

Rawdat El-Zuhur Newsletter June 2022

As the final days of the school year come to an end, we would like to acknowledge the efforts and cooperation of the community of Rawdat El-Zuhur; staff, students and their parents during the course of this year. The extraordinary commitment made by all our staff, academic and support staff alike, means that we can continue to succeed and flourish as a learning community.

We would like to seize this opportunity to thank all our friends for their support, and to wish you and your families all the best for the summer holidays. Furthermore, we look forward to welcome as many of you as possible, to visit us again now that the travel restrictions have been lifted. Wishing you all an enjoyable summer!

Raeda Jasser

School Principal

Abla Nasir

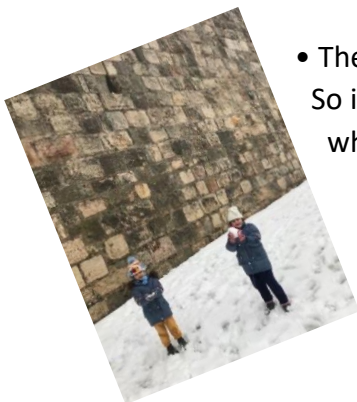
President

Lots of exciting activities took place during the last six months, and after our Christmas holidays. So, we hope you will enjoy reading about them as much as we have enjoyed participating in them!

Second Semester News and Activities:

- The city was covered with snow at the beginning of the second semester. So it was **a day off for the students to enjoy and play with the snow**, which is not a very common event.

- On January 22, 2022 **the grade reports of the first semester** were distributed to all students.



- **Stars of the Week:** At the end of the week, a group of children were chosen to be stars of the week. The aim of being a star is to motivate the children to be active and dedicated members of the community.



- On the occasion of **International Women's Day, March 8th**, the school had a holiday while the female teachers were honored during a special celebration.



- 9/3/2022 the “**Bring & Buy**” activity was launched under the title “We are all partners in giving”, whereby the money that was raised was allocated for the purchase of a wheelchair and hearing aids for children from outside the school community.



- **Mother's Day Activity. 21/3/2022.** In the Middle East, Mother's Day is celebrated at the beginning of Spring. All the mothers of the students were invited to celebrate with their children and they as well as the teachers participated with the children in some of the activities. They sang and did some drawing together. and there was a lot of fun when there were competitions between mothers and children
The proceeds of the lottery for a piece of embroidery were allocated for the school activities.



- 12/4/2022 under the title (**I am Like You**) the teachers accompanied the students of the fourth, fifth and sixth grades to attend a **play entitled (Like You Like Me) at the Al-Hakawati Theatre**. The aim of the play is to raise awareness among the students about the phenomenon of bullying and its negative consequences. Unfortunately, neither the school nor the parents are able to fully control what programs the children watch these days. However, living under a military occupation one does not need to watch movies, the violence prevails on the streets. So, it is very important for both the school and home to cooperate for the welfare of the children, and to ensure a nonviolent atmosphere both at home and school.



- 8/4/2022 **“Professions Activity”**: As young as they are, Kindergarten and pre-school children love to imagine themselves as professional people one day. So, the day focused on different professions and each child dressed with the attire that represented the profession he or she wanted to be in the future.



School Holidays: Children as well as their teachers always enjoy a break every now and then. During the last semester they enjoyed two major holidays:

- 14/4/2022 - 25/4/2022 **Easter holiday**

1/5/2022 – 5/5/2022 **Eid al-Fitr holiday**

- 14/5/2022 **School Trips for the second semester.**

Before the final exams started, a school trip was organized for all classes. The Kindergarten, first and second grades went to a **Strawberry Farm** to enjoy picking strawberries and to learn how they are grown. Then they headed to a park to spend a beautiful and enjoyable time playing freely.



Grades 3-6 went to the Moon City (Jericho) to visit **Hisham's archaeological and historical Palace**, and then to enjoy some fun playing at the **Tiger land amusement park**.



- As part of “**Teachers Without Borders**” project in partnership with the **Finnish Church Aid and the Palestinian Counseling Centre**, four training workshops were carried out for teachers about their needs, and a special training was done for the school Principal.
- **Two workshops were held with the teachers** to relieve stress on 2/6 and 7/6, and one of them was done outdoors in the nature.



- **Workshops and Training Sessions for Parents:** Two meetings were held with parents on 05/23/2022 + 25/5/2022 in the school hall entitled (How parents deal with their children during exams and manage stress).
- In cooperation with the **Young Men Christian Association (YMCA)** in Jerusalem, four female students from different universities have been accepted as interns at Rawdat, and their **internships** lasted 23 days, two hours per day.
- The **grant application submitted to the Palestinian NGOs Development Center, funded by the French Development Agency, has been approved** for the school's infrastructure project, and the project will be implemented during the summer vacation.

Staff Resignations and Retirements.

We are grateful for the dedicated service of the teachers who will be leaving us at the end of the school year. They will be greatly missed, but we want to wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

- The English language teacher Mrs. Tala Siam
- The Art teacher Tahrir Mahfouz
- Mrs. Rima Zakaria will be retiring after 25 years of commitment and dedication.



31/5/2022 A Graduation Party for the 30 Children of the Kindergarten:

For the first time, the school organized a graduation ceremony for the Kindergarten. The program included singing, dancing and small talk. At the end of the ceremony, certificates and gifts were distributed to the young graduates.

- 28/5 - 6/6/2022 The period of **final exams** for all grades from one to six, and the **summer vacation** started on 6/6/2022.



