



WINTER ■ 2019

BIANNUAL

Newsletter



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OFFERING QUALITY QUAKER EDUCATION TO PALESTINIAN YOUTH SINCE 1869

Letter from Head of School

Adrian Moody – RFS Head of School

This week we are celebrating our Gala dinner – a symbolic end to our 150th anniversary celebrations. The dinner was attended by representatives of Friends United Meeting, past Principals, alumni, administration, staff, students, parents and our very important sponsors – our community. It is our time to come together again to celebrate this institution that has influenced the lives of so many students and families.

150 years of partnership transforming our community. When I look back on the past year I feel a sense of pride and fulfillment. I am proud of our team. The time capsule, the tree planting project, the field day, and the events that have brought our two campuses closer and are the result of a team of people working together – working tirelessly and selflessly – for the benefit of our school and our community. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) tells us that community provides a place for individual members to look for wisdom and support.

Our mission is to practice stewardship for the entire school community by educating and advocating Quaker values and to work on building community by fostering relationships and channels of communication with all stakeholders – even when it is incredibly difficult! We are a Friends school.



I once quoted Margaret Wheatley, an American writer, who said *"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about"*.

As we engage with the world, we also work to bring our school into harmony with our vision. We are committed to building an inclusive RFS community of staff, Board members, students, volunteers, and parents, whose collective experience and wisdom help to guide our school and make us stronger. This is your school – this is our school.

I was fortunate to visit Bethlehem last weekend and had the honor of placing my hands at the place of Jesus' birth. In these times and especially in this season we ask that you keep RFS in your thoughts and that you hold Palestine and its people in your hearts and in your prayers and hold them in the light.*



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RFS Alumni in the Spotlight – Meet Samir Abdul Hadi

By Lama Murra – Communications & Alumni Relations Officer

Meet RFS alumnus, Class of 1959 graduate Samir Abdul Hadi.

After graduating from RFS, Samir attended the American University of Beirut for his BA degree in Civil Engineering.

He later moved to Dubai, where he worked for 40 years with one of the top 10 firms in the MENA region in the field of construction; Khatib & Alami (K&A). As Vice Chairman on the Board of K&A, he worked on tens of the largest construction projects in the region. Abdul Hadi is currently a member of Birzeit University's Board of Trustees and resides in Amman, Jordan.



Abdul Hadi with friends at RFS in the 1950s
Photo Courtesy of Samir Abdul Hadi

We got the chance to speak with Abdul Hadi during the summer, and he said that RFS had a great impact on his life academically, socially and even on the physical level. And he continued:

"The things we learned at the Friends School and experience we shared affected our lives on the long run, we were taught through activities and tasks that were appointed to us on the basis of equality, no matter of our backgrounds. You wouldn't feel the difference between the child of a minister, governor or a worker, we were all the same, and we all had to do the same tasks from cleaning, gardening and providing service in the dining room."

We asked Samir about the school's effect on his life, and he said:



"Beyond the academics of the school, the social environment at the Friends School taught us to respect the system and to be disciplined for a lifetime."

Samir ended our interview with a few words about the role RFS played in his life:

"Till this day the school affects my life details, the things we learned and the experience we shared. The school implanted many personal characteristics in us that we kept. We learned discipline, equality, commitment and dedication to our study with care to our physical activities. The Friends cultivated my personality in the different aspects."*



Abdul Hadi's school days as an athlete - Photo
Courtesy of Samir Abdul Hadi

RFS' I Know I Can English Summer Academies 2019

By Mohit Mehta & K-5th IKIC Team

Last summer, 210 students spent four weeks of exhilarating activities and critical learning at the 6th annual I Know I Can Summer Academy (IKIC) for K-2 and 3rd-5th. The combined programs with a local and international staff guided students in thinking critically about identity, community and homeland through authentic children's literature in English. Students read Sitti's Secrets by Palestinian-American author Naomi Shihab Nye.

