



Rawdat
El Zuhur
روضه الزهور



Dear Friends

November 2002

It is this time of the year when we want to send you our warm greetings and to wish you a blessed and peaceful year. May wisdom prevail and the drums of war be silenced so that our people and your people will be spared the effects of an unwarranted for war.

In spite of all the violence which has been encompassing our region as a result of the thirty five years of Israeli Military occupation, we feel we are much more fortunate at Rawdat El-Zuhur than so many other schools in the West Bank and Gaza. Of course many of the parents of our children are out of work, and the trip to school is not a pleasant journey with harassing Israeli army road blocks all around. But at least once the children are in their little "Garden of Flowers" (the literal translation of Rawdat El-Zuhur) the learning and sharing are a near normal and joyful process. Yet the children do suffer from fear and anxiety, and they cannot but think of all those other Palestinian children who have been deprived of their basic right to education. Thanks to dedicated teachers who have found ways and means to run popular neighborhood schools in towns which have been under constant curfew, and where the schools are closed. A most precious gift for the Holiday Season is to give hope for the Children of Palestine. Hope that nobody can deprive them of. Hope which will help them look forward to a brighter future. This is the time to make a special gift so that we can keep the light of hope kindled.

Thank you for being friends of Rawdat El-Zuhur. We appreciate your support of our work with the children and your advocacy work for justice, peace, freedom and democracy.

With warm greetings for a blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year.



Samia Khoury
President



Salwa Zananiri
School Principal



The last song of the musical. "May the sun always shine on Rawdat El Zuhur"



The Jubilee year



Playing the role of Elizabeth and the first two girls

The Jubilee year is coming to an end, and in spite of the cancellations and change of plans due to the current situation, we were eventually able to hold the musical. It took place along with the graduation on June 8, 2002 at the National Theatre next door to the school when twenty four children graduated from the elementary section and will be moving on to other schools. The children danced and sang the story of Rawdat El-Zuhur through its different stages. The overture was a scene of olive picking in Birzeit, the hometown of the family of Elizabeth Nasir the founder. How she found the two young girls begging on the streets and accompanied them to their miserable home, the court order to give them shelter, and the coffee shop where her presence as a woman was a shocking phenomenon, were some of the beautiful and charming scenes of the musical. At the end, and in a very moving gesture two young girls came down the stage, placed a couple of leis around Mrs. Khoury and Mrs. Zananiri and accompanied them to join the crowd on the stage as they sang the closing song " May the sun always shine on Rawdat El-Zuhur, and may its leadership continue with the same founding spirit". Mrs. Khoury, President of the organization, assured the audience that with the new and young board members and the dedicated school Principal, the school will continue to be in very good hands as the new leadership of the organization takes over. The show was produced by Aya Jawharieh Shaker, the art teacher and Simon Azazian, the music teacher, and all the staff worked as one team to make that day a memorable occasion. Organizations and partners were honored after graduation, and a symbolic olive wood souvenir was presented to the organizations which were represented on that day. The special mug with the logo of the school and the children's art work was presented to each of the graduates along with

their diplomas. We were only sorry that the three past volunteers, Brenda Spencer, Tracy Hughes and Lori Hayes who made an effort to be with us for the celebrations in April could not join us again on that day. However, the hall was simply packed with friends, parents, representatives of the different associations and special guests. And it was a pleasant surprise to have one of our sponsors Jean Hopson and Revs. Martin and Betty Bailey show up that afternoon.

From left to right: Simon Azazian, Samia khoury, Aya Shaker and Salwa Zananiri



A permanent Exhibit

The Photo Exhibit representing the stages of the development of Rawdat El-Zuhur, and the children's art work which were prepared for the Jubilee Open House will be on permanent display in the school corridors until the end of the year. April 5, 2003, a whole year later, is the new date scheduled for The Open House. So hopefully it will take place on time to coincide with the day of the Palestinian Child.

The Olive picking dance in the Jubilee musical



Music

Shortly after the beginning of the school year, Rawdat El-Zuhur hosted a group of musicians from The National Conservatory of Music for a special program of music and songs, which the conservatory arranges for schools. The program aims at introducing the children to the various Oriental instruments including Oud, Buzuk, Qanun and a variety of percussion instrument, and allows the children to participate and show off their singing skills as they sing famous folk songs. The children enjoyed the musical program very much, and some were encouraged to register for one of the instruments. To make it easier for the children, teachers from the Conservatory give the children their lessons at the school. Some of those who graduated from the school have been pursuing their music lessons at the Conservatory.

