

Friends Schools Newsletter



Volume 20, Number 2

Winter 2006–2007

House Rich and Cash Poor

By Joyce Ajlouny, RFS Director

For Ramallah Friends School, 2006 was a great year of fundraising for infrastructural projects. As is often the case, it has proven easier to find supporters interested in contributing towards a building—a landmark that supporters can point to as the result of their donations for years to come—than it is to find supporters interested in subsidizing some of our running costs. The materializing of our efforts in major development initiatives this past year lends itself to the notion that the Ramallah Friends School is “house rich and cash poor.”

Capital projects:

1. With funds from the alumni community in Dubai, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), as well as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), we have secured nearly \$680,000 for a new Kindergarten building and a new student assembly hall at the Lower School (FGS), scheduled for completion in September 2008 (building site pictured on page 7). This project means an end to congestion and is like a dream come true to the FGS community.
2. USAID/ASHA responded positively toward our grant application. With the recently approved ASHA grant for \$550,000 we will build a new classroom building at the Upper School Campus (FBS) as well as upgrade the electrical system, scheduled for completion in September 2008. The renovation of the historic Khalil Totah Auditorium is already underway thanks to our other ASHA grant of \$400,000.
3. Funding for the initial works that will transform our abandoned sports field into a proper soccer field, including basic bleachers and track, were received from a Dutch NGO. We are in the process of raising an additional \$250,000 to complete the project (see Sam Bahour’s article for more on this).

Ramallah Friends School has hired alumnus Shadi Othman ('95) as School Engineer to help see these projects through.



The happy faces of FGS kindergarten students

Despite these successes, it is important to remember that the school remains “cash poor” in that we hold no cash at hand to serve as a safety net in times of trouble, like the political unrest and related economic recession we see today. “Cash poor” also means that the school has to rely predominantly on tuition fees to meet operating demands for the school year. While support from our Quaker and alumni communities flows in, amounting to \$60,000–120,000 annually, there is no way of knowing the level of expected support year to year. With few exceptions, the majority of donations are one-time contributions. We hope to change this reality and have many ideas to help us accomplish this goal.

Our business development strategy is quite diverse. Helping us see it to fruition is our Business Consultant and school parent, Sam Bahour; and our new Business Development Coordinator, alumni Fares Azar ('96). Together we are pioneering wonderful ideas for income generation, including: more active marketing for leasing our facilities, billboard rental spaces, catering contracts, a small stationary/memorabilia bookshop at the Upper school, an agricultural nursery to sell seedlings and our own organically grown vegetables, event sponsorships for the business community, etc. Succeeding in our efforts is crucial as we model how non-profit service-delivery organizations can be innovative and increase revenue base. 

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Editor: Manal Stephan Qanzu'a

Quality Matters

By Nora Lester Murad, School Quality Assurance Consultant

Over one year ago, the Friends School embarked on an ambitious study to better understand the complicated factors that determine school quality and to see how well the school measures up. The first phase of the project consisted of developing indicators of school quality using several sources. These included the school mission statement and values; parents' views collected through focus groups and interviews; student's views collected through interviews; teacher's views collected through meetings and interviews; administrator's views collected through meetings and interviews; and international best practices in school quality and academic quality selected from an extensive review of literature.

Through this process, we determined that "excellence" is defined by members of the Friends School community as pursuit of the following objectives:

- Implement High Quality and Innovative Curricula and Pedagogy
- Continuously Improve Teaching Quality
- Create a Classroom Environment Conducive to Learning
- Attract, Retain and Satisfy Highly Qualified Teachers
- Help Each Person Recognize Her or His Responsibility to Society
- Foster Equality, Inclusion and Respect for Difference and Active Non-violence
- Ensure Accessibility to all Palestinian Students
- Create a Satisfied, Proud and Vibrant School Community
- Efficiently and Creatively Use Technology
- Offer Safe, Sanitary, Appropriate, Modern Facilities
- Demonstrate Professional and Responsive School Management



Then, for each objective we asked, "How would we know if this objective were achieved?" and "How can we measure this indicator?" For each objective, we identified several quantitative and qualitative indicators.

