

#### Welcome to OP Eighth Issue

I am delighted to welcome you to read the 8<sup>th</sup> 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

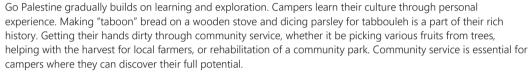
# Go Palestine Summer Program

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



"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:



THE OLIVE PRESS



By Chris Akel – College Counselor

College Counseling Corner Upcoming **Application Dates:** 

March-May Ongoing: Applications for 10th / 11th grade summer schools and camps around the world. April-June Ongoing: UK/Europe release conditional decisions from Jan. 15th Regular Decision Application. June-July Ongoing: Applications for Middle East universities (including in Turkey and for Birzeit) open.

College Counseling General: 11th Grade CC Meetings: All 11th graders will be scheduled a 1-1 meeting with

the college counselor this spring. April 30 - Harvard, Stanford, and Pomona Universities Visit: On April 30 from 3-4:30pm in Khalil Totah Auditorium Harvard, Stanford, and Pomona will be visiting the RFS campus to give a joint presentation on these three top universities! Anyone interested in research, liberal arts, or Ivy League schools should attend! Reminder: All 11th graders are required to attend at least

3 College Representative

Events between 11th grade and when their final application is due in 12th grade (for most students, January

May 5th - 11th Grade SAT date: The next upcoming 11th grade for international students is May

October 2018 - US College Tour: In October of next year, a group (10-15) colleges will be visiting the region and stopping by Ramallah! More information to come soon! \*

**ANNOUNCEMENT** 

Registration, tuition and all

School Offices- Accounting

Bireh) as of March 1st 2018.

House @ Upper Campus.

Follow this link for the Upper

the new Accounting Office.

#### Living with Integrity

By Frieda Dahdah – Lower School Principal

When we live with integrity, our words and actions leave a stamp

As a Quaker school, integrity is one of the main values that creates unity and confidence within our school community. Honesty and trustworthiness is present in both our teachers and students. Having a sense of integrity is about both self-awareness and harmony in the community. Integrity does not only benefit the people we lead, but also leads to more peace in our personal lives. Sometimes doing the right thing remains invisible and unnoticed.

We should honor the overpowering number of educational leaders who lead with integrity even under the different circumstances and conditions that can make it the tougher choice. We strive to keep our children safe and engaged in rich learning experiences on a daily basis.

The Ramallah Friends School students and teachers work in fair and honest manners, by putting in the hours to complete their jobs and

Integrity is not only discussed during class meetings and in the weekly Chapel, but it is also presented in the transparent relationship between us, our students, and their parents. A good student-teacher relationship comes from the mutual respect and trust, and these relationships are reflected by the great community we have in

Integrity encourages us to recognize our gifts and our flaws alike with modesty. When young people learn to believe in themselves, dishonesty and disrespect no longer make much sense. Living with integrity becomes a way of life.\*

Signup Now!

## I Know I Can Summer Academies – Lower Campus

By Catherine Pitcher – Teacher @ IKIC Summer Academies

Last summer the opportunity to teach at the <u>I Know I Can (IKIC) Summer Camp</u> opened up my eyes to the beauty of Palestine through the wonderful students I taught. If you're not familiar with the IKIC camp for upper elementary, it is a part-school, part-camp environment where students can improve their English and explore social justice themes while also having fun and learning new skills. As an example, in 5th grade English class last summer students explored environmental racism and learned about examples of where it occurs in the US, in Kenya, and at home in Palestine. They wrote stellar expository pieces and compare and contrast pieces about the examples we studied. They also wrote inspiring, profound, and personal poetry that described their feelings about the environmental racism that is happening in Palestine and the occupation. The serious learning and subject matter at IKIC is well-balanced with fun though. Afternoons were spent in mixed-grade teams playing team sports, and engaging in stimulating and creative activities such as arts and crafts and board games. We also had lots of fun doing team building activities such as threelegged races and the-always-favorite water games.