Music teachers from the NCM.



Music teachers from the NCM introducing musical instruments to the school children

Legacies for the Trust Fund

Even after her death, Elizabeth Nasir, founder and past president of Rawdat El-Zuhur, continues to bring good fortune to the school. Two of her friends who passed away, Anna Baker and Frances Lehmborg left a legacy which went towards the Elizabeth Nasir Trust Fund. It has been the vision of the board to continue building the Trust Fund to ensure stability for the school. Only the proceeds of the fund may be used to cover any deficit in the operating budget. The names of Anna Baker and Frances Lehmborg will appear on the special plaque for the Trust Fund. Bless their souls. The Trust Fund was established through gifts offered on the occasion of the retirement of the late Miss Nasir in 1986, and from contributions in lieu of flowers for her funeral in 1987. The first legacy that was left by friends of Miss Nasir, was from Robert & Sophie Peterson. Their children Alan Peterson & Carolyn Ericson had attended the inaugural ceremony for the new floor in 1991 during which the library was dedicated to the memory of the Petersons.

Innovative ways of support

On one of her trips to Jerusalem many years ago, Huda Khouri, a Palestinian woman living in New York fell in love with the children of Rawdat El-Zuhur. Ever since that day, she made a yearly contribution towards the care of the children as well as book gifts for the library. But during this past year, Huda started a new policy. Her donations have been sent in lieu of gifts to her friends and family on special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, arrival of new babies, get well wishes, in

memory of friends, and in appreciation for a good deed, or a theatrical performance. It is amazing how her friends appreciated being honored in this special and original way which made so many of them feel connected to home through Rawdat El-Zuhur. From a recent e-mail Huda responds to my comments about planting olive trees by committing herself to planting solid roots in our children. "I will plant as much in Rawdat El-Zuhur as I can so your children will grow up to value the trees, practically, esthetically and symbolically and to share in all of life." Bless her for her commitment and for her faith in the children.

Laith Shehadeh, one of the babies honored by Huda upon his arrival in New York in June 2002, has made a substantial contribution, making him our youngest friend of Rawdat El Zuhur.

Linda Sheppard's Art Work

Linda Sheppard, an art teacher in New York and a long time friend of Mrs. Khoury and Rawdat El-Zuhur, has held an art fundraising activity in November for "Peace of Mind." The proceeds will be divided between Rawdat El-Zuhur, Seeds of Peace, and an orphanage in Malawi. We are indeed fortunate and grateful to have a friend like Linda, who used her art to give children around this troubled world some peace of mind.

An extra gift

Both the Global Ministeries and the BibleLands who sponsor children at the school have made an extra contribution last year other than the sponsorship allocation, to help the school meet special needs during these difficult times. BibleLands made another substantial additional gift this year which will certainly be a great help as the economic situation continues to deteriorate.

Vows in Canada, gifts in Palestine

Suleiman Zaroubi and Hoda Khouri, a Palestinian couple who got married in Montreal in July, had listed Rawdat El-Zuhur as one of three charities to receive donations from their friends in lieu of wedding gifts. This beautiful gesture was greatly appreciated, and the donations will go towards the counselling program which is very much needed under these stressful times.

Honoring the memory of Faisal El-Husseini

Mrs. Khoury and Mrs. El-Husseini



As of the beginning of the school year 2001/2002, a scholarship was established in memory of Faisal El-Husseini for his dedication to the City of Jerusalem and for his efforts to bring about justice and peace to the region. Khaled El-Kurd, an orphan in the upper kindergarten is the first recipient of the scholarship. During graduation, the prayer which Faisal had written in the style of the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, was read by one of the girls, and the Olive Wood Jubilee souvenir was presented to his wife Najat, who with her daughter Fadwa, had attended the graduation and the musical.

In memory of Samir Habash

The untimely sudden death of Samir Habash, the father of Board Member Dalia Habash was a great shock to the family as well as friends. At the request of the family, donations in lieu of flowers were made to the library of Rawdat El-Zuhur. How appropriate for the memory of Samir, for he so loved reading. Bless his soul.

