Rawdat El- Zuhur Newsletter

December 2016

Dear Friends:

A few days are left before we bid farewell to 2016, and welcome a New Year, with the hope that it will carry with it good news for our region and the world all over. We have seen enough violence, destruction and violations of human rights for too long that we yearn for justice and peace for all, and especially for those young children, so that they will not lose hope in a brighter future.

We want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continuous support, and we hope we can always count on you to make a difference in the lives of those children.

With warm greetings and best wishes for a Joyful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Abla Nasser — President

Raeda Jasser — School Principal

New Admissions

Fifty three new children mostly in the kindergarten were admitted to Rawdat El-Zuhur at the beginning of the new school year in September.

New Appointments

Four new teachers were appointed to replace teachers who had retired at the end of the scholastic year 2015-2016

Tala Siam: English teacher

Nawras Maragha: Kindergarten teacher

Mais Ghosheh: Arabic teacher for grades 4-6

Claire Ghazzawi: Music teacher

Shatha Dajani filled the new position of a social worker. Due to the stressful conditions under which the Palestinian community lives, the school realized that it was very essential to hire a full-time social worker. Shatha is already following up on the behavioral problems of the children and is trying to provide them and their parents with the necessary support to assist them in resolving the many challenges they face, especially in Jerusalem. With loving care and music to lift the spirits, Rawdat El-Zuhur continues to be a haven for those children.

An unexpected resignation:

The staff and children were very sorry to see Mrs. Rana Khaldi Qutob resign after the long years of work with dedication and loyalty as the Sponsorship Coordinator. However, we appreciated her choice to be a full-time home maker, and wish her and her family, and especially her children all the best. Ms. Randa Gharfeh has been appointed recently to fill that post.

Election of the Mothers' Council:

Along the years the idea of a Parent-Teacher Council ended up being limited to the mothers, who continue to be more committed and more available to serve. This Council's purpose is to involve the parents in the educational process, and to provide support and to assist in planning and implementing some of the school's activities and fund-raising events.

With the end of the three-year term of the previous Council, the following mothers were elected for a new term, which also includes the school principal and the social worker:

Samiha Quteineh

Hiba El-Shurafa

Noureen Abu Zeid

Iman Seyam

Narmeen El-Haj

Nisreen El-Dissy

School Projects:

A joint project with Princess Basma Centre

The School is working with the Princess Basma Centre on a joint project "Improving the Livelihood conditions for the physically challenged persons in Jerusalem" which is funded by The European Union, and Diakonia. The project aims at developing educational and rehabilitation services to incorporate students who are hyperactive and with attention deficit disorders. Therefore, strategies are planned in coordination with the students, teachers, and parents in order to set an individual plan for each and every student according to his/her need.

Positive Education for Parents in their daily life

Under the supervision of the Palestinian Counseling Centre, this program aims at organizing meetings with the parents around the issues of positive education and providing them with tangible tools for conflict resolution between parents and their children. The program also aims at finding a suitable and effective alternative for physical and emotional punishment, and to increase parents' knowledge about Child Rights in a positive method.

Music

For those who do not know it, music was the first item introduced at RZ in its early stages when it was catering for destitute girls on the streets. A manual gramophone providing music helped in lifting the spirits of those young girls. We have been blessed for the last few years with Bassem and Muna Hishmeh Foundation who supports the Music and Art project at Rawdat El-Zuhur. The approach of the project is holistic and thus it works with children from different angles and through different activities of art, music, folkloric dance, special education, psychological intervention, speech therapy and counseling sessions. This project works on giving the school children a chance to build their skills in self-expression. The project also provides the children with a space to dream and to brighten up the stressful lives of those marginalized children.

The Library

John Scott, a long-time friend of Rawdat El Zuhur has kindly offered to assist in reviving and supporting Rawdat El Zuhur library. The library project will include special programs and activities such as workshops for children and their parents about the importance of reading and creative writing, theatre and drama, organizing book events exhibitions, and reading competitions, and other related activities in cooperation with local writers, and scholars. For this specific project, Rawdat El Zuhur will hire a part-time staff member.

Healthy Food Program:

The school is always mindful that the children should develop good eating habits. Therefore, a program for selling food has been launched and will continue to be part of the school policy. The healthy food items include baked goods, sandwiches, fruits and vegetables, corn, and sahlab, a hot winter drink with a milk base.

Dr. Amin El-Khateeb Scholarship:

In memory of Dr. Amin El-Khateeb who had served the Jerusalem community for many years as head of the Charitable Societies, the school board decided to offer a scholarship in his name starting next fall. However, the school has already started receiving contributions from the community towards that scholarship. Dr. Khateeb was known as the poor peoples' doctor, and was a national icon. Bless his soul; may he rest in peace.

Celebrating Birthdays:

For children all over, celebrating a birthday is always an exciting event.

Yet one cannot but think of the many children in our region, who are not privileged to remember such an occasion. However, the school has decided to introduce once again the celebration of children's birthdays which has been on hold for many years. One celebration will take place for the birthday children of each month in each class with their class teacher. So we expect many celebrations and many happy birthdays and wishes for a peaceful future for those children.

Volunteers:

Mrs. Deane Rundell Bellinger, a volunteer from the USA, sent to the school through the Global Ministries, spent the month of October at the library. She was a great help as she was able to register all the new English books, and also participated with the children in the Olive picking activity. At the end of the month the school expressed its appreciation for her work with a special certificate and a piece of Palestinian embroidery.

