# Friends Schools Newsletter Volume 19, Number 1 Spring 2006

#### First Graduation at FBS

By Donn Hutchison, FBS Teacher since 1966

hundred years ago, seven boys sat for a picture at the newly established Friends Boys School. They would become the very first graduating class. Serious, unsmiling, they sat unmoving while the camera slowly took the picture. They are dressed in their best: traditional *umbaz*, a Turkish *tarboosh*, and a western suit jacket. It was 1906 and there were a total of 27 students enrolled in the school.

The boy on the right, wearing a white jacket is Elias Salah. His father, Sliman Salah, would be the foreman when the Main Building of FBS was built in 1913. Elias was the oldest of seven brothers and two sisters. All became graduates of either FBS or FGS. His brothers became engineers, lawyers, and one was a judge. One of his sisters, Maria Salah Khabbaz, wrote one of the first cookbooks in Arabic

The boy sitting next to Elias is Mogannam Mogannam who became a leading Palestinian lawyer and Secretary of the National Defense Party in the 1930s. His wife, Matiel Mogannam, also a graduate of FGS, became an author and wrote *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* published in 1937.

Above: First graduating class; right: graduating class of 2006

These men, like others in their class, their siblings and spouses, cousins and friends, sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, were leaders—pioneers freed by education to realize their potential and possibility. From humble beginnings they rose to positions of power and prestige. They married women who were also leaders at a time when few women were active in affairs outside their homes.

The Class of 2006 is the Centennial Graduating class for FBS (FGS had their centennial graduation in 1995—11 years before). In these hundred years the graduates of Friends Schools have been leaders in their communities. They have been doctors, lawyers, judges, engineers, cabinet ministers, college professors, authors, psychologists, philanthropists and businessmen. They have been men and women of wealth and influence, who have often used their wealth and position to advance their country and people.

The heritage of Friends graduates, both men and women, has been a rich heritage. Their influence has far exceeded what one would expect from one, small school. In these hundred years, the graduates of the Friends have helped to shape and mold the Palestine of their day, and the Palestine of our day. *Inshallah* (God willing) the graduates of 2006 will further help to mold the history of the Palestine of tomorrow.



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Omar Nasser plans to attend the University of the Arts, London.

The Friends Schools in Ramallah have not only trained outstanding leaders of national and global standing, but, more importantly, they have provided generations of Palestinians with the knowledge, skills and values that have enabled them to become better human beings. The "Friends Experience" remains a significant and cherished phase of my life, and as a motif, threads through generations of my family. It is at once intensely personal and formative, while remaining an historical and educational landmark.

Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi Class of 1964

#### Thank You

By Omar Nasser, Senior

ne hundred classes of uniqueness, difference, and achievement have graduated from this school in the past 105 years of its existence, despite the persistent reign of mayhem and turmoil that seems everlasting in our abused country. Were it not for the teachers of this school who are determined to teach, give and provide, I doubt this figure could have even been aspired, least of all reached.

There is no such thing as a bad teacher. A rock can teach you if you know how and what to learn from it. Each and every teacher in our school is unique; regardless of his or her level of experience or competence in their field of teaching, a teacher has always something to teach. The school of life is not solely bound within the scholastic curriculum that is received from dusty books and forgotten theories. Learning how to deal with life's wiles and whims, how to tolerate its paradoxes, and accept it for all of its difficulties is what we learn in this school largely through, from and by teachers.

A few days ago, I met my third-grade English teacher and the librarian at the Friends Girls School. I remember how I used to look up to these fine, elegant women, who I thought knew everything back then; today I still look up to these fine elegant women, knowing they do know everything; they know how to give, love and tolerate children. Were it not for their respect, nurture and guiding supervision, few of us, if any, would be where we are today.

Fourteen years of our lives were spent in this school, not alone, but guided and influenced by the words, actions, wisdom and faults of our teachers. We pass

through this crucial point of our lives, in which we sculpt our personalities and find out what and who we truly are; however independent and autonomous we think we are, we are still influenced to a great extent by our teachers.

