

NEWS

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ANERA

AMERICAN NEAR EAST REFUGEE AID

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IN HONOR OF 5

With the recent Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the start of a new school year, we chose to focus this issue of ANERA News on Gaza and the Milk for Preschoolers Program.

Nourishing Gaza

By Noelle Janka

When I sit down with Seham Gredly, the director of the Atfal Rafah preschool in Gaza's Brazil Refugee Camp, she tells me right away she is grateful for the help her community has received from the international community because life in Rafah is "very, very hard."

Seham's school, Atfal Rafah, participates in the Milk for Preschoolers Program initiated by ANERA and Islamic Relief in 2003 in response to rising malnutrition and anemia rates among children under five in Gaza. The program feeds more than 13,000 preschool children a serving of fortified milk and wafers each school day.

While her salary is small, Seham tells me she feels lucky to have it at all. She knows many people who are unemployed and unable to feed their children. Her colleagues, teachers Sawsan Queshta and Nuzha Afane, nod in agreement. They consider the MfP Program a true

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NOELLEJANKA



Haya and her mother Samira (far left) with Haya's teachers.



SCHOLARSHIP PROFILE: Ikram from Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children

The first day of school is frightening for many children. But imagine the fear of Ikram, who was born profoundly deaf. When she began kindergarten three years ago at the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children in Gaza, it was her first venture away from her parents. In fact, it was her first time outside her home, except for visits to the doctor.

Thanks to the wonderful staff of teachers and counselors at Atfaluna, Ikram slowly gained confidence, learned to communicate with the hearing world, and blossomed into a beautiful little girl with a radiant personality. Still there are scary days in her life. Last year she was traumatized by the sight of tanks and helicopters. She cried constantly and refused to leave her home. But with the constant support of her mother and school counselor, she returned to her classes at Atfaluna and regained that sparkling smile.

Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children was founded in 1992 by Mrs. Geraldine (Gerry) Shawa. Atfaluna teaches more than 250 hearing-impaired children from kindergarten through vocational training. Ikram is one of thirty students from Atfaluna receiving scholarship assistance from ANERA donors.

ANERA's Scholarship Program helps cover the costs of tuition, books, school supplies and medical expenses for 210 students in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon and Jordan. For more information about how you can help a child in the Scholarship Program, contact Nancy Nye, Scholarship Program Coordinator, at (202) 347-2558, ext. 20 or nnye@anera.org.

Nourishing Gaza

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blessing, benefiting their students and the community in countless ways.

The women believe the MfP Program makes the children more active on the playground and more attentive in the classroom. "By the end of the year they act like monkeys," laughs Sawzan. "We can't control them! But we don't mind. It is better this way." With the snack the children seem more willing to participate in class activities. "[The distribution of the fortified snack] also teaches them organization and responsibility," adds Seham, "because the children learn to take turns distributing the milk and wafers, and they all learn to throw their trash away."

Despite violence on the street and cold, rainy winter weather, Seham reports very few absences this year. Of the few, only two were illness-related. The teachers

The teachers believe the students are more resilient to common illnesses because the milk and wafers provide them with the vitamins and minerals they need.

believe the students are more resilient to common illnesses because the milk and wafers provide them with the vitamins and minerals they need.

Seham also speaks highly of MfP's nutrition training programs for mothers. She attended one herself and found the mothers to be very receptive. "Mothers used to feed their children bread and tea for breakfast. Now they feed them nutritious food and ask me where they can get more milk for their families. They understand too that milk is not enough. They try very hard to include fruits and vegetables into their children's diets," adds Sawzan, who explained that most mothers in Brazil Camp must seek help from others to pay for fruits and vegetables.

Seham says the teachers can understand the mothers' pain and they see how much the MfP Program comforts them. "[The mothers] can tell that the project is carried out with much love and honesty. It is the best benefit to society. It is a good, good program." ▀

We recently interviewed Salah Sakka, ANERA's Gaza Director, to get his description of the recent changes in Gaza. If you would like to read his interview, please visit our web site at www.anera.org.

PLANNING AHEAD?

Please remember ANERA in your will as:

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For more information about ANERA's Legacy Society or about a gift from your estate, contact Nina Dodge (ndodge@anera.org), tel: (202) 347-2558.

Beyond Big Business: Feeding Gaza's Children

By Noelle Janka

Outside the gates of the Binat Al Mostaqbal Kindergarten in the southern Gaza area of Khan Younis, Aboud and a colleague stand on a flatbed truck unloading colorful crates of fortified milk and wafers boxes. Both men work for Sinokrot, a West Bank bakery that has been producing the fortified wafers distributed to more than 13,000 children in the Milk for Preschoolers (MfP) Program.

