

# THE OLIVE PRESS

RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Designed by: Mohamed A. Daoud | Editor in Chief: Besan Jaawan

## Christmas @ RFS



## A Time for Giving

Letter from Head of School

I am writing this at a time when there is much tension and concern for the future. Recent events of violence affect everyone and create great uncertainty. Yet this is also the time that we approach the season of celebrations in Ramallah.

Last year I was fortunate to be able to attend the lighting of the Christmas tree. I remember that it was a time of great celebration. It was also a time when tensions

were high. There were families with young children and older people celebrating and watching a huge fireworks display. It was an evening of great joy with Christians and Muslims together. In a time of tension and injustice Palestinians come together in their steadfast perseverance. Christmas is a time for families and friends to come together. A school community is in many ways like a family. RFS is a school with long term relationships between the faculty, the staff, the students and the parents that make this school unique. Our Quaker values ask us to live in the spirit of love and truth and peace and to recognize that spirit in others.

Christmas is much more than just a time for people to come together. It is a time for us to celebrate and reflect on the moment when God entered human history through the birth of Jesus Christ. It is for that reason that Christmas is a time for hope and a time to be thankful. We have a lot to be thankful for - our families, our friends, for the people that care for us. We are also reminded that during this time of tension that not everyone will have a joyful Christmas. We take all of Palestine into our hearts and prayers and remember always that we are here together.

We wish you a happy and safe Christmas.\*

Adrian Moody - Head of School



Volunteering parents join KG students in preparing their own Christmas cards.

## Young Women Taking Big Steps

By Besan Jaawan – Development & Communications Manager

At RFS all students are encouraged to take part in as wide a variety of extracurricular activities as possible as we believe it as an opportunity for students to develop new interest and learn new skills. The School's Afterschool programs offer a large variety of activities. But, as a result of parents' dedication towards encouraging their children to join extracurricular programs off-campus as well, RFS students are now leading role models in many local and national sports teams.

**Dana, Leila, Zeina, and Maya are only a few of RFS' young female students taking big steps towards accomplishing successes in Palestinian sports where women have not set foot before.**

Zeina Madi, 9<sup>th</sup> grader, has become Palestine's first female boxer and has represented Palestine in many international boxing championships, winning a golden medal in Holland recently. Zeina says her ambitions are to represent Palestine in the Olympics someday and that even though she plays a sport that many see as inappropriate for girls, she receives tremendous support from her parents, family and coach.



Leila Malki, 10<sup>th</sup> grader, has just won FEI's (*Federation Equestre Internationale*) "Against All Odds" 2018 Award for her accomplishments as the youngest Palestinian female equestrian. Leila has represented Palestine and won in many international equestrian championships in Morocco, Columbia and other countries.

Maya Khalil, 5<sup>th</sup> grader, won this year's Palestinian National Swimming Championship for her age group by swiping all the golden medals in freestyle, back, butterfly, and breast swimming for 50 meters.

Dana Bawatneh, 9<sup>th</sup> grader, joined the Palestinian National Women's Soccer Team last February and travels abroad with the team to play in international matches. Dana says it was challenging at first to keep up with her school work and the long training sessions, but she manages to play for the RFS Female Soccer Team as well!

RFS is forever proud of all our students and their wonderful accomplishments. These young ladies are only a few of our amazing youth who accomplish a lot every day in classrooms and off campus.\*



## Alumni in the Spotlight

By Lama Murra  
Communications Officer

Meet RFS alumnus, Class of 1983, General Manager of Palestine for Development Foundation, a Palestine Investment Fund-PIF, subsidiary, Jamal Haddad.

After graduating from RFS, Jamal received a BA degree in Accounting from Birzeit University, then he pursued his graduate studies at the University of Exeter and received his Master of Business Administration (MBA). He has also completed numerous intensive courses within the strategy, business development, and branding fields as a complement to his studies.

When asked about being a student at RFS, Jamal told the OP: *"Studying at the Friends School was an exceptional experience, where in addition to the quality of education the extracurricular activities played a role in shaping our personalities and creating a sense of Community"*

In addition to being the General Manager of Palestine for Development Foundation, Jamal plays an active role in the local Palestinian community as a board member in several organizations, including El-Funoun Popular Dance Troup.