The second phase was to collect as much existing data about each indicator as possible. This process highlighted how much information currently exists, but isn't systematically collected or analyzed. It also exposed some serious gaps. For example, we realized the need for information about

teaching quality. This dovetailed nicely with the concurrent effort to establish a teacher performance evaluation process. We also realized the need for more systematic collection of the views of various groups in the School community—parents, students, teachers and alumni. To close this gap, we drafted several surveys that would help to collect information about needs and strengths and to be able to track progress over time.

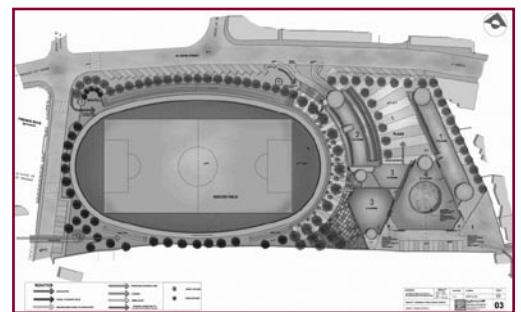
For a variety of reasons, it took longer than expected to implement the surveys, but the project is back on track. With input from parents, teachers and others concerned with school quality at Friends, we should soon be able to produce a public report that presents extensive data about those areas in which Friends is meeting expectations and those areas that require further work. The hard part, however, is pulling parents, students, teachers and alumni together to work on improvements. Too often, school community members see school improvement as solely the job of the administrators. In fact, Friends School needs all members of the community to take an active, constructive role in continuously improving this important community institution. 🌸

FBS Sports Field: Slowly, but Surely

By Sam Bahour, School Business Development Consultant

As we all worriedly move from day to day through the latest national crisis, we cannot stop looking forward and working for our long term goals, even as we manage our daily lives within the context of the unrelenting Israeli occupation. This determination to build for the future is clearly expressed by the Friends Boys School Sports Field project. The project continues to move forward, albeit understandably slower than we had planned. After successfully completing a master planning competition and a phase I concept design competition, we moved forward on two tracks: 1) addressing donors to fund the soccer field upgrade; and 2) addressing private sector developers to tap interest in the planned commercial development zone of the field. Both approaches are moving along well.

Our first donor has been presented with a proposal, and we are expecting to be contracted with them in November. This initial seed funding will get us through the detailed engineering designs and get



the parameters of the new community-size soccer field and walking/running track established on the ground.

On the commercial development front, several developers have responded to our request for their involvement and we are in exploratory discussions to find a formula that best fits the Friends School's needs. Lastly, although we held several stakeholder meetings (parents, staff and alumni) during the past year to get everyone's input on the project, the door is always open for suggestions. 🌸

Palestinian Education Continues Under Emergency Circumstances

By Mahmoud Amra, FBS Principal

During the year 2006, the economic and political situation of the West Bank and Gaza has reached a level of poverty, instability and uncertainty never experienced before. Israel is tightening its military, political and economic blockade against the Palestinian people through hundreds of roadblocks, ongoing construction of the separation wall and the withholding of millions of dollars of Palestinian Authority (PA) funds and humanitarian assistance.

The current situation of conflict, occupation and humanitarian crisis affects deeply the life of Palestinians, threatening their most basic human rights, including the right to life, security, education, healthcare, housing and an adequate standard of living. While military measures constitute the principal obstacle to education, the incapacity to face the political challenges stemming from the unsolved conflict has led, since the first half of 2006, to a sharp deterioration of the national economy that, in turn, is adding more burden on an already shattered system of education.

As a result of the economic blockade, the Palestinian Authority has not been able to pay the salaries of its over 150,000 employees, including public schools teachers, for the last seven months. As a result, all employees in the public sector, including public school teachers, began an open strike on September 1st. Up until now, over 750,000 students are not going to school since the start of this school year. ﷻ



Despite these hardships, the Ramallah Friends School is fortunate to continue educating the over 1,100 students from the Ramallah/el Bireh area. Our parents are, however, finding it more and more difficult to meet the tuition demands and our school continues to be challenged to find the adequate support for our financial aid fund. The Friends School appeals to its supporters to continue their prayers and assistance, as our families are more desperate for support now than any other time before. (See page 7 for details).

