

UPAconnect

Issue 14 • Spring 2017



In this issue:

- Our university scholarship recipients say, "Thank you!"
- Electricity and classrooms for a Bedouin Palestinian school in Area C
- Addressing malnutrition among Gaza's children

and more...

UPA United Palestinian Appeal
—Transforming lives, empowering communities since 1978—



Letter from the Executive Director

Introducing the International Advisory Council

We are delighted to welcome members of the newly formed International Advisory Council to UPA's family and are grateful for their commitment to our mission and their support.

After an extensive search, on March 6 United Palestinian Appeal established a new international advisory council that will render guidance and advice to UPA executives and members of the board of trustees, enhance the organization's visibility and spearhead or guide fundraising efforts.

In addition, the International Advisory Council offers opportunities for expanded engagement that might lead to an invitation to participate on the Governing Board as well as provide similar opportunities for Governing Board members to retain a level of involvement and express their continuing commitment when their Governing Board terms come to an end.

As UPA expands its reach, International Advisory Council members can help UPA broaden its scope, deepen its involvement and convey and amplify UPA core messages.

The sixteen inaugural members of the council include Palestinian men and women who were chosen for their recognized achievement in one or more of the following areas:

- Outstanding civic wisdom and engagement
- Professional or technical proficiency
- Academic or artistic achievement

The International Advisory Council includes physicians, journalists, businesspeople, scholars, international relief and development experts, non-profit leaders, artists, community leaders and psychologists. The members are based in a variety of locations, including each of the areas that UPA serves (the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel) and the United States.

The search to include members throughout the world continues and new members will be announced as they are identified. Now we are honored to introduce the following members.

Sincerely,



Saleem F. Zaru
Executive Director



George Araj,
Ph.D.



Akel Biltaji



Dr. Zuhdi Dajani



Maha Freij



Frederick T.
Hadeed



Halim Halabi



Adnan Hammad,
Ph.D.



Dr. Shehadeh
Khalil Harb



Maher Hashweh,
Ph.D.



Khalil Hindi,
Ph.D.



Souad Nasr
Makhoul



Miriam Mar'i
Ryan, Ph.D.



Ayman Al
Mufleh



Waleed Fuad
Shehadeh



Viorica Wahbeh



Salma El-Yassir

University Scholarship Program

We are inspired by the hard work and dedication of this academic year's scholarship recipients. Thanks to you for making their higher educational dreams possible. The university scholarships awarded by UPA each year benefit aspiring youth who do not have the financial means to afford the educational experience they desire. With your help they will now be able to earn a living, support their siblings and families, and be a positive force in their society.



"I am studying communications engineering because I am fascinated by the speed of the communication revolution. I like the idea of making the world one small village. This scholarship has made my dream come true. Thank you for helping me and my family." –Fatima, 21, Al Quds University (East Jerusalem)

By supporting each student through their full degree program (provided their continued dedicated study and academic performance) one scholarship can transform a student's life and his or her future.

Here are some of our scholarships students who would like to say, ***"Thank you!"***



"I am a freshman and happy to report that my studies are off to a great start! I plan to major in electrical engineering. Thank you for giving me this opportunity." –Saleh, 19, Birzeit University (Ramallah)



"I am interested in photography and heritage sightseeing. I want to be able to revive old architectural constructions so that is why I am studying architectural engineering. This scholarship is the greatest opportunity that I could have to help me in my dreams." –Mohammad, 19, Al Quds University (East Jerusalem)



"I enjoy music and art, and that is why I chose to study graphic design at Dar Al-Kalima. Once I graduate, I will look for a job in this field and open my own graphic design center. I like following the newest trends in design. Your support means a lot because my mother is the only breadwinner in the family and she was not able to fully support my studies financially." –Maram, 18, Dar Al-Kalima College (Bethlehem)

Children's Program

Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP)

On their campus in Dibbiyeh, just south of Beirut, Palestinian children living as refugees find a world of learning, growth and sense of community. Through quality educational programs and activities, ULYP creates safe learning spaces for 3,000 marginalized Palestinian children, youth and women where they are also able to integrate with the Lebanese community. Additionally, the spaces offer relief and enjoyment for the Palestinians who otherwise endure life in cramped refugee camps.

