



April 2011

Dear Friends,

Hearing from people who have been supporting Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam for years is always a good reminder of how **the “Oasis of Peace” remains a unique place in the world** that turns ideals of equality, friendship and respect among Jews and Palestinians, Arabs and Israelis into reality. I feel honored to share what two of our donors feel about the village and I hope they will inspire you to support the programs of the “Oasis of Peace” today.

“I was first introduced to Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam in 1992 at a presentation in Jerusalem where Father Bruno Hussar spoke about the village. I admired his work and knew I had to visit the village: that visit cemented my love of the village and its work.

“As a Palestinian-American having a strong connection to Israel (my birthplace is Nazareth), I have always wanted to find a place where Jews and Palestinians could live together. I found that in NSWAS, a village where each language, culture and nationality are equally accepted and respected. In a country where Arabic is one of the official languages but not spoken by the majority of the population it was inspiring to find this village where Arabic is spoken equally with Hebrew. Also in a country where segregation is practiced in the education system it was exciting to see children learning together with the teachers speaking in their native tongue. One outcome, after all these years, that really motivates me today to continue my connection with the village, is the fact that some of the students who have graduated from the primary school have challenged the Israeli Education system and achieved their right to continue studying together in high school.

“With all the turmoil and attempts by the Knesset to pass more discriminatory laws, the fact that NSWAS continues to grow and challenge the status quo gives me hope for the future. For all these reasons, and more, I will continue to support and promote the village for as long as I am able.” – *Rola K.*

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“Over the years thousands of people have donated to the American Friends of NSWAS, each for their own unique constellation of reasons. I know that my personal history and my Jewish heritage have played a role in my decision.

“I lost my grandparents and two of my aunts in the Holocaust, and my parents, my sister, and I were fortunate enough to escape from France after the Occupation in the fall of 1940 and emigrate to the U.S.A. During my teen-age years I became an idealistic Zionist who trained to live in a kibbutz. Rather than

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joining a kibbutz, I went to college and became a psychologist, but my connection to Israel remained. My only sibling, Nora, moved to Israel in the seventies and raised two daughters there. My dad joined her in the nineties when he was in his nineties. Not far from the Village is a large cemetery where he and my sister are buried.

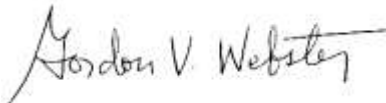
“These parts of my history connect me to Israel and, in a way, to the Village. They do not however, explain why I’ve been a donor since I first learned of its work seventeen years ago. Human rights have been a theme for me since I was a child. I linked together Jewish resistance to the Nazis and the consequent establishment of Israel as an example of an oppressed people fighting for their right to exist. During the fifties and sixties the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. inspired me. International examples of people striving for their rights earned my support and respect.

“The Village has always been a place where the rights of two peoples to self-determination are honored. It is a unique community in that respect. Where else in the world do you have two nationalities, each harboring animosity towards the other, bringing up their kids and living together? Respecting their differences, rather than being angered by them. This is more than affirming human rights - it is a living example of the good that humans can do.

“As a Jew, and as a person aligned with human rights, I’m gratified that this extraordinary place exists. I financially support it for the reasons described above. I ask that you reflect and discover what may move you to do the same.” –
Frank R.

As the President of the Board of Directors, I am proud that, in spite of the difficulties faced both by the “Oasis of Peace” and the American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, we are able to keep our donors inspired and dedicated to a better future for the region. *Please make the largest gift you can today to further Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam’s impact in the region.*

In gratitude,



Gordon Webster
President

Spring 2011

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam



A season of celebrations at the Primary School



Everyday during the week of March 13-17, the children of the Primary School learned about and celebrated the Jewish holiday of Purim – one of the children's favorite holidays. The Jewish and Arab children learned about the Biblical story of Esther, and especially emphasized the giving of gifts (*mishloah manot*) and made special dishes for their school lunch. During the week, the timeless stories of fear, courage and justice, whether they were historical or contemporary, were told throughout the school days. As part of the fun of Purim, each day of the week was given a different theme (pajamas, colors, fairytale characters) and the children came with fancy dress. The children decorated the class room doors according to their own ideas which included footballs, witches and Snow

White and they played various games, according to the day's theme. The Art from Recycled Materials class, a centerpiece of the Primary Schools' commitment to developing environmental awareness and activism, was responsible for helping the children make many of the costumes, props, art work and greetings cards from recycled materials. On the final day, the children and their parents made a special effort to dress up for the big parade, while the children of the 6th grade exchanged gifts with the first grade class.