True, sometimes we might not particularly prefer a certain teacher, or we may see them as unfit or incompetent, however rare the case is. Yet, all the same, these individuals are an asset to our development and education. They are human beings with whom we daily interact and learn from their mistakes and flaws. Teachers learn from us, and we learn from them. They need us, and we need them. Our respect gains their respect; our success, their success. Our relationship is as simple as any symbiotic relationship in this universe and, at the same time, as vital and imperative as any symbiotic relationship in the universe.

As a student and a graduate of this renowned institution, I would like to express on the behalf of the hundredth graduating class of 2006 its profound and magnanimous gratitude to the body of teachers, throughout these fourteen years of scholastic education, have with their perseverance, patience and inexhaustible supply of imaginative stimulants, helped us to become the people we are today. Thank you, and may you continue to illuminate the lives of generations to come.

Senior Students at FBS



#### Mixed Feelings

By Rasha Zakkak, Senior

t is my graduation year that I never thought would come. As a little girl, I've always longed for this day, but now that I am here, I have mixed feelings and emotions. At times I am happy to finish school, at other times, I feel sad for leaving the environment I grew up in.

I am sure each one of us still remembers his/her first day in this school and goes back in time to re-live special moments he/she spent in it. Each one of us will now go his/her separate way, and God knows when we will be reunited again; but our memories will be flowing with the tides of time. We are now the present, and soon we will be the future. No words can express how much I am going to miss my friends, my school and every single day I lived with them.

Rasha Zakkak plans to attend Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

#### When Everyone Looks at the Class of 2006

By Fadi Qur'an, Senior

hen everyone looks at the class of 2006 the fact that we are the school's Centennial graduating class receives all the attention. It is no doubt that we are immensely proud of this position, for we represent a milestone in this prestigious school's history. Nevertheless, as I have learned, it is neither your rank nor your luck that defines who you are or where you stand in life. Rather, it is what you represent. I have been among most of my classmates since kindergarten. Therefore, I can safely say that each and every one of them represents something unique and inextensible. Moreover, the interrelationships in our class, although intricate, make our small community as closely knit as feasible.

I am the type of person who would rather go swimming with sharks than exercise a widely used cliché, but no matter how I try to formulate my words, the fact of the matter remains. I will miss my classmates. We will all miss each other:

The world we live in has always seemed so small; we have always been so close. Pretty soon though it will expand. We will be removed from our roots and planted in different corners of the planet. My classmates are achievers; when they have something in mind, they will not stop until they get it done. Perfection is a lost cause with us, and this fact is further exacerbated by our conflicting stubbornness, but it is usually the most willful tree that produces the most luscious fruits. What I am trying to get across is that I know my classmates will come back to Palestine with plump fruits (GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS). The future looks fantastic now that we have reached the fruit-bearing phase of our lives.

The class of 2006 is surely *lucky* to be class #100. However, we represent much more than luck. We represent stellar academic achievements. We represent friendship and loyalty. We represent persistence and philanthropy. We represent everything the Friends Schools stands for:



Fadi Qur'an plans to attend Stanford University this Fall.

### The Ramallah Friends School Lies Deep in the Hearts of our Alumni and Attendees

By Joyce Ajlouny, RFS Director

he Friends School Committee in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) held a special fundraiser on February 26, 2006 in support of Friends School. I had the pleasure to attend the charity dinner, which included graduates and attendees of the School and their friends and associates, and was organized for the benefit of the Special Needs Resource Center and Kindergarten Building.

Amazingly, the School was able to raise US\$169,000! The event raised more than just money—it raised the spirit of the alumni community, and the glowing pride they carry for Friends School. What touched me the most about the Dubai "Friends of Friends School" event was the reassurance of commitment and loyalty of our people to their school and country. We proved that much can be achieved for a good cause through concerted effort and dedication.

In addition to being a wonderful success, everyone in attendance, whether a graduate or not, enjoyed the evening's activities. The tuneful sounds of an o'ud player livened up the crowd during the reception where everyone had a chance to mingle with friendly faces in the crowd. An elegant, well-catered

dinner followed. Everyone sat in appreciation as they listened to presentations about the School and the colorful experiences of some of our graduates and attendees. Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed a slideshow of Friends School, consisting of over 190 photographs. One attendee was able to recognize her grandmother's graduation picture. And of course, the guests didn't forget to sing the FBS School song. The unforgettable memories from that evening will remain strong in the hearts and minds of all those who were able to attend. I am certain that many will follow the Dubai "spirit of giving" and the new Friends School Special Needs and Kindergarten Building will soon be a reality. My sincerest gratitude to all that made this event a huge success.