The campus soccer field deserved to be used more frequently, but the fact that it was uncovered meant that users were exposed to the sun, heat and other natural elements. Covering the field was crucial for transforming it into a more widely used space and for reducing its maintenance costs. The field can now be used year-round. Beyond soccer, the field now hosts other campus activities, such as ceremonies, graduations and team-building workshops.

"The field is gorgeous! We can use it more for sports which are good for us," said Luna, 13 years old. Through ULYP's activities, Palestinian youth can play with children of other nationalities, build friendships and bridge social gaps in an inclusive environment.

Al Malath Charitable Society

UPA continued its dedicated support of healthy lifestyles for disabled Palestinian youth. Al-Malath, located in the West Bank area of Beit Sahour, helps mentally disabled youth gain emotional and physical independence.

Through a variety of programs and activities focusing on nutrition, cooking and exercise, these Palestinian youth, along with their caretakers, learn about the importance of nutrition and physical activity and about ways to incorporate and expand upon healthy choices in their daily routine.

These health-awareness programs are critical for disabled Palestinians who (along with their families) endure social challenges with few opportunities for social integration. Another consequence of their physical and mental challenges is their poor physical health and nutritional intake, as the extra importance of diet and exercise is not always understood in relation to their condition.

By following a healthier diet and exercising daily, as prescribed by Al Malath's staff, the youth are losing weight, lowering their hypertension and blood pressure, and becoming more productive and engaged.



"As the mother of two daughters who come to Al Malath, I found this project very useful as it educated us in healthy foods and cooking skills that have benefited our lifestyle,"
–May, mother of Rana and Rita (pictured above)

Ard El-Insan - Palestinian Benevolent Association

Malnutrition continues to affect large numbers of children in Gaza. It is critical for marginalized children and their mothers to be able to access quality health services through which they can receive diagnosis and treatment of their symptoms of malnutrition and anemia.

Financial challenges such as unemployment that burden Gaza families often result in the poor quality and quantity of food. To bridge this gap, UPA funded 10 workshops for mothers and caregivers that covered malnutrition, good health practices and cooking, with the goal of establishing a healthier regimen for their children.

Mustafa, one of 150 malnourished children aged 6 to 36 months targeted by the project, was eating mainly rice and bread and not enough vitamins and minerals. With iron and folic acid provided by the nurses, and more nutritional meals prepared at home, thanks to the handbook provided to his mother, Mustafa's health has improved.

"We are very poor, but I now know how to enrich my child's food without it being a cost burden," his mother said. Other mothers reported that their children who were previously not playing are now more active and engaged since they incorporated changes in their children's diet.



A.M. Qattan Foundation

Over 12 months, UPA funded a critical initiative to support children aged 4 to 15 years old in Gaza. Living in Gaza's most marginalized neighborhoods, many children lack access to quality educational programs or safe places.

To meet this need, UPA's partner A.M. Qattan delivered its educational programs and activities to children in six disadvantaged areas across the Gaza Strip.

The programs promoted reading and writing skills, appreciation for the arts and offered safe and comfortable environments for the children. Over 1,000 children participated in these activities, which not only supported their psychosocial health but also increased their interest and talent in the arts.

From creating mosaics and kites to learning how to play chess and conducting scientific experiments, the children benefited from a full array of quality educational programs.

Activities like these enhance their self-confidence, ability to express themselves, and skills, in addition to relieving some of the stress they have had to endure as children experiencing war and devastation.



Children's Program

MA'AN Development Center

Al-Kaabneh school is located in the Jordan Valley of the West Bank, an area specified as "Area C" under the Oslo Accords. In Area C, where Palestinian residents must comply with severe restrictions to construction on the land. According to UN OCHA, Israel grants only 1.5% of the submitted construction permits for structures in Area C, some of which can take more than 10 years to obtain. As such, it is difficult for Palestinians to even connect to local water networks, electrical grids or expand to accommodate a growing population.