This year I'm excited to offer yoga as an afternoon activity, as by the time camp starts I will have completed training in yoga instruction designed specifically to be implemented in schools.

This year will be all the fun and learning of last year with some exciting new additions- stay tuned for more info! Personally, I'm looking forward to returning to the IKIC community and serving another group of amazing Palestinian students \*

#### Sign up for I Know I Can here



## **Practicing Integrity**

By Riyam Kafri – Upper School Principal

One of the school Ouaker values we strive to practice and get better at practicing every year is integrity. "The Quaker testimony of integrity asks us to aspire to personal wholeness, honesty and

Integrity means the state of being whole. And we aspire to reach that wholeness as a community and as individuals. To practice integrity means to commit oneself to practicing truth in all aspects of life. It also means to take responsibility for our actions and decisions. In education, teaching and practicing values with students, faculty, staff and parents is the most difficult part of our lives. This often takes different forms, from policies, to practices to disciplinary procedures and more. But perhaps the most important educational tool we have is

ourselves. We, teachers, parents, school leadership and staff, recognize that we are role models to our students, and that the messages we send through our actions are far more profound than the words we say to them every day, so integrity must begin with us. We must aspire to our personal wholeness. Of course, this is easier said than done. However, the key is to continue to try, to learn and to grow. I have learned a lot in the last three years as the upper school principal. Perhaps the most important lesson is that our children are hungry for guidance, for love, and for respect. And that every time I walk out of my office, there are young eyes watching what my next step, in hopes that the next move, the next decision will only help them reach their fullest potential with integrity.\*

The first is to increase student SAT scores by an

average of 200 points. The camp accomplishes this

by bringing in expert teachers from Palestine and

around the world who have the content knowledge

and pedagogical expertise to help students master

the complicated test. However, we recognize that

especially in the summertime. Thus, rather than

incorporate a variety of competitions, music, and

debates into their classrooms, so that students are

engaged with their learning. In fact, according to

student surveys, 95% say they had fun during the

summer and 96% said they would recommend it to

Although, high SAT scores are important because

they are required for elite American universities,

helping students find their passions and career

goals. We accomplish this through not only a

statements, but also by building individual

relationships with students in each class. The

of my favorite students, and I love getting the

opportunity to work with them.\*

students I have worked with in Palestine are some

\*\*\* LS – Lower School

\*\*\* US – Upper School

equally as important for us, is our second goal of

special college counseling class devoted to personal

utilizing "drill-and-kill" methods, teachers

students do better when they are enjoying learning.

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

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click here!



RFS Monthly Calendar – Stay updated through our website www.rfs.edu.ps



## By Glen Water – Teacher @ IKIC Summer Academies

I Know I Can Summer Academies – Upper Campus

The sounds of Mohammad Assaf's latest hits filter across the courtyard from their origin inside the Ramallah Friends School's Khalil Totah Auditorium. The school bell rings out sharply at the top of the hour signaling to the students socializing outside that the opening activities are about to begin. This could be a typical day of school at the Upper School, except that it's the middle of July, and the 75 students inside are not here for Monday chapel assembly but are part of the "I Know I Can" SAT-English Summer Academies Program. In its 8<sup>th</sup> year, this summer camp is devoted to two overarching goals.



Ustaz Glen with his students- summer 2017

**Upcoming Dates and Events** 

April 24<sup>th</sup> -May 31<sup>st</sup> Registration of new and current students for the academic year 2018/2019.

Labor Day Holiday – no school

May 17<sup>th</sup> Ascension Day Holiday – no school

US – Start of final exams grades 6-11 LS – half days

May 27<sup>th</sup> US – Graduation Ceremony

End of 2017/2018 school year for all grades. LS – Farewell Party for 5<sup>th</sup> Graders

June 11th Report Cards distribution

June 18th US – Makeup exams at 9:00 a.m