This is what Emad Odeh-Dubai, attendee of the Friends School (left his Junior year in 1976) had to say during the dinner:

Without a doubt we had received a first class education from a first class school, but Friends School, you see, is not just a place but an idea—an experiment in scholastic excellence in which diversity is not just taught and tolerated but indoctrinated and embraced. The essence of this spirit transcends to existential levels, for it molded our existence, our code of ethics and scale of values, who we are, how we live and what we do.



#### **Congratulations!**

By John Hishmeh, School Counselor

he year has come and gone, and now we are about to celebrate the 100th graduating class of the Ramallah Friends Boys School. Congratulations seniors! Having arrived at the Centennial graduating class is certainly a special marker in the school's history. Not only have we survived these years, but we have done it with success! What

makes this year even more special are the students themselves. Without a doubt, the Class of '06 has demonstrated a certain degree of class and excellence throughout their time at FBS. Of course, we've had a few "downs" as well, but which class hasn't? As their counselor and their friend, I will say with confidence that this is a unique group. Collectively, I see them contributing to our community in a variety of creative

ways through volunteer work and other leadership venues. Some of our seniors this year live with real convictions about service, integrity and kindness, all qualities that we should admire. Sharing in their lives this year has been a wonderful experience and I will hold them in my heart forever. We all wish you the best for the coming years and are confident you will fulfill your dreams. To the Class of 2006... CONGRATULATIONS!!!



I. Congratulations to Laila Hashweh, the recipient of the Bern University Scholarship funded by

- Hannes & Ursula Bircher. Following graduation Laila will travel to Bern, Switzerland, where she will spend her first year learning German and the following years completing an undergraduate degree. Good job, Laila. Thank you to the Bricher's for offering their home to Laila.
- Congratulations to Khalil Hussary, the recipient of the Westtown School exchange student scholarship. Khalil will conduct his 10<sup>th</sup> grade year at Westtown School in Westtown, Pennsylvania. Congratulations! Thanks to Westtown for offering this chance of a life time opportunity for Khalil
- 3. Although it is still a bit early, our seniors have already heard back from many of the colleges and universities they applied to. It is going to be a terrific year for the Class of '06! Most of the schools listed include full and/or partial scholarships. Acceptances up until now include the following: Stanford University, Harvard University, Columbia University, Boston College, Boston University, New York University, Earlham College, Guilford College, Knox College, Simmons College, Occidental College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of Texas, University of Ohio, University of North Carolina, University of British Columbia (Canada), Utrecht University (Holland), American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University (Beirut), Butler University, Hiram College, Clark University, Philadelphia University, Kent University (UK), University of Tampa and the University of South Florida. Congratulations seniors!



Junior students pose for a picture in John's office.

#### **News in Brief**

- Design is underway for the new Kindergarten/Special Needs and auditorium building. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) approved its funding toward the Kindergarten building worth \$150,000 and our Alumni in Dubai helped raise an additional \$130,000. With almost \$280,000 secured, we hope our other fundraising efforts will secure the balance of \$420,000 required to complete construction of a much needed space.
- BibleLands, a renowned UK Charity approved a total of \$20,000 for our financial aid fund. With that, our fund remains short of \$33,000 that we hope to secure by the end of the school year.
- The Friends School remains in high demand by the community!
   Next year's new student application process has now ended with tens of students on the waiting list and unfortunately many students declined acceptance for lack of space. While
- we try to remain optimistic, we are very worried that with the significant cutting off of international aid to Palestine, greater numbers of our parents will again suffer financially and will no longer be able to afford tuition. We further appeal to the global Quaker community to keep our families in their prayers and to continue supporting our student financial aid fund—as every dollar counts.
- We are also sad to see Joshuah Lilande, our teacher and Friendin-Residence from Kenya, leave after having served the school and the community with much dedication and love. Joshuah's contribution and presence with us was extremely valuable. We will miss having Joshuah around and wish him all the best.
- The Friends School is sad to see Fred Danfoura, our Development Officer complete his United Nations contract with the school. The UNDP has been generous to pay for Fred's full-time service to the school. Fred was instrumental in establishing

#### **Over One Hundred Years Ago**

By Joshuah Lilande

ver 100 years ago, American Quakers established a Boys School in Ramallah following the community urging for the boys education because the Friends Girls School had already been started in 1869. The two schools were founded on the ideals of the pioneer founder of the Quaker Movement—George Fox. Historically, Friends have been concerned with the education of the whole person that reaches into deeper parts of personality.

