



Our Family, Together We Walk

General Assembly

Edition 5, December 2008

The highest legislative body of SOS-Kinderdorf International held its meeting in Innsbruck from July 3 to 5, 2008. National representatives gathered in the town where the movement started some 59 years ago, to meet and share experiences, exchange views and ideas on the future, and feel and contribute to the unique spirit of the worldwide SOS Children's Village family.



Mrs A. Arsanios

During the meeting Mrs. Arsanios, president of the Lebanese board of directors, was reelected to the Senate for the second consecutive round.



National Director, Zeina Allouche, with hands on deck

SOS Choir

For the third consecutive year the SOS Children's choir sponsored by Alfa performed under the direction of Mr. Pierre Samia. The ambiance was jolly at the Monroe Hotel on November 20 and the songs were lively. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.



Mrs. Arsanios and Mrs. Botter, Alfa CEO, congratulating the performers

Visit to Ireland

It had all started when Guy Jones, from the Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation, contacted the Lebanese Association of SOS Children's Villages and transmitted the invitation of Arts for Peace to 10 Youths to take part in a summer camp in Ireland.

The youths spent two unforgettable weeks in Ireland, and participated to a variety of activities ranging from swimming and horseback riding to flying the Irish army helicopters.

The Arts for Peace Foundation, Ireland, has defined its mission by the following statement: Build cultural bridges through our children. It creates therapeutic recreation programmes for children affected by conflict globally and at home in Ireland.



Stevie Dunning, a volunteer for Arts for Peace, was at our offices last week. She told us that she was in Lebanon to follow up on the summer camp that hosted the Lebanese youth last summer. She said that she had promised the Lebanese youth to visit their country. She was pleasantly surprised to find that their English was still improving and that most of them wanted to do better at school and get better grades.

She noted that at the beginning of the camp she was pleasantly surprised with the willingness of the Youths to engage, with the fact that they took nothing for granted, with the fact that they were respectful towards everyone, and with the fact that they were able to play the role of mediators whenever arguments became intense.

The interaction at the camp was quite valuable in her opinion. The Lebanese were able to influence the Irish youths with their empathy and warmth, and were able in their turn to gain confidence from that experience. Based on the encouraging outcomes and positive atmosphere of the camp the youths from SOS Lebanon participated to, Arts for Peace is considering expanding to other countries SOS works with.

Discussions



Outdoor Activities

The Family Strengthening Programme

Wajiha is 37 years old. She is married and has seven children, all below 14. Her husband, who used to be a daily laborer, was the victim of an accident and can no longer support them.

The father's accident, like all unfortunate events, did not come alone. It was accompanied by the 2006 war on Lebanon which led to, among others, a severe economic depression.

She found herself alone, wanting to support her family and not knowing how. Her relatives who felt that she is too big a burden, advised her to send her children away, place them in institutions where they would be fed and cared for. We will manage was her decision. It was not easy and she was on the verge of quitting when someone mentioned the SOS social centre. Even though she did not know exactly what type of "help" was available there, she was willing to try, hoping to get some food knowing that many associations and municipalities were distributing such assistance.

At the social centre Wajiha was surprised. No food packs were there to be allotted. She was met by a social worker (she learned the title later on) who asked her all sorts of questions about her family and her circumstances. Then the social worker told her that she would like to visit her and meet the other members of the family. After the visit, Wajiha was told that her application was admitted and that she was welcome to join the FSP.

The family owned its house, a reasonably fit three piece apartment, with its own bathroom and kitchen. Primitive but clean and healthy. The social centre made sure Wajiha's children had their basic needs, paid the school expenses of 4 children who were to start in September. As for the other children, two were too young, and the older daughter had quit a few years ago and did not want to go back)



The social worker had another task: the income generating project. She had noted that Wajiha sewed her children's clothes and asked her if she thought she would be able to develop her skills. The mother was thrilled and said she was certain she would be able to make a living out of it if she had the tools and the materials (cloth and the rest). She also needed to develop her skills. She was therefore asked to undergo some training that the centre financed. It also purchased a sewing machine and equipment, in addition to some pieces of cloth and accessories. Her older daughter was also encouraged to undergo some training in sewing and can now help her mother.

Wajiha has been working hard for 10 months now. She has not achieved total financial independence given the large number of the children she has. She still relies on the social centre for medical care and moral support.

When I am at the social centre I feel surrounded by my family and know that they are there for me and my children."

Reintegration with the Biological Family

Hoda, Leila and Roland were five, three and one respectively when they arrived to the SOS Children's Village of Kfarhay, to Mama Ibtissam's house. They had suffered their parents' violent disputes and then their mother's departure. After their admission, they were able to retrieve what they had lost in stability and basic rights and needs.

