



Annual Report

2022

Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom

Educational Institutions and Community

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A note from Rita Boulos Chairwoman of the Municipal Society



Dear Friends,

This is my second year in the position of Chairwoman, and they have been two very challenging years. I began during the coronavirus restrictions, and for me, that was a huge responsibility. There were other difficulties as well, but I feel that during this time I, together with my board and with the village members, managed to move some things that had been stuck in discussion for years.

The biggest of those, to my mind, is the development for the new neighborhood. This, in itself, entailed not a few difficulties, including work slow-downs during corona restrictions and a contractor who disappeared partway into the project. But the project is now on track, and moving forward day by day. I know, because I go to the site nearly every day to check on their progress. I hope it will be a matter of just a few months until we finish. I know that the families who intend to build their houses are waiting on pins and needles for the development to finish so they can get their plans approved and start building. Some of those families are renting small houses, or parts of houses, in the village, so that they can be a part of the village and their children can be a part of the educational system. For those families, it is super important to be able to see their family homes go up.

Over the past two years, I have promoted several ideas that will advance the village financially and socially. These have been approved by the Municipal Society board, and I hope to begin working on them in the near future. The first of these, and one that is dear to my heart, is an apartment building that will have small units for young people and senior citizens, together. I see this as a social value, mixing ages in one place, rather than isolating either group. The older residents might give up their homes in the village to their children with families, while the younger ones can live in the village without needing to own a home. That is, both will contribute to the diversity here not just of national groups, but of ages, as well.

The second is a "people's house," that is, a place where any group in the community can come together. The reason we call it the people's house is that we want everyone in the village to find a shared home there. Among other things, as the population grows, we need a place to bring us together once in a while. I am especially pleased with the 60+ club that meets there, when they are not off on field trips. It turns out that a lot of our seniors are still very active, in the community and in general.

The people's house is part of the "Friends' Bustan" (friends garden — the word bustan is the same in Arabic and Hebrew) we have been clearing and planting. It is really important to me that we honor those who stand with us and support us. By placing the names of our friends around the bustan, we will be letting the younger generations know that all these people believed/believe in our way, and helped us out of that belief.

One of my ideas has taken on a different form, due, in part, to financial constraints. I had dreamed of a large amphitheater overlooking the Latrun abbey and Shfela valley. But we Palestinians know there is more than one way to build your dream, and thus we will turn it into a youth project, and it will be graded and built a little at a time. In truth, it will have great value to us and to them when it is the work of our own hands.

This year we said goodbye to a few good friends, but one stood out: Hermann Sieben. Hermann was a friend when I moved to the village, years ago, and there is hardly a corner of this place that does not bear his imprint. He brought support for the Palestinian children's summer camp and humanitarian aid for Gaza; he built the hotel, including the lobby and dining room; as well as the volunteer housing; and he brought support for the primary school. He was active in the German Friends Association until the very end. Village members met a few weeks ago in the garden bearing his name to honor his memory.

Despite the challenges, I wake up every morning with the feeling that my life has purpose, that I am working for the community I believe in, and in which I live. I believe, with my entire soul, that only Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom can serve as a model of true peace, and we will one day show the way.



Rita Boulos

A note from Ariela Bairey Ben Ishay **Chairperson of the Association** **of Educational Institutions**



Dear Friends,

I have now served in my position for a year and a half, and I can say it has been interesting, challenging and rewarding. I have worked closely with my committee; each and every one has been active in leading change and advancing the educational institutions here in Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom. I have also worked closely with the heads of the institutions, and we have focused on cooperation, setting goals and working to meet those goals.

One of our biggest achievements was the building and planning of the Language Center in the primary school. Every day the kids saw this colorful building rising on the school grounds. I am proud of our dedicated coordinators, of the teachers and of the talented and motivated team who got the building built, the content and teaching format planned and the kids excited about learning language via a multitude of new and exciting methods. I look forward to hearing the language education products that result from the Center — to hearing Jewish and Arab kids speaking easily with one

another in both languages. The next stage will be to include adult language education courses within the Center, including pupils' parents and local community members.

We made further progress on the Peace library, following its renovation after it was damaged in an arson attack, including improving accessibility.

In addition, we made visible progress in rebuilding the School for Peace. This has been a long process, but I'm confident that 2023 will be the year that we finish the building and the SFP courses return to their natural setting.

The number of students in the school has decreased due to circumstances beyond our control, but the quality of our scholastic achievements have significantly improved. We have especially seen an increase in parents' participation, as well as in the quality of teachers' investment in the children at the school, especially in their homeroom pupils.