An Exciting Year at FBS

By John Hishmeh, School Counselor

It is an exciting year at FBS with the developing Ethics Program and the extra-curricular activities. Here at the Friends School, we recognize that education and preparation for the future often happen just as much outside of the classroom as it does inside. That is why we are working to create a school environment that fosters learning experiences through leadership, service and dialogue. In addition to the regular activities, this year we are developing such clubs as an FBS Amnesty International Chapter, Social Service Club and the *Friends Times*, a student-led newspaper. These groups are now meeting weekly to develop their internal structure and plan for yearly campaigns. In addition to this, we are organizing a school trip to the 2007 Qatar Model United Nations hosted by the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service Qatar. Eighteen student delegates will travel to Doha in January to participate in a simulated United Nations Conference conducted entirely by secondary students. Each delegate is assigned a country to represent in their respective assemblies and will address a variety of global issues ranging from arms trade, poverty, health development, the war on terrorism and much

more! This activity is a terrific opportunity to engage themselves in global perspectives and to learn about the nature and function of the United Nations.

In addition to these, the revised Ethics Program is in process. After assessing the needs of the current program, effort began last year to overhaul the program by defining specific objectives in accordance to the schools' mission and values. These objectives determined a host of topics to be offered in the classroom by a select group of teachers. The topics were distributed by grade and include a range of issues such as conflict resolution, comparative religion, non-violent peacemaking, Quaker identity and history, human growth and development, health and safety, medical ethics, decision making, vocational guidance, values and cultural awareness, religion and society, and more. ﷻ



Development

By Diana Abdel Nour, FGS Principal



From top: First graders in the art room; fourth graders ready to plant in the community yard.

Development at any successful institution is an on-going process. Friends Girls School in Ramallah is no exception. At FGS, we concern ourselves with everything related to the well-being of the student. Development takes place at different levels—academic, non-academic and the growth and maintenance of the physical plant.

With the increasing restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people over the past few months, 44 students withdrew from school. Some left because they are holders of Jerusalem ID and want to maintain their ID; some immigrated to the U.S. or Canada and some went to neighboring countries because their families found better jobs. Few have left because of financial or academic issues. Due to the growing demand within our community to provide places for new students, all the ones who left were replaced. Despite the fact that the situation we live in is still hard with the increasing restrictions imposed on our people, we cannot but keep hope and try hard to give our students the best, for they are our hope for the future.

This year, despite these hardships, we agreed to focus on the following:

- Review the quality of our educational services.
- Encourage learning by doing things such as planting in order to learn about plants in Science and taking care of the environment through various activities in coordination with local organizations.

- Expand Computer usage from Upper Kindergarten—6th grade across the curriculum and in various classes.
- Continue to create a reading culture in both languages. Conducting plays, speeches, biographies, designing an invention are other means of improving language usage.
- A review of our special education program, which works with teachers and students, is ongoing.
- We aim to enable our students to be successful, not only academically, but also socially and culturally. Educating for social responsibility and consciousness is as important to us as academics.
- Several after school activities, community services programs and the traditional white gifts
- Programs which develop students' sense of community, and most importantly develop their confidence and teach them empathy. We believe that the roots of morality are found in empathy.
- Every year we choose specific school objectives to work on. This year it is "Be Responsible" for the students. Many activities will be held in order to help students develop this characteristic. The second objective is for teachers, "Be Professional." Different aspects of the job will receive focus so teacher's professionalism will not be questionable.

Developing our institution in all aspects, at all times is our goal. We try to progress and expand to provide our children with the best education possible. 🌱

RFS Teachers Receive USAid-Facilitated One-Year Visas

By Joyce Ajlouny, RFS Director

International teachers were hard to come by this year. New Israeli policies restricted entry of foreign nationals intending to work in Palestine to a 3-month visa, available only once within a 12-month period. Two of our teachers were initially denied entry this fall and only after much agony and high level diplomatic intervention were they able to enter the country. In the end, the crises produced good results thanks to USAID West Bank and Gaza mission who stepped up and provided all foreign staff with 1-year visitation visas.

