

A Personal Experience

A good friend and supporter of our work wrote the following and suggested it as a piece for our newsletter.

"It was October 2007 and our church vicar put out a letter inviting names of anyone interested in going on a Pilgrimage to Jordan and the Sinai organised by The McCabe Pilgrimages. The proposed date was the following October 2008. To travel anywhere in the Holy Land was something I had always wanted to do, so though we thought it pricey my husband and I knew it was an opportunity not to be missed.

When we had our confirmation and other details from McCabe, with it was a leaflet from McCabe Educational Trust. From that moment I had an overwhelming urge to raise money for Al-Shurooq School in Beit Jala in the district of Bethlehem, a school and home for visually impaired children under the care of housemothers.

*There are so many charities that need our support at home and abroad and I hate begging for help, so what could I do. Well, I thought I would combine helping McCabe with entertaining the senior members of my community. I decided on running a 'Beetle Drive' (a game with dice from my childhood days) on a Saturday afternoon with refreshments of home made cakes, tea and coffee, at a nominal fee. It was a great success. I had about twenty people come along to the Parish Centre of mixed ages and sex. This I followed with a Saturday three course lunch, I had about thirty people the first time. These fundraisings I started in Spring 2008. I don't have them too frequently as I don't want people tiring of them. My husband and I have also raised plants and sold them for funds. I have made banners advertising Beit Jala and people have been so kind and generous in supporting me. On 29 March this year Rosemary Nutt from McCabe came to St Mary's Parish Church, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham from London to receive a cheque from me for £1,500. It was lovely to give the cheque in front of a number of the congregation who had supported me. I shall be continuing with lunches and beetle drives and hope to achieve another thousand pounds this year. With best wishes
Joyce Parsons"*

Thank you all for your love, prayers, friendship and support. Without you the smiles on our children's faces would have never been possible.



THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

The National Library For The Blind

AL-SHUROOQ SCHOOL FOR BLIND CHILDREN

P.O. Box 19924, Jerusalem 91198

Tel (Library): +972-2-5814907

Tel/Fax (School): +972-2-2766151

Email: info@nsfvh.org

Website: www.nsfvh.org

Quarterly Newsletter - Summer 2009

Dear Friends,

This is the first newsletter to be circulated from our new offices. The smell of polish is still in the air, and the surrounding area looks fantastic with all its new furniture. The difference between the old building and the new is immense. The change is absolutely dramatic; from a simple school for blind and visually impaired children with its limited space, into a huge organization with many facilities for development. Not in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that God would give the blind and the visually impaired in Palestine such spectacular premises from which to launch our various activities. We are indeed most grateful to the German Development Bank, the main funder for the project through the United Nations Development Programme, and to all our friends and supporters for their generous donations that have covered the remaining cost of the building and the furnishings. A brass plaque is to be put up at the entrance of every room bearing the name of the donor, in recognition of the generous support.

Helena Shehadeh

The Big Permanent Move

WE ARE IN... On May 1st, the keys of the old building were handed over to our previous landlord. It was quite a nasty task having to empty the building completely, get rid of the old furniture and move the recently bought pieces into the new building. As for the old furniture, it was sold for a few good shekels to people buying second-hand items. Most of it collapsed while it was still being moved!! It took us almost two weeks to pack; all staff members were involved in the hard task and eventually in the unpacking.

The good thing is that we are here permanently and we do not have to move again. This is our third and last move. Very soon we will start working on the landscaping, the garden and the playground



In Class

Some of the children in front of the new school

Al-Shurooq School

No words can express how happy and excited the children were to be in such beautiful surroundings and pleasant atmosphere. They spent most of their free time in the open air, examining and exploring their surroundings. The school term ended on May 30th, two weeks earlier than usual as the dates for camping in Tabgha near Tiberias had been altered due to some repairs that had to be done on the site.

Camping in Tabgha

This year's camping in Tabgha was held from 1st - 8th of June. Arrangements were made for twenty children to attend but three dropped out the last minute. Accompanying the children were four staff members, Helen and three volunteers; Mrs. Ann-Marie Coleman and Meghan Thom from Scotland and Amy from Canada. In addition to the usual activities of swimming, crafts, games, English and music, a group of them had a go on learning how to play the bells. Dunia, one of the girls remarked boastfully, "we are the first Palestinians to play the bells in Palestine." The set of bells were sent to us from a friend in Scotland. The children thoroughly enjoyed playing them, and they had lots of fun. By 10th of June all children had gone home, and so had our three volunteers and to whom we are extremely grateful; they have been a tremendous help.

The children are due back for three weeks on July 19th for a summer camp to be held at the school. We will be running courses in computers, daily living skills, mobility, English, crafts and music.

Teacher's Training

Al-Shurooq School organized a 20 hour training course in vision rehabilitation for its five teachers and two social workers. The course ran through May and June and was offered by the vision rehabilitation department at the Bethlehem Arab Society in Beit Jala.

The course covered areas in visual system and eye disease, assessment of visual functioning, optic devices, development, learning and education.



Trainer with Jihan, one of our teachers