We have also seen greater cooperation between the different educational institutions. For example, the School for Peace staff is working with the primary school teachers helping them to improve their dialogue competencies and bilingual communication skills. The Pluralistic Spiritual Center screened a film for participants in a SFP weekend workshop during which many community members also participated; the Gallery gave art workshops to the primary school classes on environmental awareness and recycling.

We have also seen cooperation between the Association and the Municipal Society, including the Going Green project that is shared between the school and the village, and the security measures that cover both.

The Communications and Development office is undergoing some renewal of its own, with dear members retiring and new people taking their places. We wish those who are now joining us good luck in their positions. The Visitors' Center, which managed to keep working during COVID by hosting Israeli groups is now on the road to recovery. Last year, the majority of visitors were from abroad.

Finally, I am able to report that our financial situation is stable. Our total income is slowly growing, and this enables us to advance new educational projects and continue supporting old ones.

On a personal note, we know we are facing an uncertain future, in the country and in the world. It is our binational educational institutions and the support they receive from friends around the world that give us hope. This past year, the largest part of our funding has come from our Friends Associations, and we are grateful every day for their support. We promise, no matter what lies ahead, to keep working toward peace.

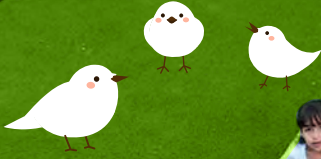
Best wishes,



Ariela Bairey Ben Ishay

Primary School

Learning respect for myself and others



“Maybe if I sit on the student council for the entire school, I can do more activities and really improve things.”

Muhammed Hasnin, Arab student council head



September:

The student council elections, held around the same time as the most recent national elections, were a true lesson in democracy for the kids. Each candidate for head of the student council (there are two winners, one Arab, one Jewish) presented their platform and campaign promises to the entire student body. The students took their voting responsibilities seriously and the new council, with boys and girls, Arabs and Jews, got to work planning new activities for break time and class events.

“I know there is a lot of responsibility in leading the student council. I wanted that responsibility.”

Itai Arbel, Jewish student council head



Mindfulness and identity:

When children can get in touch with their feelings and give them a name, they can learn to control them in the classroom. Mindfulness is a tool for children and teachers, as well, to help them work and learn together with others. When they can describe their identities and take pride in them, they can interact with others as equals. When a mixed class has fun together, the borders that separate them break down. That is why the beginning of the school year focuses on activities that include meditation, group projects, individual identity projects and students setting expectations for the new school year.

Year-Round:

Learning language: Planning and constructing the new language center was ongoing for most of the year. By the end of the year, the building was ready for furnishing with games, electronics, art and craft areas, books and more. Along with the physical construction, the two coordinators, one Jewish, one Palestinian, have been working with the organization Madrassa to develop content. All of the activities are based on the idea of “peer-to-peer” education. That is, the kids will teach one another through a variety of activities that not only make learning language fun, they will get the students to interact in a way that will carry on to break periods and throughout their lives.



Holidays:

When holidays fall around the same time, the children get a chance to celebrate them all and to think about the common themes and differences between them. Thus for Pesach, Ramadan and Easter, parents, teachers and children baked flat “matza” pitas, dyed eggs, had outdoor springtime activities, and then later met in the evening for an “Iftar” meal at the end of the day’s fast with their classmates. No bread for a week or fasting every day for a month: Which is harder?

Hannukah and Christmas were another opportunity to learn about holidays of light that fall in the middle of winter. The school, of course, was awash in colorful decorations and music.

June:

Festival of Hope: Coming right after the national days of Land Day, Remembrance Day, Independence Day and the Nakba, the Festival of Hope is a new tradition that brings a message that despite our histories and different cultures and narratives, we can build a future together. This year's festival was a large affair attended by families, staff, village members and friends. The highlight: a human "peace sign" captured by a drone from above.



***"I don't say he is Jewish,
he is Arab.
I say your name."***

Peace:

Living in peace, respect for others, equality. These are basic elements of the primary school curriculum, and they are expressed daily in every lesson, on the playground, and in art and music classes. That is why, when children in the school are asked to draw their dreams for the coming year, they most often feature peace doves and the words "Salam, shalom, peace."

Group togetherness:

Taking a number of kids from a bunch of different backgrounds and getting them to learn together as a group is a challenge for every teacher. And the more the kids are connected to their classmates and teachers, the more they will respect the boundaries and the more they will learn. That is why every class has group-building activities, including sleep-overs for the older classes, which the children plan themselves, special meals the parents bring in, puzzles and games that require the kids to work together, getting-to-know-one-another projects and more.