As the school celebrates its centennial graduation, it is important to reflect on the Quaker Educational Seven Criterion of words, i.e.—Honesty, Discipline, Simplicity, Individuality, Community, Concern and Peace. Though the school was established based on these principles, it has also served other purposes—a horse stable for the Turks, a hospital for the World War I victims and a barracks for British soldiers. It also witnessed Israeli occupation in 1967. During such disturbances, the schools sometimes closed and learning was disrupted. It is prudent to say that from the time the first graduation was celebrated in 1906, the number of graduates has steadily improved from seven to 82 this year. This is an indication of the various changes recorded and most of the seven criterions, if not all, realized. I wish to observe that the heart of a disciplined personality is the constant vision of greatness. This has led to many of the school's alumni to acquire and be in quite high and respectable positions wherever they are.

One may be tempted to ask what contribution to modern education and modern life the school has. The school has demonstrated spiritual unity of perfection that rises from varied personal differences by love binding person-to-person wherever fate has placed them and they (alumni) always remember and support the school in one way or the other. The school extends its humble gratitude for their continued support.

Students at FBS



strong relations and online communications with alumni and donors as well as re-creating our website and writing numerous funding proposals. We thank Fred for his hard work and dedication. While Fred was born and brought up in California, his father was a 1966 graduate of Friends School

- We are pleased to welcome Mahmoud Amra back as Head of Friends Boys School, after having spent one year in Qatar as Principal of an emerging private school.
- Middle East Yearly Meeting will take place for the first time in decades in Brumana, Lebanon, this September. Joyce Ajlouny will represent the school there.
- The Friends School would like to also welcome Kathy Bergen to Ramallah. Kathy arrived in April to start a two-year mission as the Program Coordinator for The Friends International Center in Ramallah (FICR). The FICR is a mutual ministry

- of the Ramallah Monthly Meeting and an international steering committee from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting and other Friends. You can find out more about FICR from http://ramallah.guaker.org.
- Friends Play Center at Amari Refugee Camp is thriving and demand for enrollment is also increasing. The children are extremely happy there thanks to the efforts of many, especially Wafieh's tireless diligence as their head teacher. Thank you for keeping the children and families of the Play Center in your prayers.
- Barenboim-Said Foundation sponsored four of our teachers as well as Wafieh from the Amari Play Center to attend an intensive training for Kindergarten teachers in Germany. Diana Abdel-Nour, our FGS Principal, and Duha Masri, our Head of the Kindergarten, were also among those who attended the study

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



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\*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



#### **Working Hard to Be Excellent**

By Duha Al Masri, Head of Preschool

E-mail

t is highly demanding to achieve excellence. We are trying our best to give our children an excellent education that will enable them to understand the world around them. We want to encourage them to feel that they have a say in it.

Some of our activities this winter included:

- I. The Tiger elected as the new King of the Jungle. During the Palestinian elections in January 2006 the children had their own elections at school to elect a new King of the Jungle. This was a very successful experience where the children learned much about the election process.
- 2. The children visited the Ramallah municipality and met with the newly elected Mayor, Janet Michael, and shared their school election experience with her. The children discussed with the mayor about her role as mayor, why she ran for mayor, and her future plans for the city.
- 3. Besides all we do, we strive on a continual basis to encourage writing. The children take turns taking home the preschool's pet, a stuffed hedgehog called Gasgoze. They are asked to draw a picture and write about what fun things they did with the stuffed hedgehog at home and share it with their classmates. This activity has successfully encouraged the speaking and writing skills of the children.
- Also, the preschool answered an invitation to the National Reading week from the Ramallah Center for Heritage and Childhood Storytelling.



