The changes around us do not stop and we do not stop working in Wahat al-Salam-Neve Shalom. We are initiating and promoting new projects that will make our community and the world a better, quieter and fairer place.

I am writing this to you at the beginning of the month of Ramadan, with the good news that the Education Ministry has now lifted all restrictions from schools. : Children will be able to learn as usual; they will be able to hug, play and enjoy activities together. How we have missed this!

I am happy to share this newsletter with a summary of our work over the past three months. It describes the re-opening of the Nadi and updates from the Primary School, the School for Peace, the Spiritual Center, the Art Gallery and the Garden of Rescuers. And, of course, it describes our efforts to meet the fundraising goal for rebuilding the School of Peace.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and joyful spring.

Best,

Samah Salaime

UPDATE ON REBUILDING THE SCHOOL FOR PEACE

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



Raising funds to rebuild the SFP building destroyed in the arson attacks this past September is our fundraising priority. With your help, we have already raised almost \$500,000! We urgently need to raise just over \$300,000 by June 30th, 2021, in order to secure a pledged donation of \$270,000 from a UK foundation. If we do not raise this amount, we risk losing the donation!!!

Our architects have come up with a bold design for the School for Peace – one that will sit in harmony with the beautiful Wahat al-Salam, Neve Shalom village and be a hub for promoting justice and peace activism in the region. We intend to construct the new building with materials that will be fire and damage-resistant, turning it into a symbol of resilience in the face of hatred and fear.

We must strengthen our efforts and reach out to all of our friends and supporters, and, indeed, to anyone who is interested in supporting the cause of creating dialogue and peaceful relations between people.

WITH YOUR HELP WE CAN REBUILD THE SCHOOL FOR PEACE!

Information on donating from all over the world can be found here: <https://wasns.org/donate>

THE SCHOOL FOR PEACE

An event honoring the work and ongoing contribution of Dr. Nava Sonnenschein

A highlight of the year's first quarter was an evening organized by the staff of the SFP in conjunction with Nava's family. The event brought together colleagues, graduates and friends. Guests shared stories about Nava's tireless efforts and dedication to justice and peace. Fifteen distinguished guests spoke live and on Zoom about Nava's work: how she has affected their lives and supported their contribution to advancing Jewish-Arab relations. The evening was hosted by SFP director Dr. Roi Silberberg. Nava said, "The event gave me new energy, reinforced by the love, respect and honor I felt by all who participated."



Face to face with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: university course at Ruppin Academic Center

The School for Peace has been running courses for Arab and Jewish students at Israel's top universities and other institutions for higher education for the past 30 years. Below is a link to a short interview with two participants, one Jewish and one Palestinian student, who explain the impact of the course, both during and after. Their experiences are extremely powerful, and these interviews demonstrate the need to make this course available to every student in the country.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV_3Z_qAVSg (Includes English subtitles.)

Other courses

Two courses continued from 2020; one to train conflict group facilitators and another for Jewish and Arab professionals from the field of performing arts. The artists' final project is to create a joint production that will be filmed and made available online.



[Facilitator Training Course \(1\)](#)
[Full Report](#)



[Facilitator Training Course \(2\)](#)
[Full Report](#)



[Change Agents Course - Leaders of Mixed Cities](#)
[Full Report](#)

Re-evaluating and updating School for Peace programs

During this quarter, senior staff worked with the youth workshop facilitators to update the methodology and content of the SFP's youth encounters. One of the main conclusions from evaluating the program was that additional time is needed for preparing the youth for their encounters.

From courses that we ran last year, we specifically learned from Palestinians participating in graduates' courses that we need to re-evaluate the Palestinian uni-national component of SFP programming. As such we used the time to evaluate feedback from participants and facilitators to ensure that the Palestinian uni-national component of the program answers the needs of the Palestinian participants.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The school started its recruitment drive for new students at the beginning of 2021. Two virtual open days on Zoom were attended by thirty families. Children from the 6th grade helped to explain and answer questions. Parents (without the children) were able to visit the school in person. Tours were arranged in capsules, according to government regulations on a Friday (when the school is closed).

Teacher training sessions were held over Zoom on how to teach effectively online. The training took place just as the third national closure came into effect. Teachers met regularly over Zoom to discuss the pedagogical approach of the school and how to reinforce the children's sense of belonging to the school.

In March, the children celebrated Purim. In accordance with COVID regulations, each class celebrated the holiday separately, in capsules. Another cause for celebration during this period was the installation of a second piece of playground equipment, which is proving to be a real success for all the children during breaktime.