Olives:

Olives are central to the cultures of both Palestinians and Jews, and the olive festival is a way for the children to explore the importance of these trees while beginning to grapple with issues of sharing and respect for nature. This year, the school and parents community invited families, village members and friends for an afternoon of picking, pressing, preserving, crafts, eating, music and talks prepared by the older classes.



School for Peace

Bringing together different narratives



First Annual Alumni Conference

Old and new alumni, social workers, urban planners, mental health professionals, environmental activists, lawyers and more met in WASNS for the first annual alumni conference of the School for Peace. Participants enjoyed panel discussions, a performance and the core of the conference, small dialogue groups on issues that affect all professionals working in collaborative settings or shared society organizations.

The highlight of the conference was the presentation of several outstanding alumni projects, one of which received a monetary prize to advance their project.



Alumni

Graduates of the university dialogue courses came to WASNS for an intensive weekend dialogue session. These university courses, offered to students in the same track, help foster collaborative work and communication later on.

The alumni planners and architects forum, run by the School for Peace and the Arab Center for Alternative Planning, met in October to discuss projects, hear lectures and make plans for getting members and SFP alumni involved in planning on the local and national levels. Four ran for positions; one, Ameer Bisharat was ultimately elected to the National Committee for Arab Local Authorities in Israel.

“It was a beautiful, empowering experience to walk into the hall and hear people speaking both Hebrew and Arabic, all them working toward shared society.”

Dr. Roi Silberberg, Director,
School for Peace

“The fact that I heard the Palestinians in the group talk about their families and what they went through allowed me to think differently about the political situation in general, as well as to identify with them.”

“I realize that this trauma was transmitted through generations, although nobody really talks about it.”

Courses:

New courses:

Changes Agents – Tour Guides

Offered together with Zochrot, the course aimed to redress the fact that much of history — the Palestinian side — is erased from the standard tour routes in the country.



Simultaneous Translation

A practical course in simultaneous translation started in November and ran into the new year. This course, among other things, was intended to address one of the issues that arise in Jewish-Palestinian dialogue.

“The dialogue workshops improved my understanding of my neighbors’ narratives, as well as the different views on ‘my side’ of the conflict.”



Ongoing courses:**University Courses**

The 2021-22 school year saw dialogue courses being taught in six academic institutions, working with students in education, architecture, psychology, nursing, political science, and social and community sciences.

Facilitators:

Our courses are only as good as the facilitators that lead them. This year's facilitator's course was especially strong, and we will reap the benefits in years to come. It was taught in collaboration with Ajeec.



Mixed Cities

One of our most important courses, and one that leads to activism and reform in Israel's troubled mixed cities, this course was well attended by people working within those cities, in administration or leadership, for better relations and justice within their spheres.

Climate and Environmental Justice

The course has already been running for a decade, and it is more relevant than ever. The fifth course, which ended in March, 2022, involved 13 Jewish and 10 Palestinian, Israeli citizens who are environmentalists, educators and activists.

Project

Making Jaffa more egalitarian (Jaffa Horizons). SFP facilitators led a group of activists hoping to create a new platform for local activism, encourage new initiatives and develop collaborations with other groups in the city.



“That is how my pioneer dream sank into the depths of my memory, and a new dream awakened in its stead.”

From the final project of Adi Mor, presented in 2022 following the previous year's course, Change Agents in the Performing Arts

“And thus that image of myself riding off to battle on a horse expands until it gets rolled up together with the people against whom I am waging battle. But there is no clear distinction between good and bad.”

Communications and Development



In May we held an Annual General Meeting in the village, the first since COVID restrictions were eased. Despite the fact that we only had a long weekend to talk about everything that had happened and everything we had planned, the event was a resounding success. It was a chance to rekindle old friendships, make new ones and recommit to peace education.

Over the three days, participants stayed in the hotel and enjoyed its comforts. They heard about the School for Peace, primary school, Pluralistic Spiritual Center and village; they heard about aid to Gaza and connections within the PA; they had lectures and a tour of the contested Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem, and they had a chance to relax and enjoy performances in the evenings. The Friends Associations had an opportunity to report, as well, and they reminded us that none of our wonderful initiatives and projects would take place without the support of generous people and foundations around the world.

We were also able to travel this year. Samah Salaime attended the Swiss Friends Board meeting and that of the German Friends, along with Roi Silberberg. She also met with some dear American friends and made new connections in the US during a quick tour of the East coast.