I am touched by the support we have received from various Quaker meetings and organizations in the U.S. Bethesda Meeting (Maryland) arranged a high level meeting at the State Department in Washington D.C.; Friends Council for Education (Pennsylvania), Sidwell Friends School (D.C.) and other Quaker schools have written the Secretary of State and/or formed committees lobbying the State Department. These efforts reassure us that our greater Friends community will continue to step up courageously in solidarity with us.

Reaching the Sky

By Duha Al Masri, Head of Preschool

As hard as we work to develop our program at the KG there is still more to be done everywhere. But there are certain things that worked very well last year like using our preschool pets, (*Gazgooze the hedgehog and Hadeka the turtle), to encourage children to express themselves in writing. For this year we host, with Gazgooze, another hedgehog (Spike, and it's an English speaking hedgehog) to encourage the children to express themselves in English.

Developing the English program is one of our priorities. Having a full time lower KG English teacher took the program to a new level. The lower KG children are benefiting with more time in English and the opportunity to work in small groups, which means more individual attention. This is important because English is a foreign language and the children need more time to learn it individually, to practice listening skills, to have the opportunity to speak with confidence, and to become familiar with the language through many different and varied activities.

Raising environmental awareness so that children feel responsible for their environment is one of our

ongoing themes all through the year. So for this year along with visiting the botanical garden at FBS, we are learning about environmental issues and we started a joint project with the FBS botanical garden by starting our own compost bin using biodegradable food left from the children's breakfast. We can observe the compost bin all year and see how the biodegradable food becomes fertilizer which helps plants grow. The environmental program is encompassed within our larger theme of 'How the World Works'.

For the future we look forward to using computers in our program as a teaching aid in language, math, and science.

*Gazgooze is the preschool's pet hedgehog. Since hedgehogs are an endangered species in Palestine the children are encouraged to learn about them and their habits and how to protect them. 🌿



From top: Kindergarten students during their visit to the Palestinian television studios; the children take care of Spike (an English speaking hedgehog).

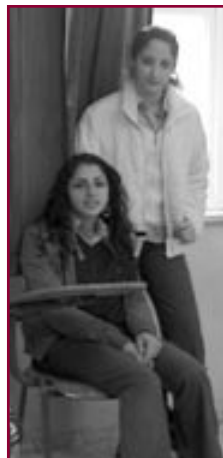
The Blossoming

By Luma Sakakini, Grade 11

When you belong to a family, a feeling of commitment begins to blossom inside you. A similar situation is when a student belongs to a prestigious school. I have attended the Friends School since kindergarten. After 14 years of making friends, struggling with homework, fretting over the first day of school, and dreading tests, you realize that no matter how much trouble you have gone through, it will always be your second home.

There are a variety of extracurricular clubs in our school that weren't present 10 years ago: drama, newspaper, and cinema, and student council committees such as: national committee, trips and extracurricular committee and cleaning committee. Value Awareness Week is also hosted by our school. A development that doesn't noticeably exist in other schools in Palestine is the establishment of "Al-Awda Daabka" (Palestinian dance) group. Also, the formation of our website (www.palfriends.org) and school newspaper have proven effective in promoting communication between students, parents, teachers and administration.

I am proud to be a Friends School student.



Mays and Luma in an RFS classroom

My School, My Home

By Mays Salhi, Grade 11

People call the place they belong to home. Home is where you are created, raised and educated. To me, Friends School has always represented home. I entered Friends Girls School at 4 years of age and was frightened—that's usually how you feel on your first day—though I was incredibly welcomed. I remember relating my teachers to roses because of the way they treated us. Every student felt special.

It's a fact that every student in my school is smart, no matter what her academic record. The beauty of the school and its originality has developed in our minds the ability to see life the way it is and that there's always a positive side. Friends School helps us find our path and destiny in life.

Life is a journey. To pass it you should start from the right base. My school will always be the foundation of my success. Friends School has enabled me to stand my ground. 🌿

Donor Thanks

We would like to thank the following people and their meetings for their recent donations to Friends School.

