

Partner Highlight: Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts (Lebanon)

This quarter, the UPA Children’s Fund is awarding a grant to the Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts, located in Lebanon. ARCPA works with youth between the ages of 7 to 14 living in Shatila, Mar Elias and Burj Barajneh refugee camps. The influx of more refugees to the camps as a result of regional conflict is adding stress to a community of Palestinians that already face dire economic and social circumstances.

Children, in particular, face increased health and developmental challenges as social services for refugees become more limited with the increased demand. ARCPA fills this need for the children by helping them improve their well-being. With the grant, children will participate in recreational and



active learning activities that are designed to inspire their creativity and self-expression and ultimately encourage a more positive transformation in their personal growth.

A Token of Thanks from Refugee Children

The children of Shatila, Mar Elias and Burj Barajneh refugee camps, taking part in ARCPA activities mentioned above, have a gift to offer you. The “Janana” CD, provided by ARCPA, features songs sung by children around the world in solidarity with Palestinian children living in exile. When you join the Circle of Hope, UPA’s monthly-giving program, with a pledge of \$20 or more per month, you have the opportunity to receive the “Janana” CD as the children’s “thank-you” for your support.



By joining the Circle of Hope, with \$20, \$25, or \$30 per month, you are becoming actively engaged in transforming the lives of Palestinians. Your monthly gift will help children, families, patients and refugees live in dignity by making their access to quality education, nutrition, healthcare, and emergency relief possible.

Please join the chorus by becoming a sustaining contributor, and visit: helpupa.org/hope

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The Gift of Education

UPAConnect

Issue 6 • Spring 2015



Running for a
Brighter Palestine



Raising funds for UPA’s Scholarship Program!
Accepting runners and volunteers now. Learn more inside.

Shortly after its establishment in 1978, UPA launched its university scholarship program to help young Palestinian men and women achieve a sacred goal: education. Since 1948, Palestinians have lived in an environment where uncertainty is a way of life, emergencies common and plight cyclical. Education is the only possession they have that cannot be abandoned, confiscated, demolished or occupied.

Throughout the years many have asked me whether UPA should continue funding scholarships when employment is scarce. To this question my answer is, “Yes, indeed.” Schooling is a process after which one is certified to get a job. Education, by contrast, is a journey through which human beings are empowered to be their best selves.

Before you receive the next edition of this newsletter, the UPA scholarship committee will be working hard to welcome a new group of students into the program. This will be a

commitment on our part to support a new group of young men and women through this sacred journey one more time.

Through your ongoing commitment to UPA, you have demonstrated a profound understanding of the importance of this program. Thank you.

A small group of our supporters has found a unique way to help raise funds for the scholarship program. They not only give of their time and resources—they are giving of themselves. You can read more about the Iqraa team inside.

Sincerely,

Saleem F. Zaru
Executive Director




Connect thru Giving
UPA is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
Contributions are tax-deductible according to applicable laws.



The UPAConnect newsletter is published quarterly by **United Palestinian Appeal**. UPA was founded in 1978 as a non-profit humanitarian organization to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians, particularly those in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and refugee camps throughout the Middle East, and to contribute to the long-term socioeconomic and cultural development of Palestinian society.



Running for a Brighter Palestine

 Since 2008, UPA has partnered with the Iqraa running club in the Washington, DC area to raise over \$162,000 for education projects in Palestine. Iqraa, which means “read” in Arabic, has trained 129 runners—including beginners—to successfully complete the Baltimore Half-Marathon or 5K or the Marine Corps Marathon or 10K. (This year, the races will be held on Oct. 17 and Oct. 25, respectively.)

“I am proud to wear the Iqraa t-shirt with our slogan, ‘Running for a Brighter Palestine,’” said runner Cathy Baker (pictured). “Because of Iqraa’s connection with UPA, my running is not just for myself, but for a useful end—education of students in Palestine. Thinking about what we are accomplishing together makes me push harder and run faster.”