Among the projects we turned our focus on this year:

- ***The primary school language center***

- ***Security***

The WASNS Educational Association is responsible for half the cost of the new security measures that we are sadly forced to install. The British Friends Association helped cover this cost, and we have now included the added expense in our annual budget.

- ***Going green***

The German Postcode Lotterie provided funding for this program, which included planting, recycling and environmental education in the village, school and NADI youth club. We intend to continue to make our already green village even greener in the coming years.

- ***The School for Peace***

The Mixed Cities program is a crucial one, for planners and municipal officials, as well as the alumni of this program.

General operating funds, scholarships, overhead:

These are the nuts and bolts of our every-day lives, and they are crucial to our programs. This includes much of the funding that comes to us from our Friends Associations, and we do not forget the significant contribution they make.

- The new year, 2023, will see an increased focus on the Pluralistic Spiritual Center, including renewing the interfaith program and seeking support for the new artist residency program.
- Early childhood center: For prekindergarten, as the number of young families grows and we need to take the volunteer housing back to its intended use.
- The Language Center will continue to be a central issue; some equipment and further development are needed.
- The School for Peace: We hope to support Alumni projects as well as courses.

The C&D office, in addition to the work it does in funding the projects of the educational institutions, began working on developing new projects and new outreach, including meetings, virtual tours, virtual events and more.

Visitors Center

The Visitors Center has begun to recover from the COVID shutdowns, but visits from outside the country are not up to their former level. Nonetheless, visits from inside the country remained strong, and there has been particular interest from groups of Palestinian citizens of Israel and from various educational groups.

Four missions from our Friends Associations stayed in the village, in the hotel, for a week, each: two from Switzerland, one from Sweden and one from the UK. In addition to providing talks, lectures and personalized meetings within the village and its educational institutions, the Visitors Center worked with them on logistics and setting meetings with other peace organizations in the country.

“I’m envious of the way that you have made your worldview into a true way of life. You are exceptional people who are ready to cope with acceptance of the other – not just in word but in day to day living... We hope your light spreads. We need it.”

Sarah, Kibbutz Ayelet Hashahar





2022 Expenses

Staff

\$1,092,989



Other

\$415,937



Building

\$451,665

Projects

\$326,030



Total

\$2,286,621

Income

Donations

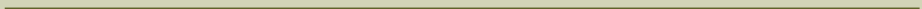
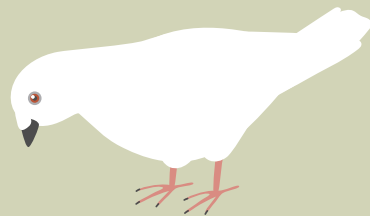
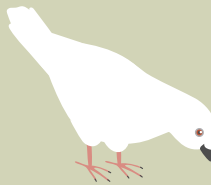
Earnings