Simultaneously, and because the biological family is the best place

where a child can grow and evolve, the Pedagogical team at the SOS Children's Village insisted on maintaining and then developing the relationship with the children's father and the extended family, namely the paternal uncles and their wives and children.

A few years later the father remarried and the ties with the step-mother were built and fortified.

Despite the children's love and attachment to Mama Ibtissam, when the time came, they were very happy to go back home and live with their father and his new wife.

The Pedagogical team and Mama Ibtissam are still following up the reunited family, and they all exchange visits and news.

P.S. The names of the children were changed to protect their privacy.

Activities

Rally -Day for Prevention of Child Abuse

On November 22 a rally was organized for children aged between 12 to 15 of SOS Children's Villages. The participants were divided into eight groups, each carrying a flag of a different color, with 8 to 9 members each. Joe Abou Naoum, a former SOS youth, currently studying social animation at Sagesse University, and the coordinator of the event was assisted by the youth from Abra, the SOS Youth leaders and a few volunteers. The day began with a breakfast and then came the eight stages of the rally. The questions were more like games, such as crosswords, and the subjects were two: stopping violence and human protecting children's rights.

An Active partner of the Beirut Marathon, SOS Children's Villages participated to all the races organized this year.



At one of the stages: the pink team

The winners had to collect 8 pieces of a puzzle related to the same themes. Lunch was also a moment of sharing and the youths who participated to the organization of the event were proud of themselves and of the responsibility they had so well handled.



Art Atelier at the SOS Children's Villages

Once a month the children at one of the four Children's Villages have a rendez-vous with Yasser Mroueh who organizes art ateliers. He sometimes tells them stories or makes them listen to music or songs and then asks them to draw along with the theme evoked. It usually evolves around their rights and the prevention of violence.

When interviewed about his work, Yasser does not seem to give himself a lot of credit. He talks about it as if it were the most natural thing in the world, but the children and the work they do, in addition to the involvement they show tell a different story.

Yasser Mroueh is a Lebanese young man who was hit by a sniper when he was seventeen. His injury was a serious one and he even lost the ability to speak and move for almost one year, and recovered after long years of therapy. Armed with this experience, he now helps others to face difficulties and overcome challenges.



Yasser and the children



A piece of art!

Training of SOS Mothers

The bi-annual training sessions for the SOS mothers took place at the SOS training center in Khenchara and at the SOS Children's Village of Kfarhay.



A scene from the sessions

Our Friends



Thank You Jean-Michel

We are proud to introduce Jean-Michel Akkari, an 11 year old Lebanese living in Brisbane Australia. For Christmas he had a very special request: instead of sending Santa Claus a letter, he sent a message to all his family's relatives and friends asking them to : " help me raise some funds and send it to SOS Children's Villages that give Lebanese Children deprived of the care of their biological parental care an alternative home. It is for the children of Lebanon regardless of their religions and background.."



The authors signing the book

How old was I when I was born? Is the title of the book by Rima Al Khatib Hervouet. It is a collection of sayings of children. And because the book was written by children, though indirectly, all its receipts are to go to SOS Children's Villages! It was officially signed at the Salon Du Livre on October 25. It is worth noting that in addition to Rima, the publishers-Tamyras- and the artists who did the drawings all donated their work.



Hala and Andreas at the Altar

Hala Traboulsi and Andreas Peneder got married last summer in the United States. They asked their relatives and friends, in the States and Austria-Andreas home country-to exchange gifts with donations to SOS Children's Villages in Lebanon.

We wish them a lot of happiness and are proud to welcome them among our friends.

Major Donors-Above 2,000\$ May-November 2008

Abou Naoum, Eddy
Al Jazeera for Children
Al Sabbah, Souad Mohammad
Alfa
Asmar, Nassif(Late)
Assaf, Nagib
Audi Bank
Baz, Pierre
Casino du Liban
Cattan, Mirese
Chamma, Gilda
Chatila, Nicolas and Isabelle
Chehwane, Carole
Chidiac, May
Child of Lebanon
Emirates Foundation
Empire Rocks Engineering
Fahed, Oussama
Fustok, Mansour

Geagea, Strida
Ghosn, Michel
Goldman Sachs Gives
Houchaimé, Omar
HP Dubai
Ibrahimcha, Fathallah
Mansour, Marcel and Pascale
Peneder, Andreas and Hala
Saad, William and Marie
Samha, Tanios Joseph
Sarkis, Elias Sarkis
Senno, Falah Kama
Staff of HSBC
Staff of Blom
Staff of SGBL
Tohme, Gragenia
United People in Christ, Inc.
Viswanathan, Ravi
Yazbeck, Fadi