Acheson, Betsy	Croton Valley Monthly Meeting	Hill, Robert & Peggy Sue	Mikhail, Charles J. & Wanda W.	Shields, Catherine &
Ajlouny, Joyce	Davies, Colin	Hillman, Gene	Mogannam, Ihsan Leila	Carl Stromsness
Akins, James E. & Marjorie Abbott	Douglas, David & Margaret	Indiana Yearly Meeting	Morris, Salwa	Shinn, Larry & Nancy
Anderson, James & Janet Leslie	Dublin Monthly Meeting Peace Committee	Iowa Yearly Meeting Missions	Mountain View Friends Meeting	Shrewsbury Monthly Meeting
Ashley, Joan & James	Durland, Bill & Genie	Jalaivi, F	Nahass, Jane & Richard	Southwest Friends Financial Corp
Atlantic City Area Friends Mtg	Durrant, P	Johnson, Clyde	Nationwide Building Society	Spray, Dr: Paul & Louise
Azar, Deeb & Kay	Dyer, A M	Jonitis, Peter & Elizabeth	Nelson, Marjorie E.	Star, Dinah
Azeez Shaheen Charitable Trust	Earlham Alumni Visitors	Jubran, Daad Khalaf	New England Yearly Meeting	State College Friends Meeting
Bahour, Sam	Evans, R S	Judson, Stephanie Dean	Nino, Ghassan	Stevenson, Douglas & Cynthia
Barbour, Celia & Peter Weed	Evanston Friends Meeting	Kaibni, Nihad & Susie	Nino, Maher	Suleiman, Penelope Mitchell & Sami K
Barbour, Elisa	Fayetteville Friends Meeting	Kalamazoo Friends Meeting	Nouri, Ramzi	Taylor, Sadie & Richard
Barbour, Hugh & Sirkka	First Friends Church	Kanost, Margaret	Oppenheimer, Jean & Christopher	Total, Samia Jubran
Bethesda Friends Meeting	First Friends Greensboro	Karam, Mazen	Oread Friends Meeting	USFW Durham Friends
Bismarck Friends Meeting	Friends Meeting At Cambridge	Kennedy, Anna & Anne Hockridge	Osullivan, Finola M	Woman's Society
Brickell, Frances G	Friends Memorial Church	Khalaf, Ziad	Oxford Friends Meeting	USFW Evening Circle
Brokaw, Fran	Garner, Sallyann	King, M B	Palm Beach Monthly Meeting	USFW First Friends of Whittier
Brown, D. Emily & John Paiman	George, Glennys	Lake Forest Friends Meeting	Perna, Franco	USFW International
Canadian Yearly Meeting	German Monthly Meeting	Langley Hill Friends	Pierce, Arden E.	Valley Friends Meeting
Canfield, Robert & Gae	Gosselink, Rev Charlotte & Charles	Lansdowne Monthly Meeting	Poston, Chip	Walker, Rachel & Charles Cogbill
Carol Homes, Zaru Inc.	Grass Valley Friends Meeting	Loos, Marilyn Sutton	Raiford, William Newby	Wheatland, Barbara
Cazden, Courtney B	Graves, Mollie B	M LT Play Fair	Rodley, J Houge E.	Wilderness Friends Meeting
Chamberlin, John & Shannon	Gretsch, David	Maayah, Mazen	Rolph, C&E J	Wilmington Yearly Meeting
Chivers, Mary	Griswold, Jane	Maayah, Tareq	Scantland, Ann	Wood, Frank & Raquel
Church Of The Savior United Church Of Christ	Hathaway, Brad & Susan	Mangelsdorf, Paul & Mary	Seese, Elsie & Paul	Wyard, SJ& J
Comer, Mary Lee	Hathehe Ramallah Magazine	Marin Friends Meeting	Shaheen, Said	Yale, Charles A
Covington, Miriam	Heaton, George	Marshburn, Ted & Mary	Shehadeh, Kareem	Yarmouth Preparative Meeting
Crossville Monthly Meeting	Herr, Imad Hanna & Sheela	Masri, Jane & Bashar	Shehadeh, Nabeel	Zabaneh, Jaleel
	Hilderbrand, Shirley & Kevin	McKelvey, Joyce	Shehadeh, Nadeem	Zabaneh, Mitri
		Meeting, Midhurst	Shehadeh, Waleed	Ziadeh & Jeanette Farhat Foundation Inc
		Memphis Friends Meeting		