\$1,762,434

\$476,501

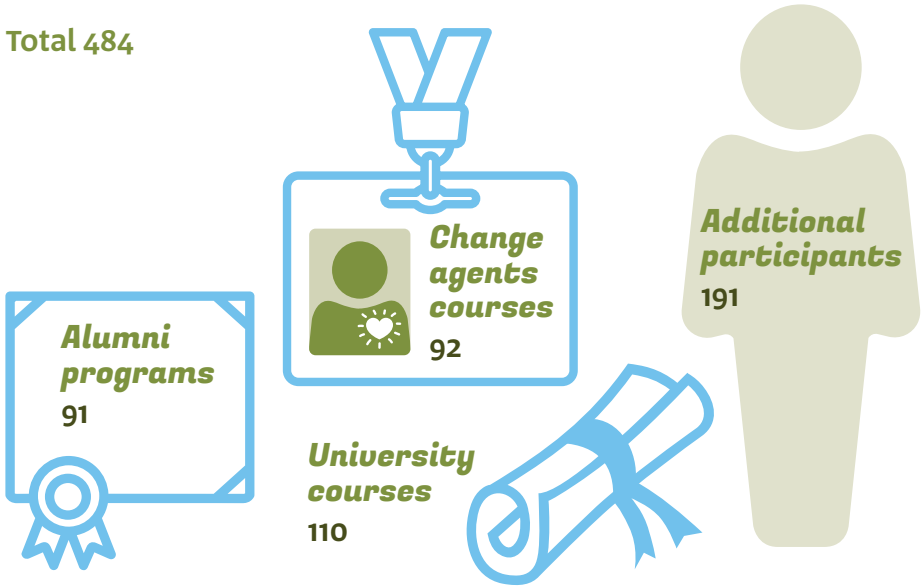
Total

\$2,238,935



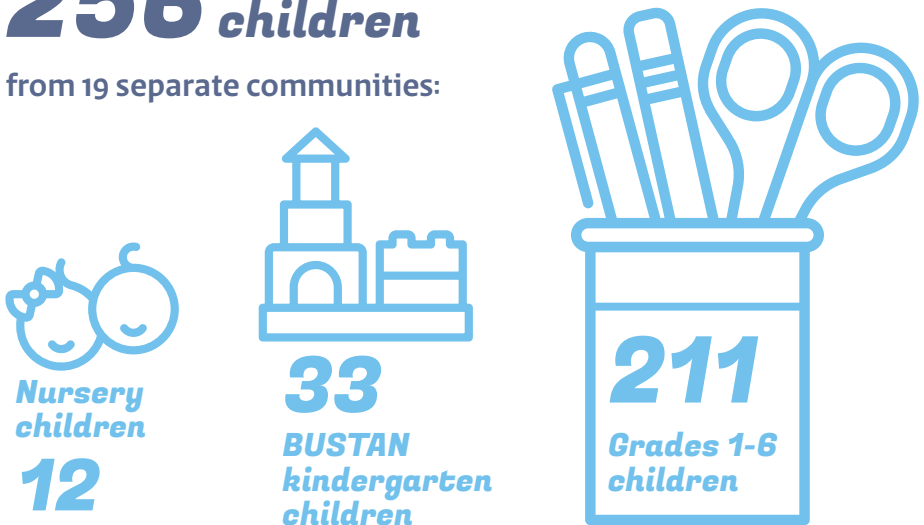
School for Peace participants

Total 484



256 children

from 19 separate communities:



Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center



1,200
Participants
in events



7,400
Outside participants
(including renting the space)



Taking the Lead

Einat Betsalel took over the PSCC in February. Einat is currently taking the PSCC in new directions and adding a new spirit to its events and programs.

Holidays

The PSCC is where the village comes together to celebrate. The Ramadan Iftar meal is a chance for all the village members to help their friends break their day's fast, to come together in a ritual steeped in sharing and sitting with family and friends.



Christmas/Hanukkah is another big holiday in the village, and this year, members of the three religions in the surrounding area, invited through the Interfaith Encounter Association, showed up to help celebrate. A group of nuns and children from Bethlehem came as well. In line with Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom tradition, the children and Santa Claus had a procession through the village, ending up at the spiritual center for a festive meal and fun performances.

Artists and performances

A number of performance artists were hosted this year through the PSCC, some through a pilot artist residency program. They brought their art to the village and went away inspired, in turn, by the village. PSCC coordinator Einat Betsalel hopes to expand this program in the coming year.

Among the performances was one for children that enchanted children and adults alike: the Jerusalem Train Theater troupe's *Once upon a World*.

Cinema in the Community

Films nights included special showings of *Children of Peace*, and *Junction 48*. The first is a documentary by Mayaan Schwartz, on growing up in WASNS. The second is the fictional story of a young man living in Lydda who dreams of becoming a rapper. The films, shown under the stars, were accompanied by talks with Schwartz, for the first, and Tamer Nafar, the rapper on whom *Junction 48* is based and who plays the protagonist in the film.

The participants in the **Interfaith** Series from the previous year continued their work, some of them implementing their projects as planned.

International Days

International women's day is one for solidarity, strength — and fun. Those attending enjoyed an evening of women's humor, and they were reminded that it is now women who lead the village, in most of the important positions.

International Rescuers' Day

(March 10) held on the European Day of the Righteous, honored Atefa Ghaffoury, a courageous Afghani journalist, and an organization, Ta'ayush, that works tirelessly to tear down walls, in a moving ceremony held in the Gariwo Rescuers Garden.

International Peace Day

(September 21) Holy Local Aliens, as well as friends from East Jerusalem and Ramallah were guests at the event, which was an evening full of activity in the Gariwo Rescuers Garden. The evening included workshops and a local version of *You Can't Ask That* (an Australian TV series adapted for Israeli TV), telling "everything you want to know about living in a binational village but were afraid to ask."

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

(November 25), was marked with a moving dance performance and discussion. Through movement, and later discussion, the two dancers spoke about struggles with body image, while the following discussion included stories of women overcoming abusive situations and statistics presented by Orit Sulitzeanu, Executive Director of the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel (ARCCI).



Nadi Youth Club



Despite changes in its staff, the NADI youth club offered a full range of activities to the village youth.

