

THE OLIVE PRESS

RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Parenting during a Pandemic

Letter from Head of School

Almost a year ago I wrote to parents amidst the early days of the pandemic to celebrate an important part of our community. **The unsung heroes at home - our children.**

During those early days we had no real concept of how our world was being turned upside down. Today I want to celebrate our parents who have, for a year, had to adjust to a fundamentally changed world. They have had to deal with constantly changing conditions even in regard to the education of their children.

Each of us have been affected in different ways. A year ago I had just returned from Melbourne where I had put my daughter into university and dropped her off at her college of residence.

A couple of days later the first lockdown began. Australia has been in lockdown since that time and there is a travel ban for residents who are not allowed to leave the country and there are great restrictions on Australian citizens entering the country.

For my family this means we have been separated for a year and my daughter has had to look after herself in a new country. She would normally spend every holiday with us but those days were another life ago.



Australia and New Zealand have effectively eliminated COVID-19 but my family, like many around the world, are separated by time and distance.

So thank you parents because you have been most patient in these testing times. Our children's world – our world - changed overnight. Give your children a loving hug – because you can. Not everyone can do the same.

Adrian Moody - Head of School

Alumni in the Spotlight – Meet Assef Jawaada

By Besan Jaawan – Development & Communications Manager

Meet Assef Jawaada, Class of 2003, a general and laparoscopic surgery specialist who began his studies in Egypt and has so far attended courses and workshops in Palestine, England, China and Jordan.

After a journey of learning and residency programs, Assef settled down in Palestine and works in Palestine Medical Complex and H-Clinic Specialized Hospital in Ramallah, and is also a part time lecturer in the Faculty of Pharmacy, Nursing and Health professions at Birzeit University.

“The experience at RFS was extraordinary. Not only did I gain knowledge that kick-started my career, but I also built lifetime friendships. Graduating from the top school in Palestine ignited my passion for medicine and helping people.”



Assef was a student at RFS' Upper Campus during the first few months of the Second Intifada, and he was there in October 2000 when the Israeli army issued a warning to Ramallah residents to evacuate public areas. The school was quickly evacuated and only a few hours later



the police station right next to the campus was bombed. It was an unforgettable night for the RFS community. Assef says *“We were in Arabic class when we were informed to evacuate the school and after a few hours we witnessed the building (on TV) crumble to the ground.”*

Remembering the day he graduated from RFS, Assef tells future graduates to enjoy their time at school, saying *“they are days you'll never get back... Rejoice and appreciate the simple things.”*

He remembers his graduation ceremony saying *“The fondest memory I have is walking down the stage in my cap and gown to receive my diploma that I had worked very hard for, reliving all the days it took for me to reach that point.” **

A Few Words on Parenting amidst a Pandemic

By Linda Khalaf – Lower Campus English Teacher

The hardest job in the world just got harder. Just when you think you've got the hang of it...“Surprise!” Covid-19 shatters the nearly completed intricate puzzle.

COVID-19 redesigned our world. It robbed our teens from major life events and high school social gatherings they were entitled to.

With immense sorrow, our graduating high school seniors may not walk across the stage for their hard-earned diploma and may not attend their senior prom.

As a parent of an RFS senior, the education aspect was the most daunting challenge of this crisis. The unfavorable conditions were out of our control, so we were forced to adapt and stay positive. Finding balance between safety, education & emotional & social well-being was a baffling equation.

Hurdling one obstacle after another, we strengthened communication ties and relentlessly showered emotional support to keep our kids safe and ambitious one day at a time.



Linda poses for a quick photo with her son Jamal before he heads off for his first IBDP mock exam while she teaches her Lower Campus students online.

Special thanks to all of RFS' dedicated administrative staff and all the devoted teacher heroes that adapted their inspiring roles to the turbulent situation and tenaciously fostered a comforting and positive learning environment for our children.

Stay safe and stay positive,

Ms. Linda Khalaf
Parent of Jamal Shkukani

Living Our Quaker Values

FRIENDS SCHOOLS PLACE A PRIORITY ON TEACHING THE VALUES felt necessary for leading a life of service in the community.

We seek to encourage our children to explore their individuality and their responsibility as school community members in the framework of a person of faith.

Friends School staff seek to permeate the whole of our school life in each classroom with these values. The school staff seek to reward those who enhance the life of our school community and to encourage better behavior from those whose actions or words are unacceptable to us.

We also hold *Silent Meeting* throughout the school program as an important part of a Friends School experience. These periods of quiet are given to remind us all of the presence of God in our lives and in the community. They provide a little time to learn to lay aside the business of our lives and relationships and be still.

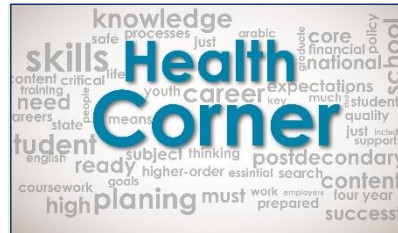
Our *Meeting for Learning* program each fortnight is designed to provide an opportunity for students to share in the celebration of the life of the school and the gifts that students bring to life in the School community. It may also be used to manage or reflect upon events which affect our lives together.