Events and Activities:

Palestinian Heritage Day

On October 7, the Palestinian Heritage day, the 5th and 6th graders visited Dar Al-Tifl Al-Arabi Museum in Jerusalem where they were acquainted with a large variety of cultural artifacts. The purpose of the visit was to encourage the children to appreciate the importance of one's cultural heritage and how to preserve it. The visit was concluded by an art workshop with the children.

Olive picking:

Under the theme "We are as steadfast as the Olive tree" and in cooperation with Armaa' Association in Jerusalem, which aims at the holistic development of the child, the children and their teachers, joined an olive picking activity which took place in Beit Hanina, north of Jerusalem. The activity included Storytelling about the olive tree and its importance and preservation as well as its relationship with the Palestinian people. After picking olives, the children were offered a traditional Palestinian breakfast and some of the olives that they had picked to take home with them. The event was concluded with popular traditional songs and face painting.

Science Day:

Sixty two students from grades 4- 6 celebrated the Science Day in Palestine for the year 2016. This event was sponsored by Al Qattan Institute at the National Theater (Al-Hakawati) where they attended a play pertaining to science and performed some experiments.

Celebrating November 15:

November 15 is an official holiday in the Palestinian Territories commemorating the declaration of Independence, which we hope will be truly realized one day. So, on the 12th, the students and staff gathered in the school hall for a short program which started with the National Anthem, followed by a moment of silence in memory of the Palestinian martyrs and in solidarity with the prisoners. After a healthy breakfast the children celebrated with a symbolic traditional Palestinian wedding to emphasize their heritage and traditions. By the end of the celebration, all the children were wearing T-Shirts with the colors of the Palestinian flag.

Educational and Amusing Trip:

November 16, was a special day for all the school. The Nursery, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades went on a trip to Tzuba Amusement Park where they spent a day of play and fun. Whereas, grades 3-6 went on a memorable trip to Sourik village where they walked through the natural cave which was discovered in 1968. Embraced by the Western Mountains of Jerusalem, the cave is known as the crystal cave due to formation along the many years of stalagmites and stalactites in fabulous shapes. Afterwards, the children went hiking in Sattaf, one of the abandoned Palestinian villages, near Ein Karem town. A charming village with a fabulous view of agricultural and mountainous spaces and water streams which spout from inside the rocky caves. The children walked through the caves with flash lights in their hands. It was really an amazing adventure for them.

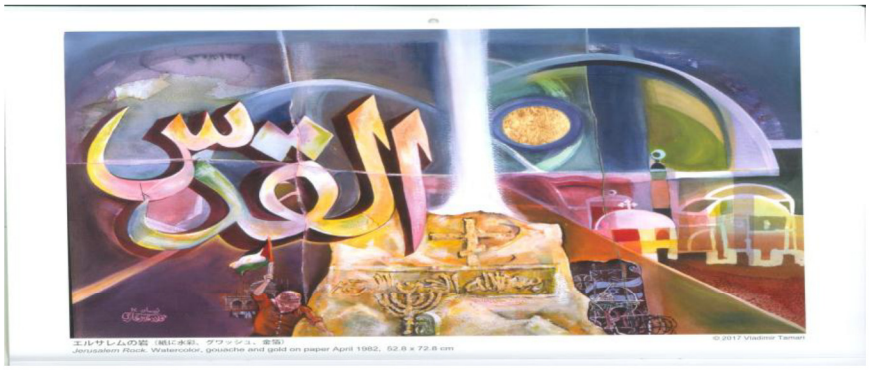
Festival of Colors:

At the end of each month, a color festival is organized for the nursery and kindergarten. Children are asked to wear one specific color that matches the topic of the month. Green and yellow to match the month of Autumn and the Olive picking season. Orange introduced the season of citrus fruits.

Keeping the children warm:

John Scott, a long-time friend of the school, realized how cold the building can be in the winter season. During his last visit in October he made a commitment to provide fuel every winter for the heating system, so that the children and staff can stay warm and function better. All of us at Rawdat El-Zuhur are ever so grateful for his generous initiative. God bless him.

A Calendar in support of the School



Thanks to the 2017 Calendar Project (Japan) initiated by Misako Nagasawa, in cooperation with the Campaign for the Children of Palestine (CCP), a Japanese NPO, which allocated some of the calendars for the benefit of Rawdat El-Zuhur. What makes those calendars very special for us is that each month carries a painting by the renowned Palestinian Artist Vladimir Tamari who lives in Japan but his heart is still in Al-Quds. It is worth noting that CCP, the forerunner and the major group of Japanese movements to stand close to the Palestinian people, has been providing support for children in education, health and social services, in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon for over 30 years.

Christmas Holidays:

During the last week before the Christmas Holidays, the upper classes were busy with their exams. However, the school invited a local kids theater group to perform a puppet show for the younger children to brighten up their day.

And as usual on the last day, the children welcomed Santa Claus who had small bags of chocolates and candy for each child.

The school principal thanked the staff and children for their cooperation, and wished everybody a happy holiday for Christmas and the New Year.

Guests

It is always a pleasure for both the staff and children to welcome guests. The following guests were at the school during the first term.

27 September 2016 Bishop Satoris from the US with a group 0f 33 persons.

5 October, Rev. Brian Grieves, from Hawaii and his group, Becky Burns, Maureen Shea, Blair Parry-Okedon. The children were delighted with the miniature koalies from Australia that Blair clipped on their tiny fingers.

24 October Mr. John Scott from the UK

26 October Neville Usher and Tracey Walsh from the UK