When asked about what he enjoyed most about the school community Jamal said: *"The community and friendships we created at the time, which I still have until today."*

Jamal ended our interview with a few words to future RFS alumni saying:

*"Be a productive actor in your school community and your outer community. Work on creating a community and space for all school related members."\**

## RFS Soccer Teams Win Big in Jordan Tournament!

RFS Soccer Teams won big in Jordan, in the Kings Academy's Soccer Championship with our Girls Team winning 2nd place and the Boys Team winning 3rd! Congrats to students Joud Zughayer and Joud Jamous – who were chosen as best female players of the entire championship!

Congrats to students Walied Anabtawi, Fadi Shehadeh, Ghassan Abu Dayyeh, and Yazan Jarrar, who were chosen between the 10 best male players out of all the Arab male students participating in the championship! Upper Campus Administration held a unique event to celebrate the teams' new trophies in the High School Library after both teams returned from Jordan.



**CONGRATS!**  
**#WeAreRFS !!!**

## College Counseling Corner

By Chris Akel – College Counselor

### Upcoming Deadline Dates:

IMPORTANT DEADLINE - December 15th: Request for any personal statement edits, recommendations, or documents sent to ANY schools from Dec. 10th - Jan. 15th (US/UK).

January 1-February 1: Nearly all US Regular and ED II deadlines.

January 15: UCAS deadline for all traditional UK/Wales/Scotland schools  
January - February ongoing: Canadian regular admission deadlines.

### Upcoming Events/Announcements:

None: More events and workshops to come in spring of 2019!

### College Counseling General:

All seniors are responsible for sending their applications by the deadline! With the exception of the final UCAS submission on January 15th.

For US regular and ED II deadline applicants: Students should share the following with Chris over email:  
-Common App ID (CAID #)  
-A list of all colleges to which the student wants their documents sent.

10<sup>th</sup> Exchange Applications: All [Applications](#) for Sidwell and Westtown schools exchange programs are due January 10, 2019.

2018-19 CC Handbook: Last year's [College Counseling Handbook](#) has everything you need to know to apply to college and use the CC Office! Contact Chris and the CC Office: [cakel@rfs.edu.ps](mailto:cakel@rfs.edu.ps)

## Lower School White Gifts Program

By Frieda Dahdah – Lower School Principal

We at RFS, since the Palestinian catastrophe in 1948, started the White Gifts Program which embodies the school's Quakers values and vision of giving and feeling with others. The program came as a correspondence to the Palestinian catastrophe where thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes and lands, and left with nothing. It started from the idea of solidarity with the refugees and giving them the aid needed. And it has become an annual tradition ever since. As a student and a principal at RFS I enjoy this program with all its details, from paying part of our daily pocket money,



Parents helping out in weekly bake sales

along with bringing food and sweets to sell in school. This idea has grown in terms of the values of tenderness and compassion, which are bound by love and peace, and they have spread in the school's community and within our Palestinian community. The program has become a role model and an example for many to follow. It reflects the message of peace in our country, which the spirit of giving reaches in all its categories and spectrum. Accordingly we continue working on the program with the school community including parents and students, in the process of selling healthy food on campus. The aim of this is to collect a larger amount of money, in order to give to families in need. At the Lower School this year we collected (40,500) ILS which were distributed among 135 families in need.\*

## Announcement: Parent-Workshops starting in January 2019

Happy New Year! We want to start the New Year off right for both our children and our parents; therefore, we are planning to offer a 3 part workshop series on Saturday mornings from 10:30-11:30 in the upper campus MS library for parents from the upper and lower campuses. This is a cooperative project between our campuses.

The workshops are entitled: Raising Successful Kids, and the series is as follows:

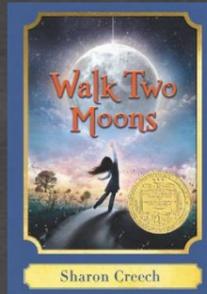
1. Academic Success- Guidelines that support your children in doing their best- Saturday, January 19, 2019- 10:30-11:30
2. Screen Time- The latest research on how screen time impacts our children's mental and physical health. Saturday, February 2, 2019, 10:30-11:30
3. The effects of Sugar in a child's diet and healthy alternatives that are also good for the brain. February 16, 2019 10:30-11:30

Our presenters are experts in their fields. We have an MD, pediatrician, psychotherapist, and a public health nutritionist. Please contact the MS library for more information. See you there!\*