After school

The theater after-school classes have been going strong. Two classes, one for first-third graders, one fourth-sixth, met every week. By the end of the school year, they chose a play or performance, rehearsed it and put it on for parents and friends. Theater is so popular among the kids, a two-week theater summer camp was added in July, during which they saw plays as well as working on their own performance.

Special workshops

Dyana, the Oasis Art Gallery curator, offered regular art workshops for the kids.

The NADI kids had an orienteering day in the forest. After they had learned to find their way by reading paper maps and the terrain, the kids had a cookout to celebrate their success.

A place to hang out and be with friends: These afternoons are the most significant in our day. This is where we get to talk, to get up to day, play games and do things in the community.

Carpentry

To practice working on a group project, the kids built a wooden Christmas tree from scrap lumber.

The staff also arranged several fun day trips during school holidays.

Local council classes

Some of the kids enjoyed workshops offered by the local council, including rap, graffiti, and leadership and communication.

Emotional resilience

Counselors work with the kids of different ages on strengthening their emotional resilience and their ability to pay attention.

Bees

The beekeeping classes, supported by the Going Green project funded by the German Postcode Lotterie, were taken under the wing of Yohai, the nature teacher. Two groups of enthusiastic kids dressed head to toe in protective gear got together once a month and learned how to care for these creatures, and they received a sweet reward in return.



Nur Najar, a village member and daughter of one of its founders, started working with the Nadi Youth club in December, 2022.

Oasis Art Gallery



“The opening event was, for me, a perfect example of creation and inspiration, of love and caring, and political involvement.

I was amazed at the originality and the vision...”

Eldad Joffe



The **Oasis Art Gallery** may be set in the green, bucolic setting of Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom, but it is a modern, ongoing project with a message — one that is timelier than ever. Every exhibit is a group exhibit showing the work of Palestinian and Jewish artists together. But each also brings up a subject and asks questions on a burning issue and invites viewers to enter the discussion.

The current exhibit has taken that idea one step further: It invites visitors and children to enter the world of the artist and to think about their personal responsibility toward the planet while they are creating art from recycled materials. Entitled *Global Climate Scream*, the exhibit first opened with a day of learning and creating with the sixth-grade classes in the primary school. The children visited the exhibit with Dyana, who challenged them to connect with the artworks and to the message they believed the artist meant to convey. Dyana has since created shorter workshops for several visiting groups.

The exhibit opened again in September, and the courtyard was packed for an evening of talks and meetings with artists.

The exhibit evolved as the sixth-graders' art work was exhibited and incorporated into educational materials produced to accompany gallery visits. With the help of art teacher Ella Shippin, six classes from the village came to the gallery for special days on recycled art.

The decision was made to keep the exhibit open for a while longer. Visitors have come from the US, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as from all over the country. Some 900 visitors viewed the exhibit. It closed at the beginning of 2023, with a closing event.

“Art is a universal language shared by all living people on our only planet. It is a pathway to the heart, and with our projects, we attract a variety of people, many of whom might not have reached the village otherwise.”

Dyana Shaloufi Rizek,
Oasis Art Gallery curator



The upcoming exhibit will be:

Us and Them

an exploration of the way racism paves the way to fascism.

Building! Building! Building!



New buildings and renovations were finished, others have just begun. But anyone walking around the village this year could not help but be impressed at the way the village is growing and adding to its population as well as its educational institutions.



Primary School Language Center

The legacy of one of our founding members, Anne LeMeignen, and the vision of school principal Neama Abo Delu, were the impetus for building a new school building to house a language center. Designed by architect Shireen Manassa, the colorful building houses a cutting-edge language immersion program. The interior is planned so that various activities — games, books, a pretend market, computers, etc., will each have a “corner” devoted to that activity.

School for Peace

The School for Peace restoration is finally off the ground. Architect Shireen Manassa designed the new structure, and it is being rebuilt in two stages. Manassa's design sticks to the original outlines of the building and makes use, as much as possible, of existing infrastructure, thereby enabling construction to begin as soon as the plans were finalized. Among the innovations Manassa introduced into the new design is a skylight covering the entryway and central area, which will present a versatile space for small group meetings, coffee breaks and video viewing.

“The office block will be done by March or April, and the entire building complex will be finished and in use again by the end of the year”

Shireen Manassa, architect



New homes

An entire new neighborhood is in the early stages of construction. This is a project that was years in the planning, and one that had a long and difficult approval process. Thanks to Municipal Society Chairwoman Rita Boulos, the plans for the neighborhood were approved this year and the next stage began. This project will add 42 new, young families to the village membership. At present, the infrastructure — drainage, water, electricity, sidewalks are under construction and the families are in the process of getting their individual plans ready and submitting them to the local planning and building committee for approval.

