

Rawdat El-Zuhur Newsletter

December 2014

Dear Friends:

As 2014 comes to an end, Rawdat El Zuhur family looks forward to the New Year with hope for greater prospects of stability and peace for the school and for the whole region. We'd like to take this opportunity to wish all our friends a very Merry Christmas and to give thanks to all individuals and organizations who have faithfully supported and still support the school to fulfill its goals in serving the children of Jerusalem.

We would like to share with you news of our first term, which we hope you will enjoy.

Raeda Jasser, principal

Abla Nasir, president



The beginning of the school year

The school year started off to a rough start after experiencing a summer of emotional turmoil as a result of the war on Gaza, and the ongoing onslaught on Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa



compound. While dealing with these conditions, Rawdat El Zuhur strives to maintain its mission by providing the highest quality of educational standards and activities that promote and instill a strong Palestinian identity and responsibility to its students. Therefore the school decided to start off the year



with some activities and events involving music, art and drama. These activities were designed to ease the tension that the children are living through.

With funding from The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) /P.A.P.P., in cooperation with COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR AREA C AND EAST JERUSALEM (CRDP), Rawdat El-Zuhur was able to renovate and do maintenance work on some parts of the building. The kitchen was included in the project so that students could have some baking activities in it. The central heating system was reactivated to provide a warmer and safer environment for the children, and some windows were changed for better insulation. The school hall has also been sound-proofed for multi-purpose use.

Staff News

After 35 years of faithfully serving and nurturing the students as a teacher of Arabic and part-time librarian, as well as working with the alumni club, Ms. Basima Abu Libdeh decided to retire as of the beginning of the new scholastic year.

- After 31 years of dedicated work, and overcoming all obstacles on the Qalandia checkpoint, to make it to school, we are sad to see Ms. Nada Jamal El-Faqih retire. Both will be greatly missed, and we want to wish them an enjoyable retirement with their children and grandchildren.
- Ms. Dawlat El-Qadumi is taking a year off to care for her child, and Ms. Sumaya Kasabri is substituting for her as a math teacher.
- A new teacher, Ms. Fida Ghneim, was appointed for physical education. She also works in the library as part of a program to encourage reading and drama.
- It was unfortunate to lose Mrs. Julianna Turujman, due to the cancellation of the French program.
- Based on the desire and vision of Mr. and Mrs. Basem Hishmeh and their love of music, Ms. Rula Azar was appointed to be the new music teacher who will instill in the children a passion for music with the children.

The School Board

Rawdat El Zuhur general assembly held its meeting on October 15, 2014 to elect new board members to replace members who have completed their terms. The elected members are:

- Ms. Abla Nasir, Chairperson
- Ms. Amal Duaybis, Vice-Chair
- Ms. Margo Tarazi, Treasurer
- Ms. Maha Hussein, Secretary
- Ms. Dina Nasser, Member
- Ms. Dima Said, Member
- Ms. Mahasen Nasser-Eldin, Member
- Ms. Badiyah Bajjali, Member
- Ms. Lama Abdellatif Dajani, Member

The Board meets regularly to plan for the development and future of the school in addition to securing funding so as to ensure the continuity of the school while focusing on improving and adding value to the entire educational program.

Additional News

- Rawdat El Zuhur continues to work in cooperation with the Faisal Hussein Foundation through workshops and professional development courses for the staff. The goal is to utilize new strategies for collaborative learning.
- The school also participated in a contest in support of children's rights with the Faisal Hussein Foundation to provide the staff with new strategies and tools on how to deal with student violence and to protect rights of students.
- The school was privileged to be one of the recipients of the proceeds of an auction for the paintings of Samia Halaby, a renowned Palestinian painter residing in New York. The auction was mainly in aid of Gaza, but the school was one of the very few who were included from the West Bank and Jerusalem, and we are indeed grateful to Samia for thinking of us during these difficult times.

School Activities

- The fifth and sixth grade classes took part in the Palestine Comics Festival hosted by the Yabous Cultural Center.
- The third and fourth grade classes had great fun attending a puppet show with music at Al Hakawati Theatre on October 23rd. The key performers were Radi and Muneera Shhedeh who were the first to introduce puppet shows to Palestinian Theatre, and there was a moral to the show discouraging greed for money.
- On the 30th of October, the first and second grade classes participated in a theatrical performance with Mr Fadi Al Ghoul which included a Dabkeh dance.



Kindergarten Activities

- On the 8th of November, the school took part in an art activity in cooperation with the Early Childhood Resource Center funded by the Welfare Association. An Arts and Crafts bus was provided by the Welfare Association where groups of students were



brought in and were able to create and enjoy different kinds of activities using play dough, sand, cutting and pasting through using a various number

of tools. The main purpose of this activity was the development of the children's fine motor skills and to have lots of fun.

- There was also the activity of olive pressing which was conducted inside the school. This activity included a breakfast where the children were able to eat and enjoy a meal of *Zeit and Zaater* (oil and thyme) with olives.



Community Service

Rawdat El Zuhur strongly believes in community service, and encourages its students to do voluntary service. With the cooperation of the Parents Association, the staff and the children of grade six provided for a meal which they served to the residents of the Four Homes of Mercy in *Al-Ezariyah* (Bethany.)



The Alumni

With an effort to renew the activities of the alumni club, alumni who have their children at school were invited for a meeting and tour around the school to share with them the achievements and concerns in view of the current financial situation. It was decided that the next gathering would be an open house for all alumni who are already professionals and working. Unfortunately the planned activity had to be cancelled because of the violence that was encompassing the Jerusalem area due to the attempts of the religious settlers to take over Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.



Visitors

We would like to thank the following friends who stopped by to visit the school during the first term of the new school year from September till December 2014:

Octavia Taylor - Sep. 16

Joanna and Daniel Bergen, Representatives of Mennonite Central Committee - Sep. 18

Elizabeth Knott – Sep. 25

Congregational UCC Division of Overseas Ministries group – Oct. 2

AFPS Nantes (French group) - Oct. 29

Barbara Darling - Nov. 20

Friends of Diocese of Springfield, Illinois group – Dec. 4

Please continue to check our website www.rawdat.org