

SCHOOL OF JOY FOR SLOW LEARNERS ("AL-FARAH")

The School of Joy for Slow Learners
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The School of Joy was founded by Randa AbuSada in 1993 in Beit Sahour, the town of the shepherds, just few miles from the birth place of our savior Jesus (Nativity Church - Bethlehem). The school was founded to improve the overall quality of life for students who have low academic achievement in greater Bethlehem area.

The prevailing harsh political and economical situation our area is going through has affected almost every member of our community and specially the children and young people. An increasing number of children are dropping out off schools and heading for the streets, specially those ones who suffer from low academic achievements and are coming from poor families. Noticing the alarming numbers of dropout children roaming the streets and in response to the requests from the distraught parents. The school was started for the children with special needs and for the poor/orphan children. He has recruited 6 teachers, who are receiving less than half of the normal salary, and furnished the school with the needed desks, chairs, and equipments. The school relies mainly on the generous donations from the local and international communities, in addition to the small amount of fees collected from some of the students who can pay.

The School of Joy now serves 51 children between 6-14 years old, and seven youth between 16-23 years old. The School is considered their home offering its services to poor, orphan children, and also children with learning difficulties without regard to race, religion or color. And there are continual requests to take more students. There is a waiting list of at least 50 further "at risk" children which.

Also many of the children served at this school suffer from a low academic achievement that is due to a Minimal brain damage, bad home environment or bad schooling, Children with minimal brain damage include those who have Dyslexia, Right Hemisphere, Learning Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder and other.

Our Mission is to rehabilitate mentally disabled and emotionally distorted children by preparing them for greater self-sufficiency and independent living, and to make them productive members of the society. Since we started we have been working on the ethical and human rights for these children, so that they can live a better life as human beings. One of the things we appreciate is to protect the child

from being in the streets. Signs of support and sympathy must be shown, in order to give the child his right in education.

The school consists of several classrooms for teaching in addition to several workshops for vocational training and Olive Wood carving. The school also provides some internal and external facilities for children to play. The school provides the children with transportation to and from school.

The Aims of the School:

- To prevent deterioration of the problem of street children.
- To provide the children with schooling appropriate to their needs and to enable them to catch up so that they can return to the normal school routine as soon as possible.
- To improve quality of life for pupils who have Low academic achievement in greater Bethlehem region.
- To prevent the growth of a population of Palestinian street children.
- To provide a safe environment for children who have dropped out from normal schooling and to enable them to continue their education in anticipation of returning to normal school in the near future.
- Accepting difference as ordinary, and not an excuse to dismiss, reject or ridicule. To give opportunity to disabled people getting the full and effective education they need.

The school present programs try to rehabilitate older children through a vocational program, and serve younger children through an academic program. The vocational program emphasizes life skills development by making carved Olive Wood articles and Christmas hangers, while the academic program emphasizes on the necessary education needs of the child in his/her daily life.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Teaches the young children to read and write alphabets and numbers, to identify pictures and figures and to exhibit their creative abilities in drawing pictures, building blocks, singing, dancing and so on. For older children they are taught English, Arabic, Mathematics, Science, Computer, and other subjects.

PHYSICAL TRAINING

Includes physical exercises like running, jumping, outdoor and indoor games, and several other activities that entertains, educates, and keeps the children in good physical shape.

VOCATIONAL PROGRAM

Several instructors provide the older children with the training and techniques of carving Olive wood (which is a popular source of income in the Bethlehem area). The children are learning how to make

Olive Wood articles such as Crosses, birds, fishes, Nativity Sets, and wooden Christmas hangers. Profit out of selling these items is being used as an income source for the school. You can buy such items and in the same time support those children.

ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITES

The school also recognizes the importance of entertainment and sports in the development of a healthy child. We conduct several entertainment activities such as:

- Birthday parties for each child.
- Christmas/New Year's parties.
- Field trips to historical and educational places.
- In addition to several sporting events.

All of those activities are free of charge, and each child is presented with gifts and presents during such events.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TRANSPORTATIONS

The school charges only very nominal fees for its services, and that too from only those who can afford to pay. Poor students are excepted from paying fees of all kinds. The school also provides food and drinks to the children during the day.

The school owns only one small van that is used to transport the poor students to and from the school, while the other children pay money to taxies to provide them with transportation. Since we only have one van we can only provide free transportation to a limited number of our students. A lot of our students had to drop out of our school because they can't afford to pay for their transportation. Therefore, one of our immediate needs is to buy new van or bus to be able to provide all of our students with transportation. We are looking for generous donations to provide the needed transportations for our students, thus preventing them from going back to streets.

Our main vision to the future of the School of Joy concentrates on increasing the number of students in our school, and in developing and advancing our services to them. We are aiming in developing the school to contain three main sections:

1- Theoretical / Academic Program:

In which the basics of academic needs are taught to the students, starting from the alphabets & numbers and developing into Mathematics, English, Science and Computers. The school now provides such program but with a limited resources and a minimum number of teachers. We