## Middle School Library Corner

By Cheryl Engel – Middle School Librarian

This month's book is: *Walk Two Moons* – By Sharon Creech  
This Newberry Award Wining Book can be checked out at the RF Middle School Library.  
As the young girl, Sal, entertains her grandparents with an outrageous story about a girl named Phoebe, her own story begins to unfold. She is a 13 year old girl whose only wish is to be reunited with her missing mother. This is a story that weaves together two tales, one funny, one bittersweet to create a heartwarming, moving story of loss, love, and complex human emotions. Students will find it hard to put down.\*



## Teaching Giving

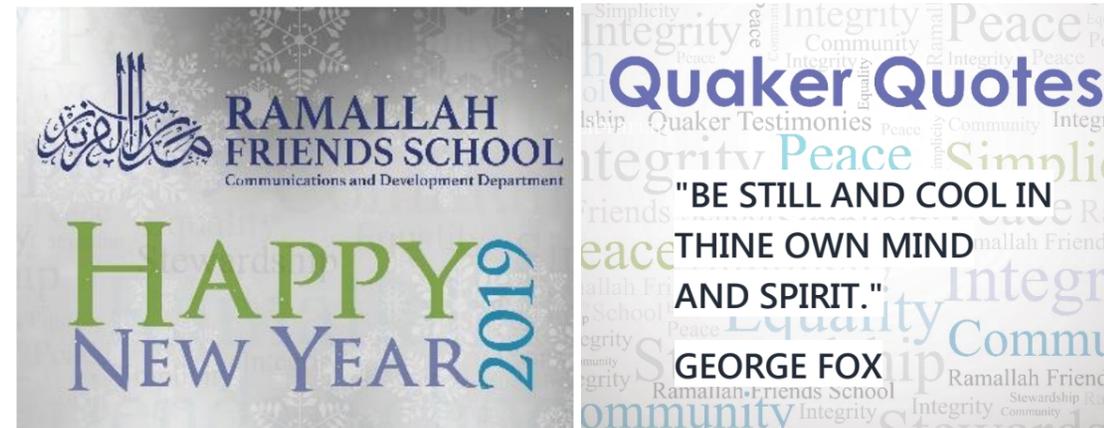
By Riyam Kafri – Upper School Principal

The White Gifts program is an old tradition at our school. During my studentship at RFS (formerly FGS), the White Gifts program consisted of a classroom piggy bank that was passed around every morning during homeroom, and we donated whatever we were moved to give from our personal pocket money. A simple idea with a great impact on both givers and receivers. Over the years the program has evolved to bake sales, and more recently charity dinners and online silent auctions. The white gifts are near and dear to my heart. The symbolic meaning and practice do not escape me neither as a mother nor as an educator. To give to those in need regardless of their backgrounds is how we hope our community at school and beyond will continue to live, appreciating humanity and celebrating plurality. Beyond the symbolism there is a powerful skill being taught, the ability to think of others, and give a bit of what is ours, be it time, effort, or a few shekels from one's own pocket money. This, in my opinion, transforms giving from theory to practice.



Student bake-sales, part of White Gifts Program

We often take before we give, so to teach students the skill of giving; to train them both emotionally and psychologically to think of others; to do away with the extra candy bar so they may give five shekels in the classroom piggy bank is to raise selfless young men and women who not only talk about giving but actually practice it. Of all the things we do in education, teaching and practicing values is the hardest. The White Gifts Program gives all of us an opportunity to "practice what we preach." \*



## Upcoming Dates & Events

Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Frist day back to school.

Jan. 14<sup>th</sup>  
Tuition payments due (Plans B & C)

Jan 19<sup>th</sup>  
Professional Development- half day for students

Jan 21<sup>st</sup>  
Last Day of 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter)

Jan 24<sup>th</sup> – Feb 4<sup>th</sup>  
New Students Applications for Grades LKG, UKG and 1<sup>st</sup>.

[Press here for RFS Calendar 2018/2019](#)

\*\*\* LS – Lower School  
\*\*\* US – Upper School

Jan 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>  
US: PalmUN Conference

Jan 26<sup>th</sup>  
No school

Jan 28<sup>th</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter) Begins

Jan 29<sup>th</sup>  
Report Cards Distribution

Jan 31<sup>st</sup>  
LS: Parent Teacher Conferences



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

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