Accessibility

The library building got an upgrade to make it accessible, including added parking, a new sidewalk and resurfacing the patio area to give wheelchairs traction.

Hotel

Once the renewal of the lobby and dining room was complete, hotel manager Rabiah Barhum undertook renovation of the rooms, a process that continues into the new year.

Roads

Two new roads are in the development stages. After two years of planning, says Municipal Society Chairwoman Rita Boulos, only police approval is outstanding, and she hopes to begin construction in 2023.

“People’s House”

This was an empty building near the Friends Garden. The renovation was done by people in the village, and it is already being used by various groups for meetings and get-togethers.

Housing for young singles and the elderly

This project is in its very first stages, with a tender put out for the surveying that precedes every project. The village has retained two lots, and the idea is to erect small apartments that will house a mixed-age population. The local council has already indicated it will support the project.



“It is much healthier to have the older members sharing their environment with young people. They gain, each from the other, so it is win-win.

Young people who are not yet established can stay in the village and older people can move into smaller, more comfortable spaces”

Rita Boulos, Municipal Society Chairwoman

Community



***“The ‘People’s House’
is really is a house for everyone”***

Rita Boulos, Municipal Society Chairwoman



We are welcoming new families into our midst, growing the community. In addition, we see the center of the community developing.



The Friends Garden

Situated near the village entrance, the Friends Garden is dedicated to all those who have helped the village and continue to help it today. In the beginning of January, the village children planted herbs around the bases of the olive trees there and added rows of vegetables on the side. They will continue to nurture this space, as will the village. Signs placed around the garden, on rocks and trees, honor special friends, and more signs will be added in the coming years. Further plans include adding ecological solar lighting to the garden. In the spirit of "going green," new walking paths were surfaced in wood chips from pruning in the village.



The **"People's House,"** next to the Friends Garden is now used by a variety of groups — new and old — in the village. These include Arabic lessons, a women's group and a group for young parents.



Christmas market

The hotel staff got into the festive holiday spirit this year, and put on a Christmas market. The village, along with thousands of visitors, came to eat fresh pita or pizza, drink hot drinks, buy gifts and listen to music or watch the final World Cup games on the outdoor screen. The several-day event was so successful, it will be repeated next year, and other holiday festivals may follow.

60+ club

A group of members, made up of village founders, established a 60+ club, and there has been a great deal of interest among senior members. The club focuses on enjoyable social activities, and they have already taken several trips together. This has also given rise to an archival project, including recording the stories of the founders. Inbar Zak, a student, has taken on the project.

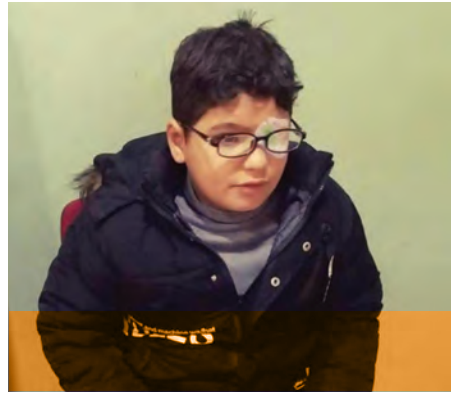
Security

Together with the Educational Association, and with the help of the British Friends Association and the local council, we installed security cameras around the village, installed a new gate and hired a security firm to guard the public buildings at night. This became a necessity for the village following several instances of arson and vandalism. There is a suspect in the last instance, but the police suspect he was hired and have not managed to arrest anyone else in connection with the arson. In the meantime, we are working to prevent any further attacks.

Solidarity

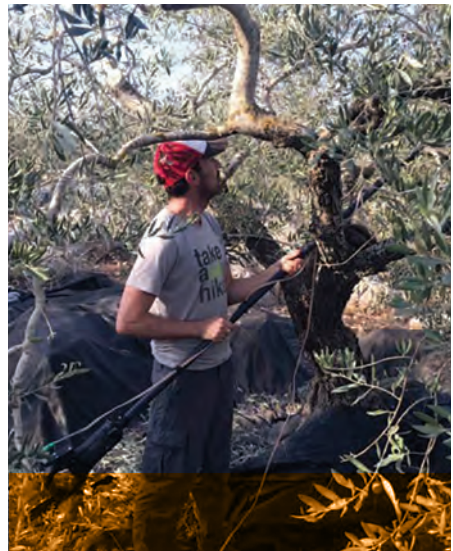
School children accompanied village members to Ein Rafa, Beit Nakuba and Abu Ghosh in December, after they were attacked by right-wing extremists, with cars lit on fire and racist slogans graffitied on walls. Rita Boulos, Chairwoman of the Municipal Society organized the solidarity demonstration. The children held signs that read: No to hate, yes to peace.

