

Khan Younis and Rafah

PWU

Rummaging through garbage piles for paper scraps, carton and wood pieces - anything to keep a fire lit for cooking purposes - has become a routine after school activity for many of the children who attend the Palestine Women's Union kindergartens. As in all corners of Gaza, the basic necessities of life have become scarce with the closure of the border.

The PWU operates two preschools in the neglected and impoverished areas of Khan Younis and Rafah that enroll a 155 children, ages 3 - 5 years.

Since April, the lack of fuel has made automobile transportation impossible and the number of children in attendance has decreased to the 80. Most live in the preschools' immediate vicinity. A few teachers were able to continue coming to school by foot - a 30 to 40 minute walk twice a day in the scorching heat.

Even through these dire times, the PWU continued to receive daily nutritional supplements of fortified biscuits and milk through ANERA's Milk for Preschoolers Program.

Latter-day Saint Charities donated hygiene kits containing shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, towels, combs and soap to PWU students through ANERA's In-Kind Program. School kits of notebooks, paper, rulers, erasers, and coloring pencils allowed children to participate in ANERA's annual drawing contest, which created a positive atmosphere at the schools. The school kits were especially helpful since stores in Gaza currently lack stationary and pencils.

Despite hardships, the schools remained in operation, providing their recreational, social and educational services, until graduation day on May 31st.



Preschoolers participate in ANERA's drawing contest.



Children watch in anticipation as their grandmother cooks their meal over a wood fire.

The Schools

GAZA

Atfaluna (*Our Children*) Society for Deaf Children, Gaza City

Palestine Women's Union kindergartens, Khan Younis and Rafah

JERUSALEM/WEST BANK

Dar El-Yateem (*House of Orphans*), Tulkarem

Dar El-Tifl (*House of Children*) boarding school for girls, Jerusalem

Rawdat El-Zuhur (*Garden of Flowers*), elementary school, Jerusalem

JORDAN

The Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, Salt

LEBANON

Al-Kafaat (*Abilities*) Rehabilitation Institute for physically and mentally challenged students, near Beirut

ANERA'S SCHOLARSHIP

PROGRAM benefits hundreds of children from seven schools in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon and Jordan. Gifts of \$240 per child per year, given by ANERA donors, help cover costs such as books, school supplies, teacher and staff salaries, clothing, basic medical care, and room and board.

ANERA (American Near East Refugee Aid) is a leading non-sectarian, non-political, 501(c)3 organization providing humanitarian support to the Middle East since 1968.

We deliver immediate and concrete results by virtue of our 40 years of experience in the region and highly trained staff in Jerusalem, Gaza the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan.

ANERA works with local institutions to design and implement social and economic development projects, and provide relief in response to emergency needs.

Summer 2008

News from ANERA's Scholarship Schools

ANERA
Scholarship Program

Feeling the Rhythm

ATFALUNA

Gaza streets, once jammed with traffic, are nearly empty today apart from the occasional taxi fueled with cooking oil, which sputters and chokes walkers with its toxic fumes. It has been almost one year since an embargo blocked supplies going into Gaza, crippling normal living, devastating the economy and rendering scores of children ill and hungry.

Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children gave its students a one month advance on their summer vacation in response to frequent power outages, generators without fuel, and no school buses.

Despite all odds, the spirit of the children at Atfaluna remained strong. They took the initiative to create their dream: the Atfaluna Palestinian Debka Dance Troupe.

The troupe's leader, Mahmoud, a small and cheerful thirteen year-old, was one of the several deaf students who astounded trainers during the tryouts. The enthusiasm, dedication and talent of the troupe - four girls and three boys - were

Helping Hands

HOLY LAND INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF

Jordanian culture is built on good social relations, and children love to visit and enjoy time with their extended families during the summer - a time for gatherings, weddings and catching up over tea.

At the end of this school year at Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, a mix of excitement, tension, satisfaction, and weariness prevailed.

The older students did a beautiful job caring for the little ones in addition to their studies. Everyone is tired, but satisfied with a peaceful and happy year.

Two deaf girls will finish 12th grade and take the final high school exam.

Planting Hope
THROUGH EDUCATION



The Atfaluna Debka Troupe in action.

cause for celebration as they debuted at this year's graduation, a joyous occasion in itself.

The audience cheered and clapped as Mahmoud led his troupe using eloquent hand signals, orchestrating stops, starts, and turns to the beat of *Debka* music and a strong *tubla* (drum) beat.

To the children, the performance represented the empowerment of the deaf community of Gaza. Dance had finally entered their world.

Twenty-three students graduated from middle school this year. Enrollment numbers at Atfaluna are expected to reach 300 students next year.



Arwa joins Hassan for a meal.

Together with two boys from the school, they will try to get the certificate which will allow them to study at Jordanian universities. Their greatest wish is to attend university and become teachers for the Deaf.



On Rawdat's French Day, a student proudly shows off her banner with days of the week in French.

Parlez-vous Français?

RAWDAT EL ZUHUR

The 27 sixth-graders at Rawdat El Zuhur who graduated this year did not exhibit the usual end-of-year excitement and sighs of relief. They were sad that they will not return to the second home that has embraced them for six years. In fact, they wanted a seventh grade to be added to the school!