The program may from time to time re-inforce the history of our school and our land, hear directly from our graduates about their successes and failures, learn something of our Quaker culture and tradition and reflect any aspect of our life and times together which is best heard as a gathered community.

A Friends School makes every effort to make these occasions special and memorable.

Please note that both meeting programs have been adjusted in 2021 due to Covid19 regulations.

*To know more details please visit our website www.rfs.edu.ps



By Anwaar Khoury
Upper School Nurse

Healthy at Home Keeping it Positive

Quarantine, School Closure, Remote Working, Physical Distancing, Online Classes, are all phrases we kept hearing of during the past year since the COVID-19 pandemic spread.

Parents faced a huge change in the lifestyle of their families, since they have been forced to stay home to work remotely or to keep up with their children's online school classes. The main goal we had to keep is the healthy life of our families especially the psychological side. This could be applied by keeping a positive atmosphere inside our homes.

It's hard to feel positive when our kids are driving us crazy, but children are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and a lot of praise for what they do right.

The following are some steps to help our children behave positively while staying at home:

- Say the behavior you want to see using positive words.
- Speak in a calm voice; shouting at your child will just make you and them more stressed and angrier.
- Praise your child when they are behaving well.
- Help your teen stay connected with their friends and that is something you can do together. *

Change Due to an Emergency Situation...

By Frieda Dahdah Khayat – Lower School Principal

Yes, we are still in an emergency situation due to the spread of coronavirus.

With the high rates of positive cases and high death rate, as a school and caring community, we took another new step.

To ensure social distancing and follow health protocols, for the first time ever, the face to face application process for the kindergarten and first grade became an online process. In addition, payments for the applications were done through the bank.

Moreover, as lifelong learners, problem solvers, and risk takers, changed to an online orientation meeting for the parents of the new applicants.

We also took a step further and conducted virtual online conferences with the applicants and their parents replacing face to face meetings.



The Environmental Committee handed out awards to winners of the Municipality's online competition a few days before the closure of school campuses.

It's an adaptation that needs to be recorded in the history of RFS. We learn from our experiences and I believe that people never gain experience unless they go through the experience themselves and life must go on.

Stay safe friends*

Middle School Library Corner

By Carmen Abdul Hadi – Middle School Librarian

Spring has sprung...so spring into a good book!
March is Women's history month in the Middle School Library.

Here's what you can join and enjoy during this month:

March 8th – International Women's Day.

Our library has interesting books honoring women's achievements.

March 16th -22nd - World Folk Tales and Fables Week.

Do you know why this is important? Folk tales and fables are stories rich with cultural detail that have been passed down through generations, often orally (until someone finally wrote them down). The original teller is often unknown, the tales morphing as they stretch across countries and continents. Check out some tales and fables and find out!

March 21st – Mother's Day and UN World Poetry Day. Coincidence? No. Mothers are poems!

UN World Poetry Day celebrates one of humanity's most treasured forms of cultural and linguistic expression and identity. UN World Poetry Day is an occasion to honor poets, revive oral traditions of poetry recitals, promote the reading, writing and teaching of poetry.



Do you have a favorite poet? Do you write poetry? Let us know by emailing me (carmen@rfs.edu.ps) and your poetry will be featured on the MS library virtual site and on the library's Poem-tree.

Happy Spring reading!

"We read to know we are not alone."



Parenting in the Time of Corona

By Riyam Kafri AbuLaban – Upper School Principal

These days I am plagued with an endless feeling of guilt. Since the beginning of the pandemic, I worked endlessly, only taking a break when Covid-19 finally nailed me to my bed with wave upon wave of severe symptoms.

On any given day, my phone does not stop, my email notifications ring infinitely. And I am pulled between doing my job, and being a mother. It is fair to say that my children have borne the largest loss in this pandemic.

It is also fair to say that working mothers find themselves alone and unsupported during this difficult time.

One school closure after the other, working mothers were left to fend for themselves. With grandmothers and elderly members of the extended family self isolating and avoiding close contact, working mothers lost their support network who swooped in and took care of the children when work demanded their presence. A culture of extended family, we suddenly found ourselves reduced to our nuclear units facing the pandemic alone.

Like everyone else, I found myself torn. Do I go to work where I need to be with my colleagues who are teaching online? Or do I stay home with my young twins who need support learning online? When I did stay home, I ran from one room to the other, making sure the internet was working, the password was correct, the notebook was open, the pencil was sharpened and the sandwich was eaten. When I went to work, my mother would step in, and with no vaccine in sight, in the back of my head was a monstrous fear that she will contract Covid-19 from one of us.



In the end, I was left feeling like a total failure. It seemed no matter how fast I moved, how quickly I responded, and how long I sat with the twins while they worked endlessly through their homework, I was failing as a mother. It also was clear that no matter how hard I worked, I was also failing at my job.

These days it feels that I am just rushing from one thing to the other, only to circle back to the endless phone calls, the emails (that no one reads probably), and to tracking cases at school.

I am sure what I describe here rings true for many of the mothers I know. The pandemic left us feeling like we are failing as parents, failing as teachers and worse of all unable to protect our children and loved ones from getting sick. Protecting one's own is the most basic instinct of motherhood. *

When everything seems dark, consider you may be the light.
Quaker Proverb

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