

New Arrivals

Al-Shurooq School received five new children in September, four girls and one boy. Areej is four, totally blind and lives in Jericho. Abdel Afou is four, partially sighted and lives in Hebron. Nadia is three, totally blind and lives Hebron. Mayar is five, totally blind and lives in a village near Hebron. Zein is four, partially sighted and lives in a village near Bethlehem.

We are so pleased to have them all. It took them some time to settle down, especially Nadia the youngest, but they are all doing well now.



Nadia



Areej



Zein



Mayar



Abdel Afou

Library and Braille Production Unit

For the last three months, working at the production of Braille textbooks has been incessant. Eight new book titles have been typed on the computer and added to our collection, and three hundred volumes have been given out on loan.

Last minute: We have finally had our formal inauguration of the new premises on October 15, 2009 under the auspices of His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad. More details and pictures in our next issue.

We thank you all for your genuine interest, devotion, and support.



THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

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Quarterly Newsletter - Autumn 2009

Dear Friends,

We have already been through September, the first month of another new scholastic year and being at the new school is making all the difference. One can sense the excitement of the children everywhere, they love being in class, outside enjoying the different smells in the garden or playing in the beautiful long awaited for playground.

The staff is a lot more at ease, having the space and facilities they desperately needed to function in a healthy and professional setting.

Nonetheless, there is still a great deal to be accomplished in the building, screens to be fitted on a few windows, shutters not working properly and drains to be tested, but the overall situation at the new premises is very pleasant and delightful.

Helena Shehadeh

A Delightful Summer Camp

We had an extremely busy summer; first with the camp in Tiberias, followed by the summer school camp held at our own premises, which was both very pleasant and beneficial, particularly for our students who had joined inclusive education in previous years. We ran classes in computers, daily living skills, mathematics, Arabic and English for them.

Perhaps the most exciting event was having five volunteers staying with us for three weeks and working hard on developing our garden. Three were students of Edinburgh School of Arts and were joined by two Palestinian engineers living in Ramallah and Dubai. Their plan was to focus on building the garden, painting the metal fencing and doing workshops with the children involving them in the development of the garden on a daily basis. A lot of the workshops involved activities in the garden, tactile workshops and photography sessions. Every child had two disposable cameras, during the photography sessions, each child took photographs of whatever he/she thought they liked most around them. The results were amazing. Every child's favourite picture will be framed and put up in the school.

For two days, the five volunteers were joined by twenty-five other volunteers helping in the garden and doing all the hard work. The group was from Zyara 2009, a group of people from Britain and Dubai visiting Palestine for the first time and meeting the real people of Palestine. To know more about Zyara, please visit: zyarapalestine@gmail.com. The group produced a beautiful 10 minute video about their visit. [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdGbSsjSxwI>]



Sahar, Miriam and Ian digging up the garden

As for our children, the younger ones in particular, those days were the most delightful. They just loved working in the garden; weeding, digging up, planting, cleaning the ground, and throwing away all the rubbish. As'ad and Abdullah were among the happiest. Yet something quite disturbing occurred which caused us great concern. For several days Abdullah was observed digging strenuously in the ground making a huge pit. When he was asked as to what this was supposed to be, he replied: "I am digging a grave for my father." That was a tremendous shock for us all, and since then work with Abdullallah has doubled.



Children and volunteers shaping up the garden

Mainstreaming

This year only two of our children were able to join inclusive education. Eleven-year-old Nisreen, partially sighted and left Al-Shurooq to join a regular government school in Beit Sahour near her home. Her family has always maintained a very close relationship with Nisreen, making it a much easier integration for all parties concerned. Naturally, she is delighted to be back into her own local community.

As regards our twelve-year-old boy Qais, his situation varies immensely. He is totally blind and needs to adapt to his new surroundings. At first the headmaster and teachers of his new school refused to accept him at the school, particularly as Qais was the first blind student to join the school. Our social worker and Qais's parents had to work extensively with the headmaster and teachers to get them to accept Qais and give him the chance he deserves.