A gift for the Eid

The Union of Charitable Organizations has made it possible for 11 of the school children to have new outfits for Eid El-Fitr. (The feast marking the end of Ramadan) Children all over the world love to wear new clothes on a Feast Day. But so many of the Palestinian children were even deprived this year of celebrating the feast. Most likely Christmas will also not be celebrated this year as long as the 'little town of Bethlehem' continues to be under siege.

These are not normal times

Although these are not normal times, we are trying our best to help the children lead a normal life, at least while at school. For security reasons and due to road-blocks and check-points, the regular field trips and picnics have not been scheduled on the program during these last two years. But the children and staff manage to come up with innovative alternatives such as this pizza lunch in the school hall.



A pizza lunch at the school hall

In memory of Mr. James Briggs

Our friends continue to find meaningful ways of making their contributions, for which we are indeed very grateful. Mrs. James Briggs made a donation through BibleLands in memory of her late husband James, which went towards the completion of the canopy in the court yard to help protect the children from rain and sun. The project had been initiated through an earlier donation by the United Nations Women's Guild (Queens- group, New York), which included the repair of the wall behind the canopy and the wiring around it.

The Alumni Club

Members of the Alumni Club continue to gather at the school once a month, but they are still hoping to have their special program which was scheduled for the Jubilee celebrations.



An alumni club meeting

Training at Rawdat El-Zuhur

Six girls from Hind Husseini Girls' College are doing their teacher's training at Rawdat El-Zuhur. They are all seniors at the College and two of them are getting training to be English teachers while the other four will be kindergarten teachers.

The website www.rawdat.org

Special thanks go to Rev. Robert Quillen, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Fremont, Ohio, our webmaster, who has volunteered to build the website and continues to work relentlessly on its development. Hearty thanks are in order as well to EZ works of Fremont, Ohio also, for providing the site for free. A service greatly appreciated and has helped a lot in promoting the work of the school.

The Special Trio

Encouraged by the freedom of thought and expression at the school, the twins Yousef and Mustapha and their friend Ahmad came up with an idea of starting a society within the school. Intrigued by the serious discussion those boys were having in one of the corridors, Mrs. Zananiri, the school principal asked if she could help. She was so impressed with the children's idea and encouraged them, provided they got an approval from their parents, because part of their plan was to pay their dues for the society from their pocket money. She also helped them formulate a certain commitment as members of the society. Those boys became very responsible and continue to help in different tasks, while their school performance improved significantly. But the highlight of this story is that the trio started collecting funds to go towards the national campaign to support the victims of the latest Israeli incursions into the Palestinian Refugee Camps. Of course that encouraged their friends, staff and administration to pitch in and the three boys accompanied by one of their teachers took the money personally to the Union of Charitable Organizations which was in charge of the campaign in Jerusalem, and they specifically wanted their money to go to the Jenin Camp because of the atrocities and the suffering that took place in that camp. The President of the Union was so touched by their gesture that he asked to recognize those children during graduation. He thanked them personally and offered each of them a special gift. They felt so privileged that they could help in their own small and humble way, in comparison with many children in the West Bank and Gaza who have been deprived of their normal and happy childhood.



Mr. Barbar, president of the Union of Charitable Organizations, honoring Yousef, Mustapha and Ahmad



The kindergarden children during the march

A March for the Rights of the Child

The kindergarten children joined other children as they marched and sang in the streets of Jerusalem at the end of May 2002, while handing out pamphlets on the Rights of the Child. Stopped by an Israeli soldier, one little girl was so petrified that she did not know how to react. Rescued by her teacher, she was encouraged to give him one of the pamphlets. With fear all over her face, very hesitantly she gave it to him with the hope that he will take time out to read it and learn something about the Rights of the Child and the need for freedom, protection and above all peace.

Drama and music. A scene from the Jubilee musical

Child Rights Education Project

In March 2002, The Canada Fund approved the support of a Child Rights Education Project which will cover workshops and a variety of activities in art, drama and music. The printing of cards from the art work of the children as well as special mugs with the school logo and the children's art work were funded through this project. Sample of the cards and a photo of the young artists are posted on our website www.rawdat.org





Visitors

In spite of the situation we have been getting a trickle of visitors during the jubilee year. Some are old friends and partners, some are sponsors, and some have just heard about the school during their solidarity visits to the country. The children enjoy showing off their skills and talents when there are visitors and "We shall overcome" continues to be one of their favorite songs to assure the international guests that with hope and faith we shall truly overcome.