Students were all very appreciative of the unique active learning at Rawdat, where children are at the center of a teaching method that employs problem-solving, critical thinking and analysis.

One of Rawdat's challenging programs is French. Because the majority of parents are unable to help their children with homework, Rawdat recognized the need for practice, and began using break time for communicating solely in French. It was a very successful initiative as the children showed great progress not only in their grades but for their love of the language. A representative of the French Consulate attended French Day and was impressed with students' language skills.



Ten year old Muhajed have been living at Dar al Yateem for three years.



Elin and Sabrin share a room.

Thank You ANERA Donors

DAR EL YATEEM

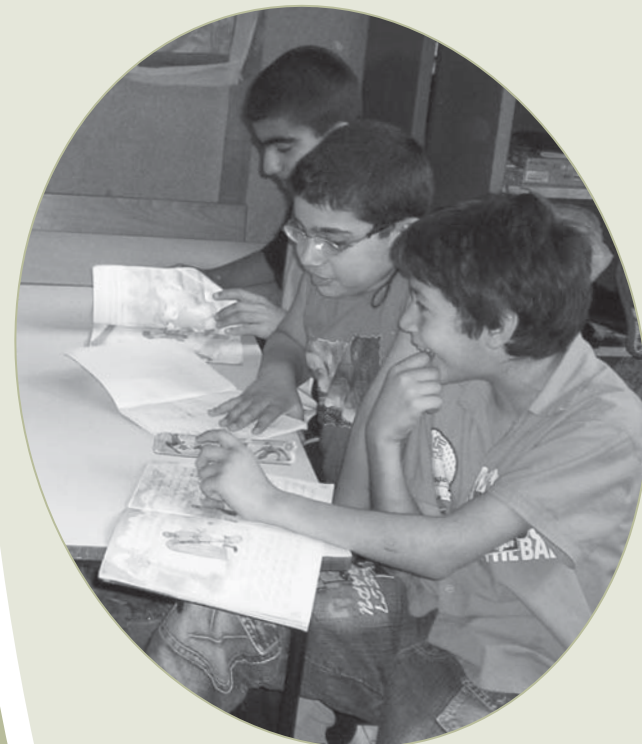
Most of the residents have already left Dar El Yateem to spend the summer with their families.

Students this year participated in many trips to historical sites and activities with the cooperation of the Ministry of Culture, Y.M.C.A., and friends in Tulkarm.

The election of a new board was an important event. Over 300 members elected nine new board members and Ms. Laila Tayeh was elected as the new president.

Dar El Yateem staff and students express strong appreciation to ANERA donors who have generously supported them throughout the years and have assisted in projects, such as the new computer lab, kitchen, rooms, and other basic necessities.

With such donations, Dar El Yateem, located in an isolated and turbulent part of the West Bank, continues to provide psychological and social help for its residents.



Ishac (far right) joined Al-Kafaat in 2005 at the age of 9, with mild retardation. His disability makes it difficult for his parents to communicate with him. Training and constant professional and therapeutic help ensure a better future for Ishac and his family, thanks to assistance provided by ANERA donors.

Unfoiled by Turmoil

AL-KAFAAT FOUNDATION

The severe economic crisis, fierce political conflict, and armed clashes punctuated the academic year at the Al-Kafaat Foundation. On many occasions, centers had to close because of the dire situation – particularly during the recent May clashes that occurred close to the five rehabilitation centers. Fortunately the situation has since stabilized.

Despite these challenges, Al-Kafaat staff continued to provide vital medical care, therapy, rehabilitation and educational activities to more than 1,000 residents in all locations. The village center recently improved its line of products, which are all produced by physically and mentally challenged residents.

At this year's commencement, approximately 1,000 students graduated from the different centers, either completing their academic studies (secondary school, college and university) or their training (technical and vocational education).

Extracurricular Fun

DAR EL TIFL

It has been an eventful and successful year for Dar El Tifl. The school was able to secure an adequate number of classrooms for its increasing number of students and was able to get valid permits for its West Bank teachers to enter Jerusalem.

This year Dar El Tifl focused on extracurricular activities:

Kindergarten Art and Handicrafts Exhibition, March 17, 18 & 19

Inaugurated by the General Director, Ms. Mahira Dajani, the exhibition featured kindergartners' artwork. Students, parents, friends, and ANERA staff were all invited.

Annual Sports Festival, April 12

Elementary and Secondary schools participated in gymnastic performances, karate, folklore dancing, and beautiful athletic routines using colorful banners.

Bazaar, April 17, 18 & 19

Items sold were produced by employees and students – science projects, embroidery, artistic bead accessories, paintings, artistic lamps, and Palestinian pastries.

The Graduation Ceremony, May 22

31 students from the Literary Stream and 21 from the Scientific Stream graduated this year.



Remedial Classes

Courses are in session for students of all levels during the summer.

The school is working to upgrade the boarding dining hall into a stage with light and sound capabilities. Next year the school is planning to participate in Jerusalem's Capital of Culture 2009 activities.