Naomi Shihab Nye and her brother were both students at the Friends School in the late 1960s. On July 30th, students and staff participated in an international video call with the author, who is now based in San Antonio, Texas, USA. Students read original poetry to the author, and Shihab Nye read to students from Sitti's Secrets. Students had a chance to ask the author a variety of questions. Apart from building literacy skills, students participated in a wide range of recreational activities including dodgeball, soccer, basketball, kickball, painting, Karaoke, Zumba and photography. In the photography class, students learned about guidelines of taking good "selfies," composition, portraiture, color and lighting. In painting, students learned how to mix color, illustrate small details such as the seeds of a watermelon or the leaves of a pineapple.



The IKIC Summer Academy strives to provide a wide range of educational experience that build on the children's artistic, physical and academic talents. For the first time, the IKIC camp coordinated with Golden Goal to provide a day of recreational activities. Based on children and parent feedback, all enjoyed this memorable event. Each year, the staff aims to improve the camp offerings and we are already busy planning for 2020!*

NEWS IN BRIEF

By: Besan Jaawan – Development & Communications Manager

- Ramallah Friends School graduated its 113th class Sunday June 9th, 2019. And the RFS community was honored to welcome His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian Prime Minister Dr. Mohammed Ishtayeh to the Graduation Ceremony which was held in the School's Upper Campus in El Bireh.



- RFS junior Taleb Jallad was elected President of the Model United Nations Conference (UA-MUNC) General Assembly 2019, held in the United Nations Office in Geneva – Switzerland.
- In October 2019, Ramallah Friends Lower School was awarded the Green School Sustainability Award by Ramallah Municipality for the third consecutive year.
- The RFS men's basketball team won 2nd place in the Ramallah and El-Bireh Governorate Education Championship 2019.

Construction & Maintenance Projects on RFS Campuses

By: Amal Abu Nimre – Facilities Engineer

Over the past few years RFS campuses have developed tremendously. Many projects were carried out in accordance with the school's vision and mission. The latest project that has been executed was the Photo Voltaic system installed at the Upper School campus and on a smaller scale at the Lower School campus. Solar power in Palestine has become a very feasible source of renewable energy and by installing the system RFS has become the first school in Palestine to use this environmentally sustainable system.

The system has showed its efficiency from the first day of operation. The electricity bills have reduced tangibly. In addition, it has also demonstrated leadership through practical care of the environment seen by students and the surrounding community. This summer will be a busy one with two main projects at the Upper School campus and one at the Lower School campus in addition to the regular maintenance and development works that are carried out every summer.



The newly renovated amphitheater remains a historical site at RFS.

The school had secured funding (through USAID/ASHA) for the rehabilitation of the cafeteria in the Administration building and for the rehabilitation of the amphitheater. The design was reviewed and approved earlier in 2019 and the construction on ground was carried out during the summer break and was finished right before the beginning of the new school year. At the Lower School Campus, stone façade insulation was added to the 3rd floor and the annual maintenance works were carried out.*

Participate in the future of Ramallah Friends School. With your tax-deductible gifts!

U.S \$ Gifts: Tax-deductible gifts should be made payable to Friends United Meeting and sent to: Global Ministries, Friends United Meeting, 101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN 47374-1926, or online at www.fum.org.

Sterling Gifts: Should be made payable to Quaker International Educational Trust (QuIET), noting "for Ramallah" on the back and saying if Gift Aid may be claimed, and sent to: QuIET, 5 Dene Terrace West, Wylam, Northumberland, NE41 8AZ or Averil Armstrong at QuIET, Tel: 01295 720019; e-mail: averilarmstrong@hotmail.com

☐ Yes, I would like to contribute to the Ramallah Friends School:

☐ Scholarships and Child sponsorship*

☐ General Award (any amount)

☐ ESJ Award (min. \$2,800)

☐ Preferences (age, gender, other):

☐ Where most needed \$

☐ Enclosed is my total contribution of U.S \$

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It is preferred that donations are received online. Donations made through our secure site are U.S tax-deductible and go through FUM; please visit our website www.rfs.edu.ps and click "Donate". You will also find additional information about other donation options including Planned Giving. As always, we will never share your information with a third party.