A Delegation from the Global Ministries

Mr. Peter Makari, the Global Ministries Area Executive for the Middle East and Europe, and Linda Lawrence, administrator of the sponsorship program accompanied an African American Group from the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on their visit to the school at the end of October 2002. After a tour around the school, the group met with Mrs. Zananiri and Mrs. Khoury who briefed them on the work of Rawdat El-Zuhur. Mrs. Khoury seized this opportunity to express the appreciation of Rawdat El-Zuhur for the substantial support of the Global Ministries through the sponsorship program, and to present Mr. Makari with the special anniversary souvenir. On the other hand the Global Ministries presented the school with its beautiful glass logo. Later in the week, Rev. Robert Chase and Mr. Joseph Parlagreco interviewed both Mrs. Khoury and Mrs. Zananiri for a video which is being produced by the Middle East and Europe Office of Global Ministries in cooperation with the Proclamation, Identity, and Communications Team (PIC) of the United Church of Christ, and which will highlight partnership and mission in various contexts. Revs. Martin and Betty Bailey were responsible for the team's logistics and arrangements.

Photo of the children taken by the delegation



New Admissions for 2002/2003

Forty new children were admitted to school this year making the total enrollment 247; 116 girls and 131 boys belonging to 157 families. Besides from the 24 children who graduated in June 2002, twenty five other children did not return to school at the beginning of this year because it was impossible for them to continue commuting every day through road blocks and checkpoints. One of the mothers did not have the heart to move her three children despite all the difficulties. So now she accompanies them and stays at the school doing some voluntary work until it is time to take them back home.



Board and staff at the strategic planning session

Strategic Planning

After fifty years of caring for the welfare of children, and due to the up coming changes in the leadership of the organization, and its organizational chart, the board of Rawdat El-Zuhur decided it was the right time to come up with a strategic plan for the next 5 years. The process is involving board, staff, parents, children and alumni. Mr. Mazen Hashweh is facilitating the process, and it has been a very encouraging and enjoyable process for all. We hope to have a document by the end of the year which should be helpful for future development.

Mr. Mazen Hashweh, facilitator of the strategic planning



The Jubilee Book

The School board has approved the publishing of a special book about the history of Rawdat El Zuhur with photos to mark fifty years of service. We are still behind on fundraising for this project, but we hope we can count on our friends to support it. We also need your stories, photos, comments, anecdotes, especially from those of you who have visited us.

Substitute teacher

To help ease the pressure and keep the classes going normally, a substitute teacher was appointed this year to fill in for any teacher who might not be able to come to school. Being sick is not the only reason that teachers are absent. Very often a whole area is under curfew, or a check point can simply prevent teachers or workers from getting through.



Volunteers

Nahoko Araki, a Japanese woman volunteered for a month after the new school year had started. She helped the sports teacher in the physical education classes, and she also helped in some office work.

Cathy Wurfel, a volunteer from United Church of Christ will be spending six weeks at Rawdat El-Zuhur starting in the middle of November. It is always good to have a new face around, and Cathy has been great in communicating with the children and encouraging them to practice their English.

Unknown Deposits at the Arab Bank in New York

To our friends who sent us gifts through the Arab Bank in New York and have not received a receipt and a thank you note from us, our apologies. Your contribution has appeared in our audited accounts under a special item "contributions from unknown sources through the Arab Bank". The bank has promised us that as of October 2002, the eternal problem of not receiving deposit slips with the name of the depositors will be solved. We hope you will let us know if you were one of the unknown contributors, and help us recognize you. In spite of the bank's promise, when you make a contribution through the bank, please inform us at: info@rawdatt.org

The Arab Bank, 520 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022-4237
Account # 7001-600022-051
The Arab Bank, Box 138, 15 Moorgate, London EC2R 6PL
Account # 1001-570060-410





Rawdat El Zuhur
P.O. Box 19796 Jerusalem
Fax: 972-2-5834058
Tel: 972-2-6282062, 972-2-6287842
E-mail: info@rawdat.org
Website: www.rawdat.org