Village families also drove to the ODT during olive picking season, in October, to assist in the picking.



Humanitarian Aid

As in previous years, the American and German Friends Associations assisted us in getting humanitarian aid to those in need, particularly in hospitals in Gaza. One project we helped support is working on saving the vision of children with kidney disease, who sometimes need complicated surgeries and treatments.



Contacts and Support

Contact us:



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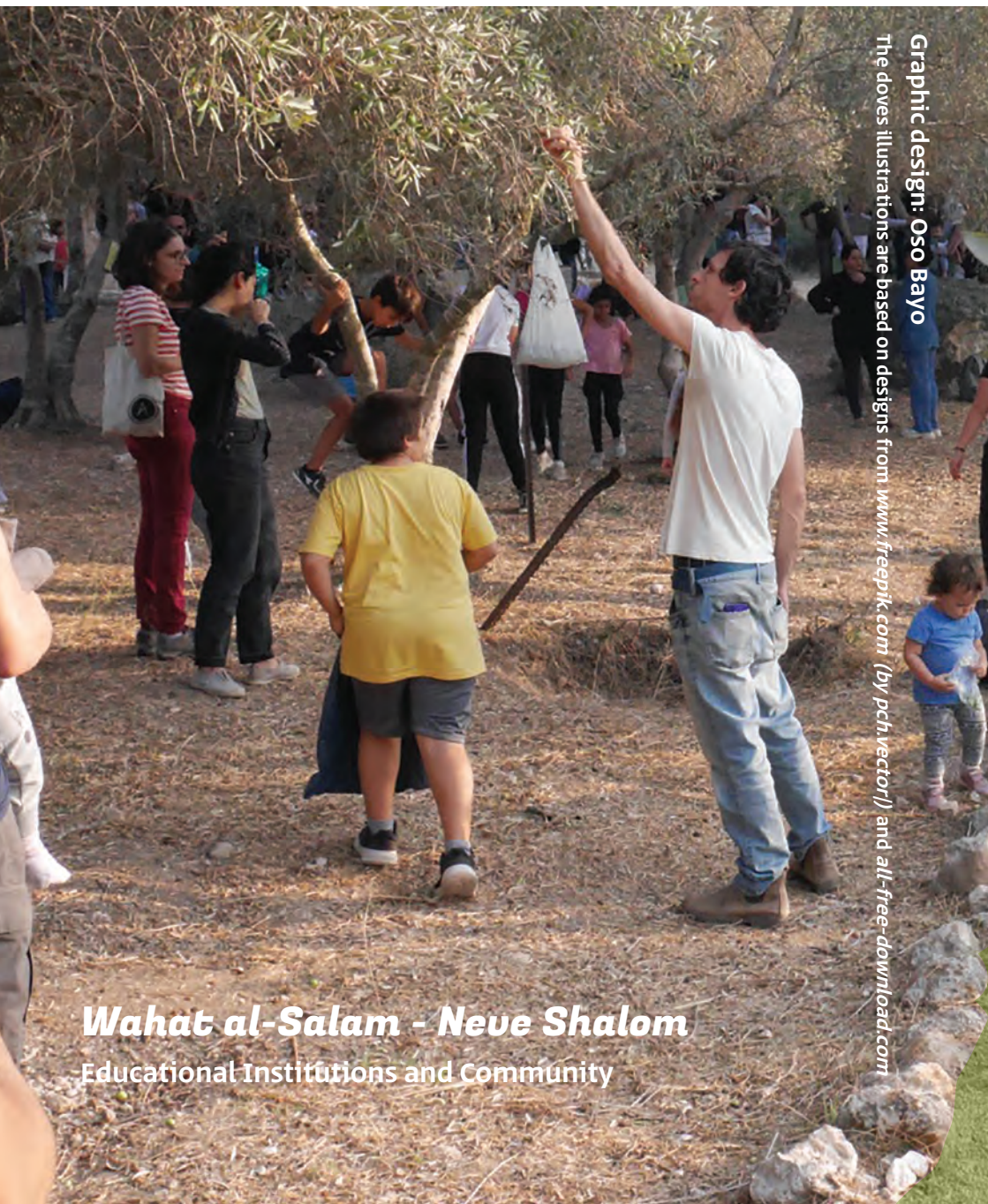
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