



September 2011

Dear Friends,

I started my new position as Executive Director a few months ago, excited to take on a bigger role in this organization that I had served for more than three years. A lot has been accomplished thanks to supporters such as you since the mid-1980s, when a few believers thought the American people ought to know about a small community of Jewish and Palestinian families living together in peace in Israel.

I know that together we can do so much more: not enough people know about the "Oasis of Peace." Not enough children attend the first ever bilingual, binational and multi-cultural Primary School. Not enough Israelis and Arabs participate in binational encounters at the School for Peace to learn how they can impact the conflict in a positive way. Not enough community and religious leaders come to discuss their traditions and ways to work together at the Pluralistic Spiritual Center.

For a decade, the "Oasis of Peace" has aspired to create a program that would integrate its 35 years of experience and knowledge at the grassroots level and share it with a global audience. The new Peace College opening at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is a realization of this dream and offers new ideas, extraordinary vision, and hope. A natural next step in the evolution of the work of the "Oasis of Peace," the Peace College will build on its expertise to expand its impact internationally.

Through courses and training programs for students and professionals from around the world, the Peace College will connect individual values to civic consequences by creating a peace education program that deepens knowledge, shifts attitudes and builds skills for a new generation of peacemakers. Deanna Armbruster, our former Executive Director, is now the American Friends' Honorary President in charge of developing the Peace College in partnership with the village.

As we are looking for ways to strengthen these life-changing programs, I am asking you: have you told your friends and family about Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam? Could you tell your local (or national) media about the Palestinian and Jewish children growing up together as equals in the "Oasis of Peace?" Will you help us come to your community? And finally, will you give the extra dollars that will make a project happen?

My ambition, for all of us who believe in a brighter future for the region, is to come together to make change possible. I hope you will join our efforts, contact us with ideas and make the largest contribution you can today.

With gratitude,

Perrine Vaillant
Executive Director

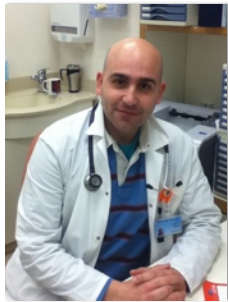
American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam



Sagi and Suliman share their experience of living together in peace

Sagi Frish is 31-year old, and studies Islamic Middle East History and International Relations at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he lives. Sagi was among the first children to be born in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (NSWAS). Suliman Boulos, 31 years old, lived in NSWAS from the age of 10 and went to medical school in Germany. He is currently a second year resident at the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

Growing up in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam



Suliman: "The impact of growing up in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam was amazing for me, it changed my world from one end to another. I look at the conflict in a different way than other Arabs living in Israel and of course different from Arabs living in the West Bank and Gaza.

"The Primary School was an important part of this change that happened in my way of thinking and the person I am these days. I always tell people that the fact that children can grow up in NSWAS makes a big difference from the outer world, that we only realize after we become adults."

Sagi: "For me, growing up in NSWAS is intertwined with being enrolled at the Primary School. The school had a central place in our lives as children and also in the life of the community. Special programs at the school, such as celebrating holidays of the different religions together, were a central

part of the village social life.

"The school molded me as the person I am today. It made me more sensitive to the complexities of the reality I live in, where two nations are living together. And it has allowed me to develop my own Israeli-Jewish identity next to learning and becoming familiar with the Palestinian national identity, culture, Arabic language and learning about Islam and Christianity."

Experiencing the world outside of the "Oasis of Peace"



Sagi: "First, let me say that the outside world enters and influences NSWAS. The village is very different but it's not isolated. The reality of conflict is felt strongly in NSWAS but the community has the ability to deal with the conflict in a constructive way. I see myself as an Israeli Jew; the village has allowed me to build a positive way for my narrative: I can keep and develop my identity but still give room to the other identity and work together with Palestinians in order to create a better reality."