From top: FGS students with Ramallah Mayor, Janet Mikhail; FGS students sit for storytelling at the Ramallah Center for Heritage and Childhood.

#### The Centennial Graduation of Friends School

By Diana Abdel Nour, FGS Principal

e are very honored and pleased that Friends School is celebrating its one hundredth graduation this May. This reminds me of the centennial celebration of the Friends Girls School that took place in 1989 under the difficult circumstances of the first Intifada and the Boys School celebration in 2001 during the second Intifada. As I gather my thoughts of this time, truly what has made FS a success in our community is our commitment to the individual and through him/her, the society. I reminisce where we were and where we are and cannot help but feel proud.

The Friends School has operated throughout successive generations, committed since its establishment to an educational philosophy based on providing unique educational opportunities for students at the Girls school, and later at the Boys School. These opportunities are guaranteed through equality of treatment regardless of gender, religion or social status. The school has managed to graduate generations of women and men with great roles in developing the local Palestinian community and in turn society as a whole. This is not strange since the Friends Schools' belief in education rests on the fact that the school is the spirit that we breathe into the individual, an education based on values of the Quakers.

Graduates of Friends School start their education here at FGS preschool where they spend eight years before moving on to the seventh grade at FBS. Our goal is to develop the children emotionally, socially, mentally and physically while at the same time teaching them to think conceptually. Along with rigorous academics, FGS provides a caring, nurturing environment where each child is valued as an individual.

What is planted at an early age is never forgotten. In the preschool, children are taught through active exploration and first-hand experience. The program aims at providing the child with an exciting and pleasant atmosphere, while providing the opportunity for developing creative abilities and a sense of identity.

All students benefit from counseling, where they are taught necessary life skills complemented by a variety of after-school activities which provide them with knowledge how to utilize their talents and exercise their minds. A community service program introduces them to the visually impaired, the orphans, the elderly, and the handicapped. This helps them be empathetic and appreciate the blessings they have, makes them think of others and help them. The White Gifts Program provides our children with an opportunity to help the less fortunate.

Art and Music offered to all classes from Kindergarten–sixth grade form a full-fledged part of the school curriculum and helps develop the self-identity of the child.

The Special Education Program, established eleven years ago at the Friends Girls School, was founded to provide opportunities for children with learning difficulties. Based on the fact that each child is important, we feel obliged and responsible to attend to the needs of such children and work on developing their abilities.

It is an honor for me to be part of the centennial anniversary. I feel a great sense of commitment and pride to FS and its impact on our society through our students. We can very much take credit for some to the best leaders in our society. Hanan Michael-

Ashrawi, a well-known female political leader who is also a graduate of FGS, once said: "The seeds of awareness were planted in me at the Friends School." Ms. Ashrawi's comment indeed summarizes FS great effect on our students and Friends role in our community. The school has a major impact in shaping the future of the children; learners of today are the leaders of tomorrow.





From top: An FGS student makes a presentation for Show and Tell; FGS students during the white gift program; below: FGS students learn about the five senses.





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Friends School, Ramallah/El-Bireh Scholarship Donors, Restricted and General October 1, 2005—March 30, 2006

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

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Manoukian, Paul and Dona M,
Reverse Manoukian

Boyce-Manoukian Marshall, Barbara B.

Marshai, bar oa a S Martin, Joann Maury River Friends Meeting McAllister, Olga and Bard McCosker, Timothy J. McCosker and Phebe

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Nahass, Jane and Richard
Nahass, Jane and Richard
Nahawi, Bashar
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Neston, Marjorie E.
New Earswick PM Jean Dow
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Penn Quaker Meeting
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Pierce, Arden E.
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Rasheed, Rifat
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Reinhard, Heynen
Religious Society of Friends
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Rycroff, Keith
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Williams, Joe and Sally
Woodward, Esther Thomas
Woodward, Esther Thomas
Woolson Friends Woolson Friends Woolson Friends Wright, William and Marygene Wyne, Gary and Cheryll Xavier, Marjorie Yabroudi, Anwar and Eman Yale, Charles and Virginia

York Friargate York, Alan