At Al-Kaabneh school, 45 boys and 35 girls in grades kindergarten to ninth attend class in rooms constructed from shipping containers that offer little protection from the strong desert heat during summers. Without connection to an electricity network, the school receives some power from outdated solar units that were in dire need of upgrades for additional capacity. Limited power has greatly affected the learning environment, as students have to spend their school hours in dim classrooms, reducing their alertness.

Thanks to your support of the UPA Children's Program, MA'AN completed the enhancement of the solar power unit with 6 new batteries and a new efficient model for the electricity control panel to ensure safety and efficiency. The enhanced power supply now allows teachers to power on and utilize classroom computers, projectors, lights and refrigerators.

These basic improvements in supplies have improved the overall learning environment. Cooler classrooms in summer, cooler water, and the ability to access educational resources through technology have improved both the teachers' and the students' motivation and sense of safety.

UPA funding also supported the completion of two new concrete classrooms. The school had started constructing these classrooms two years ago through a local donation, but did not have the means to complete it beyond a brick structure. With your help, UPA has completed the construction with concrete flooring, internal and external wall plastering, and installation of glass windows and two iron doors.



"The temperature in this classroom makes us feel warm although it's cold outside and the temperature is low. Our previous classroom was broken, had bad lighting and the water would seep into the room but now we feel the positive change in a safe and protected room." –Intisar, 8th grade student



More updates!



During his visit to UPA's office in Washington, D.C., His Excellency Mr. Ayman Al Mufleh, General Secretary of the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, presented UPA with an award for its continued outstanding humanitarian efforts.

JHCO is the largest relief and development agency in Jordan. Its work through different humanitarian efforts spans the globe.

"It is an honor and privilege to work with UPA," Al Mufleh said. "UPA's work is efficient, effective and we see benefits on the ground. We look forward to future opportunities of cooperation with UPA."

The JHCO is the primary facilitator of UPA's in-kind pharmaceutical and medical supplies shipments to Gaza.

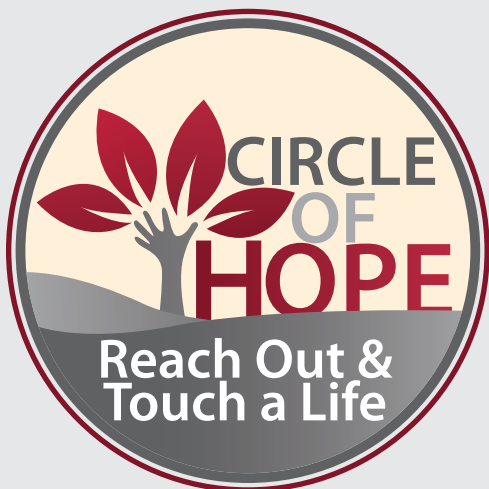


In January 2017, UPA reached a major milestone in our Embracing Life Program by conducting our first local delegation in the West Bank. Local delegations are led by Palestinian surgeons that have been trained by the ELP and provide an opportunity for these surgeons to perform cleft-lip and palate surgeries and to train other surgeons independent of outside intervention.

The ELP team is the first and only team to carry out local surgical delegations where all team members are Palestinians and live in the West Bank.

To learn more about the ELP, please visit:

www.helpupa.org/embracing-life



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Help support marginalized Palestinians



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Iqraa

Running for a
**Brighter
Palestine**



**Are you a runner in the DC area?
Interested in training for a 5k,
10k, half-marathon or marathon?**

Since 2008, Team Iqraa has trained 148
runners and raised over \$208,000 for UPA's
University Scholarship Program.

Join us for an info session on April 26th at
6:30 pm or April 29th at 1 pm.

Contact Kirk Campbell at
kirkcruachan@yahoo.com

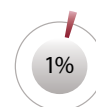
In 2015, 97% of UPA's operating expenses went to programs that
directly benefited Palestinian communities in need.



Programs



Management



Fundraising

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



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