Suliman: "For people outside the village it is hard to understand our way of thinking, many people tell me that we are living in a dream and not in reality and that we are far from reaching real peace between the two people. Actually this gives me more confidence in what we believe in and that our way of living in NSWAS is the right way. I lived the experience and I know the impact of living in

NSWAS on me and how it changed me, so I am sure it was the right way no matter what others claim or say. Many times we have to stick to what we believe in, not because we are stubborn, but because we don't think that war is the way, as history showed us too many times.

Continues page 2

Adopt a class this fall!

This school year, you have an opportunity to personally take part in the global movement to create peace between Jews and Palestinians: Adopt the 1st grade of the Primary School and follow the children as they grow in this unique school over the years.

These twenty-five 6-year olds are our common hope for a better future in the region, and together with their teachers you can ensure that they receive an education that respects their culture and traditions as well as that of their comrades.



Learn more at www.oasisofpeace.org/adopt-a-class

Because you believe in Peace.

Opening the way for new impact in peacebuilding

Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is opening a **Peace College**. The educational work of the community and the daily life experience of living in a mixed Palestinian-Jewish village provide the ideal context for studying the grassroots peacemaking experience. A Master's degree and short term training courses (2-12 weeks) will be offered to local and international students and professionals. The goal is to prepare an international cadre of skillful, reflective peace builders to bridge relations on individual, group and community levels in a wide range of conflict scenarios.



The Peace College will feature both residential courses and an intensive interactive web-based online program. The campus already includes a School for Peace, Primary School, Pluralistic Spiritual Center, Goodwin-Eisenberg Auditorium and the Fred Segal Friendship Library, a state of the art facility opened in spring 2010, will be home to the college.

Peace College programs will challenge students to explore theoretical concepts within the real-life work and practices of the "Oasis of Peace" and its educational institutions. The community is a laboratory for studying conflict and the realities of building equality. It is an opportunity to bring the experience of the community to all types of conflicts. It offers a

unique, critical perspective from the micro to the macro levels and will provide skills and tools for active engagement, teaching a new generation how to make substantive change as peacemakers.

AFNSWAS is seeking U.S. university, college and professional partnerships for the Peace College. Please contact Deanna@oasisofpeace.org to explore opportunities for engagement.



Their approach to conflict resolution

Sagi: "Growing up in NSWAS means not only believing in beautiful ideals but trying to apply these principles in daily life. I have learned that if you strive to follow principles of equality, democracy, dialogue, acting together, in spite of mistakes and difficulties, you can make a difference. You have to hold to your beliefs that it can be done even when it is difficult to reach positive results. NSWAS does give you this strength because it proves that the effort has meaning, and that it can and it will contribute to create a better future.

Suliman: "During my work at the hospital in Jerusalem, I treat all kind of patients, including religious Jewish patients, and none of them are shocked to meet an Arab like me - a person they can talk to without fear. The real change sometimes comes in an indirect way, and also lasts much longer. I am not saying that everything is solved by the fact that I grew up in NSWAS, but it gives me the tools to manage many difficult situations in the outside world.



"I believe that the only way to solve this 64-year conflict is through trust: when people trust each other it is much easier to make compromises, and reaching this point is the hardest in my opinion. I don't have solutions, but I am sure that killing each other won't solve a thing."

What it means to live in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

Sagi: "The most meaningful is to grow up as children together. Your Jewish or Palestinian identities don't disappear when you grow up together - we deal with them all the time - but we have a strong belief in political partnership and the need for a change in reality. But when you grow up together you have something which goes beyond political views and ideological beliefs. You have a deep personal connection which creates a mutual commitment that goes beyond and is deeper than political partnership.

"Last year when I turned 30, a group of my good friends from the village came to congratulate me. While we sat together I suddenly noticed the sound of Hebrew and Arabic mixing, and the unique atmosphere between us, and it made me feel proud that such a place is my home and my community."

Read more at www.oasisofpeace.org/voices-from-the-village



The American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is a not-for-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status under the Internal Revenue Code.

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam
12925 Riverside Dr., 3rd floor ♦ Sherman Oaks, CA 91423
Ph: (818) 325-8884 ♦ Fax: (818) 465-9498
afnswas@oasisofpeace.org
www.oasisofpeace.org