



Quaker Education in Palestine since 1869

## New Outdoor Learning Spaces

By Farhat Yousef, Project and Facility Manager



**T**he Facilities team is currently implementing two projects in the Upper campus, aimed at connecting our students more to the environment: the Outdoor Learning Center (OLC) and an outside study area (Quad).

The OLC will introduce many exciting environmental elements that will be the first of their kind to reach a school in Palestine. It is located at the south-east corner of the Upper campus with an area of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> and will provide additional stimulus for inquiry-based interdisciplinary learning outside the classroom. It creates the ground for students to watch, research, learn, and enjoy their surrounding environment. On one corner, the OLC is bound by the historic open-air amphitheater (to be renovated), with 250 seats that can host RFS art, music, and other events and activities.

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## Friends School Newsletter

Winter 2017



### Back to School Party at the Lower School

The annual Back to School party was attended by more than 1,000 students and parents. A short drama sketch about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables received a positive reaction from the audience.



**Ramallah Friends School**  
Quaker Education in Palestine  
since 1869

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## New Outdoor Learning Spaces

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We hope the OLC will benefit not only our students, but the Ramallah community as well. It will create the grounds for a natural bird habitat area—in the center of a very dense urban center—for migrating birds to rest, feed, and drink. Other elements include a man-made pool, a bird blind, and many indigenous and foreign trees and plants. There will also be a variety of scientific and environmental stations, such as photovoltaic lighting-poles, a weather station, whisper tubes, a sundial, and a bonfire. Designated stations/spaces that allow us to develop many future learning experiments and tools are also included.

The biodiversity of the OLC will allow students to study, outside the classroom, their surrounding habitats. It is an experimental space that can accommodate scientific and environmental learning stations which can continuously change to reflect student interest and the needs of the school's academic programs.

The Quad, located between the Science and Multipurpose buildings, will be a 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> outdoor study area that provides students with an opportunity to learn from and about their surrounding environment. It is considered a continuation of classroom spaces, and will be used for academic and extracurricular activities.

The area will be composed of two semi-circular study areas, shaded by wooden canopies to protect students from direct sunlight and light rain. The area will also include pathways, stairs and ramps, and landscaping elements. It will accommodate up to fifty students, and will be easily accessible for all.

## Lower School News in Brief

*By Frieda Khayat, Lower School Principal*

- Construction of an additional floor to the Kindergarten Building began during summer vacation and is well underway. As we continue to bring innovative learning approaches into the school, the new floor will introduce new learning communities for third-graders. Other steps towards interactive learning and teaching with the integration of technology include the installation of six interactive projectors in classrooms, and the purchase of Lego Kits and Math teaching resources.
- As an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) candidate school, our journey towards PYP authorization took another leap forward as we finally submitted our application to the International Baccalaureate Organization in October.
- Our daycare program has been extended to 4:30 p.m and is now open for Lower Kindergarten through 2nd grade and offers different activities including Zumba, Ballet, and other artistic activities. Students in grades First through Fifth are now offered a wide variety of extracurricular activities such as Ballet, Zumba, Gymnastics, Basketball, Soccer, Karate, and Drama for Fourth- and Fifth-graders. The most recent additions to our extracurricular activities program are "Engineering for Kids" and "Robotics," which introduce our students to the world of engineering and science technology.
- Lower School students participated in the annual Ramallah Municipality children's marathon. This year the money raised by the marathon will be used by the municipality to create a park for children. We are also excited to participate again in Ramallah Municipality's "Healthy and Environmentally Friendly School" project.

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# Ramallah Friends School is the Seed of Hope

By Linda Khalaf, 5th Grade English Teacher

“Harvard Admits ALL Ramallah Friends School Students” . . . Well, that’s my dream. It’s a dream that all parents have for their children. It’s a dream every student should believe is possible. Yes, I am a dreamer.

My father always said, “To dream is to achieve,” and it all starts with the seed of hope. Hope breeds optimism and motivation, which then yields the hard work necessary to achieve. Our Quaker Friends School was founded on this principle of hope in 1869.

Hope is the first encounter I have upon arriving to school each morning. Our welcoming security guard—Abu Hanna—greeted me with a “sabah al-khair” (good morning) that is full of optimism and positive energy. Next, I pass by the beautiful garden and dozens of trees that have stood for generations, alive and stronger than ever. As I stroll through this staggering beauty, I encounter the little people with the curious eyes. They are the first reminder of why I am here. They are the reminder that I was once a little curious person that wandered the same nurturing campus.

