

THE OLIVE PRESS

ISSUE 08 YEAR 2017/2018

Ramallah Friends School's Monthly Newsletter

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Welcome to OP Eighth Issue

I am delighted to welcome you to read the 8th issue of RFS' monthly online newsletter, the Olive Press. When we first introduced the newsletter, with a title connecting it to an old "press" that has been near the Upper Campus main library for decades, we had no idea what the "press" had been really used for in the past. We had asked different staff members, principals, alumni, previous and current teachers if anybody knew what the press had been originally used for- but nobody knew.

I can gladly tell you now, thanks to feedback from a few parents and current teachers who had graduated from RFS in the nineties, that the "press" (pictured above) had actually been used for pressing students' books. And that is why it was put next to the library.

The name of our newsletter, Olive Press, is aimed at presenting RFS' history and identity together.

As we start preparing plans for summer 2018 as staff, teachers, and parents, we want to share with you some of the events and programs that are set to take place at RFS this summer. Preparations for organizing RFS' two major summer programs, *Go Palestine* and *I Know I Can Summer Academies*, are well under way.*

By Besan Jaawan
Communications and Development
Manager

Quaker Value of Integrity

Letter from Head of School

We have decided that we would take the opportunity to relook at the values that this school is based on. We are a school which offers rigorous programs guided by Quaker principles. The theme for this issue of the Olive Press is integrity. What does integrity mean? Integrity is about consistency between word and deed. I often describe it as saying what you mean and meaning what you say. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) describes it as the need to deal honestly with all others and with oneself.



This is summarized by the old injunction: "Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay." Having integrity means being authentic and having consistency between one's values and one's actions. Lack of integrity separates us from our own soul and from our community. Quakers try to live according to the deepest truth they know and this means speaking the truth to all, including people in positions of power. It is interesting that Friends do not take oaths when appearing in a court of law because they reject the idea that there is one standard of truth for daily living and another for the court.

What does this mean for us as a school? I think schools are very human places and that means that at times there is going to be misunderstandings between students and also between members of our community. The best thing that we can do as a community is to role model the Quaker testimonies to our students.

This means how we relate to each other, how we speak to each other and what we say to each other is based on integrity and openness. Parents send their children to RFS not only for the education that we offer but also for the values that this school imparts to them. We want our students to leave RFS and young people with character and integrity. Thomas Jefferson once said "It is in our lives and not our words that our religion must be read." I think there is a great truth in that. It is our actions and not our words by which people should judge us.*

Adrian Moody

Adrian Moody - Head of School

Go Palestine Summer Program

By Suzi Hamdan – Go Palestine Camp Director

For the past seven years Go Palestine has made it its mission to connect diaspora Palestinian youths to their homeland. The founders Sa'ed Atshan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies, Swarthmore College; and Joyce Ajlouny, RFS director from 2003-2016, wanted a summer program for students all across the world to visit Palestine for the purpose of understanding their heritage.

Go Palestine is a unique experience for international and RFS campers. Go Palestine is so much more than a summer camp; it is a journey of discovery. Both a physical and spiritual experience, campers have the opportunity to walk through the cobble stones of the old city of Hebron, smell the sea salt of Akka and squeeze themselves through the concrete walls of the Balata refugee camp. Palestine has a story to tell, through Go Palestine, for many this will be the first time they hear it.

"I love the connecting with campers and counselors, and our mutual love for Palestine"- 2011 camper

Go Palestine gradually builds on learning and exploration. Campers learn their culture through personal experience. Making "taboon" bread on a wooden stove and dicing parsley for tabbouleh is a part of their rich history. Getting their hands dirty through community service, whether it be picking various fruits from trees, helping with the harvest for local farmers, or rehabilitation of a community park. Community service is essential for campers where they can discover their full potential.

"I met new people who deeply impacted me, I also got to see new perspectives to life in Palestine. It made me love to be here." – Walid, 2012 camper

Go Palestine is life lessons wrapped in fun and games. Watching film screenings, taking part in numerous sports activities and reflections at the end of the day; these experiences carry a lasting effect on campers. The understanding of their culture encourages them to become more empathetic, more socially aware to different situations. Go Palestine gives students a feeling of connection to their past as well as their future.*



Alumni in the Spotlight

By Lama Murra – Alumni Relations

This month, the Olive Press was honored to interview Ramallah Friends School alumnus, Class of 2009, Software Engineer at Microsoft Saher Ahwal. Throughout his years at RFS, Ahwal was an active member in his class, participating especially in science programs representing the school. *"Ramallah Friends School counseling and strong education system gave me the opportunity to be well prepared for university applications."* – Saher Ahwal

After graduating from RFS Saher continued his studies in MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), often ranked among the world's top-ten universities, where he received his Bachelor of Science (BS) and Masters in Engineering (M.Eng) degrees in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS).

Saher is now working as a Software Engineer at Microsoft in the Cloud Storage and Edge Team (Azure). He says RFS played a unique role in his education and professional life as well, as he carries RFS' educational approaches with him where ever he goes. He believes that the focus that RFS' academic program puts on student research methods and assignments, prepared him for doing research in college and preparing presentations for many assignments in college and beyond.*

Go Palestine is still looking for international campers, if you know someone who would like to join the program for summer 2018 please direct them to the link below:



GO PALESTINE SUMMER 2018

The summer travel experience for Quaker and/or Palestinian diaspora youth

Go Palestine is a multi-faceted program based at the Ramallah Friends School including: community service, arts/music/dance (focused on Palestinian culture), sports, swimming, hiking, films, field trips, host families, and much more!

Our mission is to connect global youth (ages 14-17) with local Palestinian teenagers and to promote mutual understanding and dialogue. Go Palestine is deeply rooted in the Quaker values of the Ramallah Friends School, promoting peace, nonviolence, simplicity, and equality.

For more information, please visit our website at: www.summerinpalestine.org.