To learn more about Iqraa, come to an info session at UPA:

April 25, 1 pm or
April 29, 6:30 pm

or contact Iqraa Coordinator
Kirk Campbell via email at
kirkcuachan@yahoo.com

Children’s Fund Quarterly Report: January - March 2015



Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children
Gaza City, Gaza Strip

Atfaluna, with support from UPA, provided playgroup and therapeutic activities for 50 at-risk deaf students aged 12 to 17 years old. The project aimed to build the students’ self-confidence and help them address any ongoing emotional difficulties they have. The activities included drama sessions, performances and recreational field trips.

A 16-year-old deaf girl named Islam participated in the project. Her mother died when Islam was five years old. During the 2014 war, she became frightened and worried and even attempted suicide. Atfaluna teachers said that after she joined the program “she gradually started to get better, as she was provided with the opportunity to discuss the stress she felt and minimize her fears and concerns.”



Community Rehabilitation Center for the Disabled
Gaza Refugee Camp, Jerash, Jordan

With a grant from the UPA Children’s Fund, the Community Rehabilitation Center screened for hearing and speech impairment among children in the camp, provided 150 children speech and physiotherapy treatments and raised community awareness about the rights of people with disabilities. The interventions helped improve the productivity, independence and academic achievement of the children in comparison with their peers at school.

Gaza Camp is home to approximately 24,000 Palestinian refugees who fled Gaza after the 1967 war. The camp struggles with poverty, overcrowding, unemployment and poor shelter quality.



Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP)
Saïda, Lebanon

UPA continued its sponsorship of the Strengthening Amity in the Arts (SAWA) program, organized by ULYP. The SAWA program uses collaborative art and music programs to encourage creativity, critical thinking and self-confidence. The program offers these activities to 25 Palestinian refugees and 25 marginalized Lebanese children to break down the social barriers that exist in Lebanese society.

Two teachers from each participating school also participate, to encourage the continuance of the lessons after SAWA ends. This quarter, the program focused on teaching the meaning of gender equality and human rights, as well as suggesting ways to peacefully pursue those goals and solve disagreements.



YWCA Preschool
Jalazone Refugee Camp, West Bank

More than 100 children benefit from the work of the YWCA in Ramallah, which operates the Jalazone Refugee Camp Center. The center’s mission is to promote education and well-being among disadvantaged children in the refugee camp by creating a safe space for play that contributes to childhood development, including social skills.

Thanks to a UPA Children’s Fund grant, the YWCA was able to remodel the walls surrounding the outdoor play area, enhancing the outdoor experience that the Center offers. Teachers are able to use this outdoor space for activities that develop children’s speech abilities and behavior. Five-year old Hala Qasim writes, “I feel it’s my second home. I spend as much time as I want here without getting bored.”

Embracing Life Delegation

Dealing with Uncertainty

We arrived in Ramallah at dusk on Thursday, March 12th, though without our surgical tools, which we were not allowed to bring into the West Bank. We still hadn’t obtained a permit to Gaza. The next day, we had intended to go to Al Shifa and Nasser Hospitals in Gaza with two teams of Palestinian surgeons that are part of the Embracing Life Project.

When we did not receive the Gaza permit, we changed plans. Despite the short notice, we screened 90 patients in Jenin, Ramallah and Hebron, and spent 2.5 days performing operations. Our team included Drs. Mahmoud Abu Hatab, Muntasir Asia, Munthir Atawnah, Jafar Ayes, Wa’el Halaby, Nasr Jafar, research coordinator Hassan Zawahrah and assistants from partner universities (Al Quds, An Najah and Birzeit).

We look forward to returning to Palestine in May 2015 to screen patients in Beit Jala, Ramallah, and Tulkarm, and operate on children with clefts and craniofacial deformities in both Beit Jala and Ramallah. We are also working hard to obtain a permit for our surgical teams to go to Gaza again.

— Dr. John van Aalst
Embracing Life Project Director