Shortly after, the children commemorated Land Day, a day when Palestinians all over the world remember their connection with the homeland. However, as with Holocaust Day, this is one of the national days that the Jewish and Palestinian children of the school commemorate together. The teachers organized activities adapted for each grade: the children created a lexicon with words such as 'home,' 'garden,' 'mother,' 'homeland,' 'roots' or 'rights;' and built a diorama with hand-made houses. They learned about the identification with the land as a human right around the world, and joined in a range of activities that included garden and olive tree planting, art work and the wearing of traditional costumes.

The philosophy of the school is to use the national days to strengthen the ideals of mutual understanding and education for democracy. With the exception of Memorial Day, Independence Day and Nakba Day, during which some of the activities are conducted separately, the school works to commemorate these days together, knowing that it is just as important for the children to understand each other's national identity, as it is to understand their religious and cultural identities, and that sharing each other's hopes and fears in an environment of trust, will foster a more secure and inclusive future for all.



Because we believe in Peace.

The School for Peace and its partner create change

120 Jewish and Palestinian journalists, environmentalists and up-and-coming politicians have now started the new "Change Agents" program in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and Ramallah. Over the years, the School for Peace's pioneering program has evolved to become more impact-oriented and further develop the participants' skills to create meaningful changes in their workplaces and communities toward a better understanding between the two sides, greater respect for human rights, and peaceful solutions to the conflict.

The program is developed through a partnership with Tawasul, a nonprofit based in the West Bank, which focuses on creating and developing democratic and communication between all levels of society by strengthening the grassroots movement.



Woman journalists during a binational workshop in Aqaba, Jordan



"Creating Change Agents: Israelis and Palestinians in Dialogue and Action" is made possible with the generous support of USAID and the American People in cooperation with the School for Peace at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and Tawasul.

Helping Palestinian women raising from poverty thanks to sheep

Last fall, the American Friends launched an online campaign to raise support for the Humanitarian Aid Program (HAP)'s latest project: providing sheep for underprivileged women of Beit Sira, a neighboring community in the West Bank. We raised more than \$4,000 to buy 10 sheep - two each for five women.

This spring, the HAP volunteers of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam delivered the sheep to the women and their families. Thanks to extra money that was raised, we were able to buy pregnant sheep which soon will deliver additional lambs. The women received information on taking care of the sheep and the volunteers from HAP will come back to Beit Sira on a regular basis to ensure that the women get the most benefit.

The five women are between 35 and 56 years old, with children, and none are employed outside the home. Their families are in difficult financial situations, especially as only two of the husbands are employed.

The whole community welcomed the delivery of the sheep and was very grateful for the American donors' generosity!



The Nadi: a second home for the youth of NSWAS

Only a few years after its launch, the Nadi-Youth Club, has turned into a successful institution where the youth of the "Oasis of Peace" meet and flourish. *"It's exciting to see that coming to the Nadi, taking initiative and exercising leadership are becoming natural for the youth, and it is inspiring that from an idea and a once-a-week activity center, the club house is now bustling with activity for youth of all ages, with different groups meeting regularly several afternoons and evenings a week. The Nadi has become a second home for the young people, much more under their leadership. It's a dream come true!"* explain Dyana Shaloufe-Rizek and Ariela Bairey Ben Ishay who initiated the creation of the club in the mid-2000s.

Learn about the many ways you can support the programs of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam at www.oasisofpeace.org/what-you-can-do and make a donation at www.oasisofpeace.org/donate.

Thank You!

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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) 325-8983

afnswas@oasisofpeace.org

www.oasisofpeace.org