• 11/6/2022 Graduation Day of the 51st Graduating Class of 2022. Twenty four students from the sixth grade celebrated the ceremony in the presence of their parents, the President of



Rawdat El-Zuhur, members of the administrative board, teachers, and school friends. The ceremony was beautiful and heartwarming. It included a dialogue in Arabic and English by the graduating children, the addresses of the school Principal Mrs. Raeda Jasser, and the President of the organization Mrs. Abla Nasir. In his address, Mr. Nader Salaimah from the parents committee thanked the school administration and teachers for their dedication

in teaching and guiding their children. As usual, the ceremony included, the Dabkeh folk dancing and music which the children enjoy a lot.



13/6/2022 **Grade Reports for the second semester were handed out.**

A Fundraising Event:



Responding to an urgent appeal from Rawdat El-Zuhur, Samia Halaby, the Palestinian artist and President of Embrace the Children of Palestine, Nahida Halaby, Vice President, and Lana Kurtz, Secretary treasurer of Embrace, arranged for a fundraising event over the web in cooperation with Mr. Faisal Saleh of the Palestine



Museum, United States. Samia contributed five signed original proofs of her silkscreen prints to be sold for that special function while Lana contributed original photographic prints.

The school children while taking the attendees on a tour of the school, related their favorite memories of certain spaces and the history of the school. In honor of the event the school principal had prepared a short video of the children performing their favorite Dabke, the national folk dance, and singing a few songs, two activities that have always brought joy to the children. Some of the alumni and some parents present gave very positive testimonies about their days at the school. Samia reported that the children were magnificent and stole the hearts of all those who attended. Even after the end of the webinar, audience members wanted to watch the video of the children over again.

The school is very grateful to Samia, Nahida, Lana, and Faisal, the team who made this event very successful and who helped the school in these difficult times. In response the team in the United States insists that the event succeeded only because of the steadfastness and amazing collaboration of the heroic team of board members, the school principal, teachers, and alumni of Rawdat El Zuhur working tirelessly in Jerusalem.



List of Donors since the last newsletter

A special thanks goes to:

- Robert Larson in lieu of a Christmas gift for his father Peter Larson
- Anonymous through PALCRAFTAID, UK
- Embrace the Children of Palestine
- Isabelle Bacon Fund through ANERA
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Basem and Muna Hishmeh Foundation
- Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ
- Samia Khoury
- Samia Halaby, Lana Kurtz, and Faisal Saleh Fundraiser Campaign: *a special thanks also goes to all those anonymous individuals who couldn't participate in the live Webinar yet sent their contributions through Embrace the Children of Palestine.*
- Diana Safieh
- Hala Hallak
- Abla Nasir

The school **lost three of its very good friends** during the school year 2021/2022

- **Neville Usher** from Stratford-Upon Avon passed away on November 2, 2021. He and his mother and sister were good friends and regular visitors for many years, and ever since the days of the founder, the late Elizabeth Nasir. His visits and support never stopped even after his mother and sister had passed away. He will be greatly missed by all of us and by many of his friends and a cousin who had accompanied him during his visits to Rawdat El-Zuhur. The school and the children meant so much to him that he remembered Rawdat El-Zuhur in his will. Bless his soul; may he rest in peace.
- We received the following e-mail from the children of our longtime friend **Harold Buckingham** from Bloomfield, CT in the USA

It is with sadness, but also a sense of thanksgiving, that we let you know that our Dad was finally able to allow himself to be at peace and join his soul mate – our Mom, for eternity. Harold passed away quietly on June 5, 2022, at 7:30 AM at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital, while allowing us to provide him comfort.

Thank you,

His children, Margie, Bucky, and Janet

Our heartiest condolences to his children, his family, and friends. His support of Rawat El-Zuhur and personal friendship will always be cherished. We got to know him through one of the school friends who was his client and had left a legacy for the school. We were so sorry that he visited Jerusalem when the school was on holidays. However, the school principal showed him the school and he was ever so grateful. Bless his soul; may he rest in peace.

Also, the school received the sad news from the representative of the Presbyterian Church:

- *“**The Rev. Elizabeth B. Knott** was born on July 29, 1927 in Philadelphia, died June 13 2022 at Glen Oaks in Urbandale. She enjoyed traveling the world. After her retirement, she created Pal CraftAid a nonprofit organization that supported the Palestinian people. In the time Pal CraftAid was active she provided 1.6 million dollars for various projects in Palestine by selling Palestinian needlepoint embroidery and sculpted olive wood. Her greatest joy was visiting her Palestinian friends. In the Presbyterian Church she served at all levels from parishes to Synod. She was known for her hearty laugh and her generosity to many charities. Liz Knott was an outspoken proponent of equality for all people. She died with her longtime friend and companion, Connie DePond at her side. Our thanks to the staffs at Vintage Hills, Glen Oaks and Unity Point Hospice. A memorial service will be planned in the near future.”*

Liz was a very close friend of Rawdat El-Zuhur and its leadership along the years, and she and Connie enjoyed visiting the school, singing and dancing with the children. the following item had appeared in the school newsletter in 2010.

The board of Pal Craftaid honored and celebrated the retirement from active leadership of Pal Craftaid of Liz Knott and Connie DePond at a reception during the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in July 2010. In her acceptance speech she humbly accepted the award in honor of Palestinian Women. This reception kicked off a fund raiser for the Rawdat El-Zuhur School in East Jerusalem in Liz and Connie’s honor.

The Knott-DePond Fund aims to raise \$50,000 for the Rawdat School as a tribute to Liz and Connie, who, for 17 years, traveled to Palestine to buy craft products at a fair price, kept inventories of stock, shipped purchases to online buyers, ran sales in churches and major denominational events, stashed boxes in the basement and donated the profits to humanitarian work among Palestinian agencies. God Bless her soul, may she rest in peace.