Purim celebration

New playground equipment



PLURALISTIC SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY CENTER

During the first quarter, we planned and conducted the [International Rescuers Day Award Ceremony](#) and were able to begin the Mixed Religious Leaders Program. We look forward to updating you on this exciting new PSCC program in our next newsletter.

Other Events:

- [Film and live music performance](#)
- [Panel discussion with actor/filmmaker Muhammad Bakri following recent court ruling](#)
- Film Screening, "[The Dead of Jaffa](#)" a film by Ram Levy, followed by a discussion with the director, on March 3, 2021



UPGRADING THE GARDEN OF RESCUERS

With the generous help of the GARIWO foundation and the WASNS Friends Associations, we were able to perform a magnificent upgrade in the Garden of Rescuers. The works conducted included surveying and planning fees, stonework, ironwork, landscaping and electrical work. Read the [illustrated report](#) on our website.

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.



THE OASIS ART GALLERY

A new resident of the village, Rabia Qadi Barhoum, has created a new mosaic for the gallery, which is a beautiful addition to the artworks already on display in the courtyard. There are plans to add more art to the outdoor space. These last few months have been focused on repairing damage caused by the fire in September and networking with artists for future events.

The 5th grade was able to visit the gallery during this quarter and participate in a workshop of color and fun! During February the Nadi also participated in a range of art activities. The gallery continues to be open for the residents to express their creativity and is being used for dance, art drawing and after-school programs.



[Full report](#)

[Photo Album](#)

THE NADI YOUTH CLUB

Unfortunately, the Nadi was closed in January due to COVID regulations. The children were thrilled to return in February to the theater workshop group. These last two months, the children have met weekly and are aiming to perform together in a production at the end of the year. In February, art activities were organized in partnership with the Oasis Art Gallery. During March, the Nadi conducted a three-day Superhero Camp for 4th-6th graders. The children found their inner superhuman strength, as well as having lots of fun outdoors, cooking dinner in the woods and watching a late night movie together. A new counselor, Yuval Shunri, has joined the Nadi for six months to work with high school students. She is taking part in a program organized by our regional council, which provides scholarships for BA students within the region to work with children in one of the communities within the Council's jurisdiction.



HUMANITARIAN AID FOR GAZA

In December, we launched a humanitarian aid campaign for Gaza: The main objective was to help the people of Gaza deal with the coronavirus. The medical system in Gaza is collapsing under increased pressure, causing a shortage of urgent medical supplies and equipment. The corona crisis has added to the challenges and stresses on the health system, as well as those of daily life in Gaza, with essential supplies needed for the sick in short supply.

The community of Wahat al-Salam–Neve Shalom, together with our friends from around the world, successfully raised funds to provide special medical masks for patients suffering from COVID-19, as well as other basic essential items needed by the hospitals. In March, a delegation of doctors received permission to enter Gaza, following a full year of not being able to enter. Among the doctors was Dr. Raed Haj Yahya, a member of the village who volunteers with Physicians for Human Rights. During their visit, the doctors set up mobile emergency rooms, treated thousands of patients, and performed dozens of operations. The delegation also helped train local doctors living in Gaza.

The medicines and masks generously purchased by Italian, American and other friends from all over the world reached Gaza thanks to Dr. Raed Haj Yahya. Each year we try to maximise our support to Palestinians in Gaza through The Humanitarian Aid Project, with a particular focus on the hospitals. The next delegation is due in May and we hope we can continue to give more help. **Special thanks to all our supporters.**



AFTERWORD BY RITA BOULOS, CHAIR OF THE MUNICIPAL SOCIETY



On behalf of the newly elected municipal society board, I extend to you my warmest greetings. Thanks to all of those who have sent their congratulations and good wishes.

For the first time, the community has an Arab woman as chairperson, as well as a very gender-balanced and nationally-balanced team, in which both the 2nd generation of the village and our new families are well-represented.

The new board is already studying many large and challenging issues, some of which are described in my [recent interview](#) that appears on our website.

As always, the living Arab-Jewish village of Wahat al-Salam- Neve Shalom is what gives inspiration and lends experience to all of the educational work taking place here. I remain deeply committed to this work through my continuing role as director of the Visitors Center, and as a member in the Communications & Development team.

I will continue to be of service to you, our dear friends, whenever you need me. I deeply appreciate your support for the village, for its educational work and for the vision of peace that we endeavor to spread throughout our region and the world.

With my love and appreciation to you all,

Rita Boulos