As the early morning starts to brighten, the little people start to multiply, and the magic begins. Hope fills the air as exuberant “good mornings” are exchanged. I shower reassuring smiles across the yard and pat tiny shoulders as I manage my way through the crowds of little dreamers. My mission to sow seeds of hope begins.



The Ramallah Friends School has embraced me as an elementary student, a high school graduate, a parent, and now as a teacher. Year after year it continues to give to me. I am blessed to be part of this warm community. Now, it is my turn to instill hope in every single little person I stumble upon at this extraordinary school. It is my turn to lavish the Ramallah Friends School with passion and inspiration. Today, it is my turn to give back. This is why I am here.

## Lower School News in Brief (continued from page 2)

- We held the first session of our new IB information program. Our PYP Coordinator conducted an interactive workshop in which parents got to experience for themselves how students are taught the IB Learner Profile traits in class.
- The annual Back to School party was attended by more than 1000 students and parents. A short drama sketch about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables received a positive reaction from the audience.



First IB information program.

# Interview with Jean Zaru

By Lora Assi, 12th grade



“The three most important things each person must have are equality, then dignity, and, of course, their basic human rights,” says Palestinian Quaker and long-time activist Jean Zaru.

Born in Ramallah, Palestine, Zaru promotes the notions of nonviolence and equality for all human beings. From 1968-1986, her husband, Fuad Zaru, was the administrator of the Ramallah Friends School (RFS). Zaru says that due to her numerous experiences in life, she was given many opportunities and made many great connections. Until recently, she served as clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting, established in 1910.

Along with her five siblings, Zaru attended RFS, where she later taught religion and ethics to young girls for sixteen years. She educated these girls about their roles in society and encouraged them to never stay silent in the face of inequality or injustice. After being active in leading the Young Women’s

Christian Association (YWCA) of Jerusalem, the YWCA of Palestine, and the YWCA of Jordan, Zaru went on to become vice president of the world YWCA from 1983-1991.

She also had a place on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, advocating the spread of values such as kindness and service towards one’s community, as well as non-violence and tolerance.

Zaru also served on the RFS Board of Trustees for two terms. After the 1967 war, she and other members of the Board ensured that the Quaker school would not cease to exist. After volunteering for three summers in a row, they were able to raise funds to enable RFS to go on.

In 2008, Jean published *Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks*, in which she illustrated the complex, painful realities faced by all parties in Palestine. However, she suggested an alternative: a religious path of nonviolence to peace and justice in Palestine.

Zaru continues to stress the importance of morality in education. To her it is, “. . . not enough to educate people as scholars. They must be true children of God.” She firmly promotes equality in education for all students, regardless of gender or disability. Jean says the best thing about the Ramallah Friends Meeting today is that everyone is encouraged to share what he or she has to say. The Meeting provides all of its members and visitors with a place to share stories, values, hopes, and dreams in an all-inclusive atmosphere.

## Upper School News in Brief

By Riyam Kafri, Upper School Principal

- Teachers kicked off the new academic year with setting personal, departmental, and school-wide goals aimed at refocusing our attention on students by offering modern, innovative, and enjoyable learning experiences.
- Seniors started the school year in August and our science laboratories have not been empty since. Between working on their internal assessments for the IBO officials, and running their science experiments on campus, seniors are keeping the campus alive and vibrant on weekdays and weekends alike.
- Almost all 716 middle and high school students participated in the Upper School’s annual democratic exercise, election of the new Student Council!

This year’s campaign saw three candidates for council president and two candidates for first vice president, most of them female students. The election process proceeded as planned with colorful banners filling campus during the few days before the voting.

- We are currently preparing our Model United Nations student delegations as they plan to attend five international Model UN conferences this academic year—in Jordan, Germany, Greece, and the Netherlands—before they start organizing the Seventh Palestinian Model UN Conference set to take place on the RFS campus in January 2018.

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# Our Students Find Their Voice Through Drama

By Samah Hussein, Theatre/Drama Teacher

Education can sometimes militate against creativity, and there lies the challenge for teachers and parents in keeping creativity alive.