A young, smiling man in his early twenties, Aboud manages the distribution of both the milk and wafers to the schools in southern Gaza. “After signing a distribution agreement and becoming a partner in the milk program, Sinokrot took responsibility for delivering both the milk and wafers to the preschools,” comments Mona Abu Ramadan, ANERA's MfP Program Manager. “They saw the importance of this program and wanted to help as much as they could. They are happy to be serving the Palestinian community.”

The Sinokrot Food Company, based in Ramallah, manufactures more than 90 kinds of confectionaries including cookies, biscuits, nougats, and chocolates. These products are distributed throughout Israel and the

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Aboud and his co-worker unloading a delivery of milk and wafers.

ANERA Honors Long-time Donors and Playgrounds for Palestine

Project partners and loyal donors make ANERA's work in the Middle East possible. In September, ANERA will honor Playgrounds for Palestine and the multitude of loyal ANERA donors who consistently support our work.

Playgrounds for Palestine (PfP) builds playgrounds for Palestinian children not merely as a place for play, but as a refuge where children can find a reprieve from the unforgiving reality of occupation.

PfP was founded in 2001 by Palestinian human rights activist Susan Abulhawa. While visiting Jerusalem, Ms. Abulhawa was moved by the faces of children losing their childhood. She witnessed the heartbreaking life of Palestinian children caught between military occupation and oppressive poverty.

With ANERA's assistance, PfP has installed playgrounds in Bethlehem and Hebron in the West Bank, and Khan Younis and Rafah in Gaza. ANERA engineers worked side-by-side with PfP volunteers to install playgrounds that provide some fun for children who live with so much hardship.

This year, ANERA also honored a group of people very near and dear to our hearts. Individual donors – those who give financial support because they believe in ANERA's mission to create opportunity and hope in the Middle East – are, and have been, the backbone of our organization for 37 years.

Year in and year out, individual donors demonstrate their commitment to helping people in Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan. Last year the combined giving of individual and institutional donors totaled \$5,915,684. Giving gifts of all sizes, through wars, intifadas, and periods of peace, the steadfast support of ANERA's donors make it possible to meet emergency needs and carry out long term projects.

Although hundreds and hundreds deserve this honor, two representatives accepted the awards on behalf of the entire family of donors: Marjorie Anderson, a retired teacher from Pennsylvania and retired Ambassador Richard Parker of Washington, DC. To them, and the thousands they represent, a heartfelt thank you. ▀



The area before the new playground.



The area after the new playground.

ANERA Online

ANERA has launched its online e-newsletter! It contains information about our work and the people being helped by our projects. Join our e-Community by visiting us online at www.anera.org and signing up, or fill in your email address below:

Beyond Big Business

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Palestinian territories, and are exported to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries. Sinokrot employees take their role in the MfP Program, as well as their greater role in relieving malnutrition, quite seriously.

Tariq Abu Khaizaran, Business Development Manager for Sinokrot, explained “Kanz,” the name of the wafer, means treasure in Arabic. “This is both because the wafer is like a treasure, containing so many important vitamins and minerals, and because we must learn to treasure our health,” said Tariq. The Kanz wafer is the first fortified food product manufactured in Palestine.

“Kanz,” the name of the wafer, means treasure in Arabic, “ because the wafer is like a treasure, containing so many important vitamins and minerals, and because we must learn to treasure our health.”

- Tariq Abu Khaizaran, Business Development Manager, Sinokrot

With warehouses in Gaza City, and the middle and south areas, Sinokrot ships the fortified milk from the dairy in Nablus and delivers it, along with their own fortified wafers made in Ramallah, through the Gaza border crossing to their warehouses and later to the preschools. Previously, each preschool director traveled to ANERA’s Gaza warehouse to pick up their school’s monthly supply. Currently, 12 Sinokrot staff members deliver the milk and wafers to each school once a month. Given the travel difficulties to and from Gaza, this is no small feat.

ANERA’s warehouse manager monitors the supply, and ANERA MfP coordinators regularly visit the schools to monitor the children’s intake of these nutritious snacks. In preparation for the Israeli disengagement, ANERA and Sinokrot stored a one month’s supply of milk and wafers for each participating preschool in Gaza.

With the delivery arrangement working so well this past school year, the program hopes to be able to add more qualified preschools this fall. The Milk for Preschoolers Program currently serves 122 preschools, and 97 eligible schools will be added as funding becomes available. Those selected are managed by charitable organizations in disadvantaged communities. **▶**

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Taube Roy
Joe Tabachnick
Edward Said
Dr. & Mrs. Kazimi
The mothers of Mariam Miqdadi & Fatima
Abdul-Hamid, and Ahmad & Suzan Ibrahim
Cornelia Stone James
Mrs. Samia Khoury
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Help people in need:

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- ▷ reduce administrative costs.
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ANERA

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