*Donate either to the General Award Fund (partial, any amount) or ESJ Award Fund (full). Tuition fees for 2019-20 range from U.S \$2,700 to \$4,120. For further information and inquiries, feel free to contact our office at development@rfs.edu.ps or Tel: +972-2-295-2286, www.rfs.edu.ps

1.

SIMPLICITY

Friends believe that the most important things in life aren't things.
2.

PEACE

Friends believe that there is always a path that brings peace, justice, dignity and respect.
3.

INTEGRITY

Friends believe that our words and actions must reflect our truest selves.
4.

COMMUNITY

Friends believe that we need each other, since each and every one of us is precious to our community.
5.

EQUALITY

Friends believe that every person is equally beloved by God, no matter what.
6.

STEWARDSHIP

Friends believe that all God's gifts are entrusted to us for the sake of future generations.

A Trouble Maker Am I?

By: Walid Mohammad Batrawi – RFS Graduate & Parent

Fall 1986, Friday afternoon, the doorbell rang. It was FGS teacher Anna Kennedy. "Marhaba Walid, I am here to see your father", she said. My mind went "Oh God, is it something that I did at school?" She sat in the balcony that overlooked the Israeli prison while I hesitantly walked to the room where my father was, with thoughts crossing my mind "it must be something that I did at school, trying to recall events and predict which one it was."

Finally, a big relief, when Anna explained why she was there "Keifak Abu Khalid, I am here to redesign the school logo. Khalid Mahshi told me that you are the only one who can help. We want a logo with a Palestinian identity, something that unifies the two schools, we need this as soon as possible." Now it was my turn to speak out after being choked for a while, "yes this is a great idea and I will follow up with my father, do not worry" I intervened trying to get Anna out of the house before she says anything else, I was still unconfident that the logo was the only reason for her showing up suddenly. Anna's departure was delayed, as my mother walked in with the coffee, so it was another ten minutes of anxiety!



Finally, Anna left, and I insisted that my father started working on the new logo immediately. I gave him few ideas from a student's perspective, "We want something revolutionary, something modern but says we are Palestinian", I explained. Over the weekend, my father worked on three designs; modern, semi modern and traditional.

The following Friday, Anna Kennedy showed up again, with two other colleagues this time, the couple Jennifer Bing and John Canar, both known as the Bing-Canar. My father presented the three designs, and they all pointed to the traditional Arabic calligraphy, that ever since became the logo of the Friends Schools. The story of the logo did not end there. It was too long before we would use the new logo for the next academic year, and so the first branding was printing the new logo on T-shirts and Sweats. And as we were trying to find alternatives to spending so much money on buying suits and dresses for the graduation ceremony, we decided to design a unified uniform for all boys and a similar one to all girls, and we also thought this should be revolutionary and against all traditions, so the blue went for girls and the maroon for boys, and definitely the "Madares Al-Friends" logo was outstanding.*



Donor Thanks

We would like to thank the following people for their recent donations to Ramallah Friends School:

- Abdel AlMajeed Melhem

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Donations received May 2019 through November 2019

150TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

By Besan Jaawan – Development
& Communications Manager



On the eve of December 6th 2019, about 300 RFS community members came together to culminate the School's 150th anniversary celebrations in the School's first Gala Dinner. The dinner was organized by RFS' Communications Department, and attended by alumni, parents, staff, RFS friends and Quakers.

Friends United Meeting General Secretary, Kelly Kellum commenced the event with the Quaker moment of silence, a tradition RFS has always held dear. Several FUM senior staff had flown over to attend the event, joining the local community in an effort to raise donations for RFS' student financial aid fund.

All proceeds from this dinner will go into the student scholarship fund, in an effort to entice the local and public community to increase the percentage of RFS students receiving financial aid.

For the academic year of 2019-2020, almost 17% of the entire student body at RFS is receiving some form of financial aid. For the academic year of 2020-2021, and with your continued assistance as F/friends of RFS, we aim to increase that percentage.*

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