At Ramallah Friends School, providing opportunities to experience new ways of thinking outside the box of our own prejudice has always been a priority. Whether children have the opportunity to perform in theatre productions or help out behind the scenes, studying Drama and Performing Arts not only engages the creative side of the brain, it also provides an ideal balance in students' patterns of studying.

In drama class, a student can become another, explore a new role, or try out and experiment with various personal choices and solutions to very real problems—problems from their own lives, or problems faced by characters in literature or historical figures.

Rather than sitting still and listening, students are encouraged to move, speak, and respond to one another. Students who are challenged by reading and writing often respond more positively to the imaginative learning offered by drama. This in turn helps them develop such skills as creativity, enquiry, empathy, self-confidence, cooperation, and leadership. These skills are also included among the IB Middle Years Program's Approaches to Learning (ATL), which enable students to become stronger and more self-regulated learners.



Most importantly, drama activities are fun—making learning both enjoyable and memorable. Giving children opportunities to explore, discuss, and deal with difficult issues, and to express their emotions in a supportive environment.

As a drama teacher, I find that it is my role to prepare students to live and work in the world as confident, responsible, and open-minded people. The moment I spot a positive change in my students' academic and behavioral skills at school always gives me enthusiasm and joy. At RFS, we are always paving the way for more young feet and we cherish the moments in which we watch our students grow into young men and women who will make the future a brighter place for our nation.

## *Upper School News in Brief (continued from page 4)*

- As part of RFS' environmental stewardship and extracurricular activities program we have launched a new community gardening project which invites all members of the RFS community to care, plant, and work in our organic gardens. Alumni, Lower and Upper school students, parents, staff, and even Friends in Residence all joined on a sunny October morning to weed the garden and share food and chat about what brings us all together—our school!
- We are excited to plant the garden together and fill it with a variety of winter vegetables, which we will do soon. Since the city has become a bustling center of cars, brick buildings, and busy streets, the RFS gardens have become a luxury most Ramallah residents miss and cherish.



# A School Like No Other

*By Adrian Moody, Head of Ramallah Friends School*

Ramallah Friends School is a school like no other. It is a school that promotes grace, dignity, self-respect, and acceptance of others. It is a school with a long history beginning with the Friends Girls School in 1869 and the Friends Boys School in 1901. In 1990, the campus of the Girls School became a co-educational Elementary School and Kindergarten and the campus of the Boys School became the co-educational High School as it is today. We now proudly identify as one school with two campuses that work collaboratively to ensure continuity in our programs both within the classroom and beyond.

RFS has a rich history and holds a unique and important location in the world. I was drawn to Ramallah Friends School because it is a school based on Quaker values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship. A school's mission and its values affect every level of a school from the quality of teaching and learning to how we make decisions, how we develop policies, and how we relate to each other. They articulate the school's purpose, our reason for existing, and the nature of the student body that we are designed to serve. They reflect the school's commitment to the concepts of intercultural and international understanding.

Based in Ramallah, RFS is a school surrounded by the conflict that affects all of Palestine and, as such, the Quaker values of peace and non-violence are an important guide for us. Peace is not just the absence of war and violence—it is more than that. It is about our day-to-day relationships with our families, our neighbors, our students, and our colleagues. Peace is about how we cope with people we may find different from ourselves and sometimes difficult. It is about accepting that there are different ways of doing things and that different does not mean worse. It is about right relationships. It is an important understanding that we bring to our students and our community. At RFS, we have a community living and working together to create a truly unique experience. It is an experience so unique that it lasts through the ages and has long-lasting effects in people's lives. It is an experience that offers opportunities to students that change their world and will, in turn, lead to change in Palestine and beyond.



## Participate in the future of the 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](http://www.fum.org).**

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

\*Donate either to the General Award Fund (partial, any amount) or ESJ Award Fund (full). Tuition fees for 2017-18 range from U.S. \$2,600 to \$4,020.

For further information and inquiries, feel free to contact our office at [development@rfs.edu.ps](mailto:development@rfs.edu.ps) or Tel: +972-2-295-2286, [www.rfs.edu.ps](http://www.rfs.edu.ps).

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## Donor Thanks

Donations received 1 April–31 October 2017

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

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Above: RFS Student Council elections, Fall 2017.  
Above, right: Community garden.



Friends School Newsletter