News in Brief

- Enrollment for the 2006–07 school year reached a record high with 1117 students (622 FGS, 495 FBS). In spite of our optimism, we remain cautious. There is an expected high volume of student withdrawals due to immigration as a result of the vulnerable economic and political conditions in Palestine, and parents are not paying tuition fees at the rate we normally see, causing a major cash flow problem for the management of school finances.
- Our very active student council helped raise \$2100 to cover the cost of cafeteria seating at FBS. Their community service effort was commended by all.
- RFS launched its new website www.palfriends.org. Our e-magazine, put out by our tenth graders with the guidance of English teacher, Doug Hart, has just launched its third edition. Check it out from our home page or go straight to www.lifebehindthewall.org.
- As one of our strategic objectives this year, a review of the English language curriculum and its delivery is taking place in hopes of introducing new programs aimed at improving reading and writing skills at all grade levels.
- Kaykab Gardens Community Project at Swift House hosted approximately 600 students from various private and public schools in the area. Our staff provided students with creative environmental education awareness through hands-on lessons.
- Graham Leonard, long-time f/friend and former RFS teacher, visited the school in the fall. Graham designed and delivered an extremely stimulating workshop for our Upper School Arabic teachers on the Arabic Touchstone discussion methodologies. And he did it all in Arabic! We hope to have Graham back for a follow-up workshop.
- RFS warmly welcomes new Board of Trustees members Mazen Karam, alumnus, RFS parent and well-regarded Engineer, and Issa Kassis, a respected banker in our community. Our Executive Board membership now consists of nine committed professionals, proving themselves quite valuable in the running of our school.
- Amari Play Center sadly mourned the loss of its dear friend, sustainer and primary care taker, Violet Zaru. Violet is greatly missed by the Amari Refugee community who greatly loved her. The

Participate in the future of the Friends School, with your tax-deductible gifts!



- Yes, I would like to contribute to the Ramallah Friends Schools:
- Scholarships and Child sponsorship*
 - General Award (any amount) \$ _____
 - ESJ Award (min. \$1,500) \$ _____
 - Preferences (age, gender, other): _____
 - Where most needed \$ _____
 - Enclosed is my total contribution of U.S.\$ _____

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U.S. \$ Gifts: Tax-deductible gifts should be made payable to the Ramallah Friends School and sent to: **Global Ministries, Friends United Meeting, 101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN 47374-1926**

Sterling (£) Gifts: should be made payable to the Quaker International Educational Trust (QIET), noting "for Ramallah" on the back and saying if Gift Aid may be claimed, and sent to: QIET, Yew Tree House, Church Street, Bloxham, Banbury, OX15 4ET or Brian Morphy at QIET, Tel: 01295 720019; e-mail: brianmorphy@hvmail.co.uk.

*Donate either to the General Award Fund (partial, any amount) or ESJ Award Fund (full). Tuition fees for 2006–2007 range from U.S. \$1,500 to U.S. \$2,300.

For further information and inquiries feel free to contact Manal Stephan Qanzu'a at the Director's Office at admin@palfriends.org or Tel: 011-972-2-2952286, www.palfriends.org

News in Brief continued...

Center is nevertheless thriving and bubbling with the same happy faced youngsters we are used to seeing. Muna and Wafieh remain committed to serving the refugee community.

- Due to the war in Lebanon this summer, the Middle East Yearly Meeting, originally planned for September of 2006, had to be postponed until next fall. We are excited about the planning for this long awaited event.
- I, Joyce Ajlouny, Director, had the privilege of attending FUM Strategic Planning sessions and the FUM General Board meeting in October. This was a wonderful opportunity for FUM board members to reconnect with the Ramallah Friends School and hear first hand about the accomplishments it has achieved and the challenges it continues to face. Later that month I also attended the ASHA workshop in Washington DC. This workshop was essential to enable the proper and timely management of the ASHA grants.



The location where the new kindergarten will be built.



Friends United Meeting
101 Quaker Hill Drive
Richmond IN 47374-1926

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