



Holy Child Program

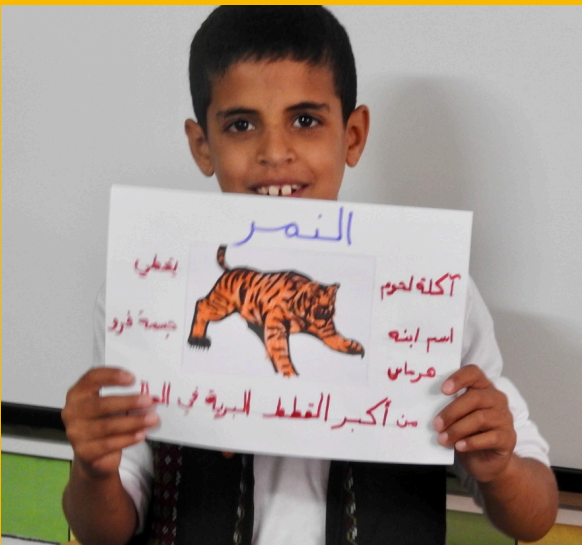
برنامج الطفل المقدس

Beit Sahour – Bethlehem – The Holy Land بيت ساحور - بيت لحم - الأرض

First Quarter Report: August 1, 2018 - October 31, 2018



Our German guests visiting the memorial rose garden



Tiger, Tiger burning bright!

Objective 1: To provide a therapeutic environment which fosters not only academic and emotional growth but also a sense of belonging to a larger family.

- This fall we had several visitors. We had two groups from Australia visit, many of whom were educators. The Australian educators who have visited in the past have been stalwart supporters of HCP. One teacher who visited last year had her sixth grade classroom raise \$1,000 for HCP. There was some discussion of the possibility of having some of the Catholic school teachers come and work with us at HCP! The interest and dedication on the part of the Australians is a powerful testimony for our students that they do belong to a larger community!
- A group of German therapists and educators visited us in November. Several of the teachers said they would love to volunteer at HCP after they retired! One of the Germans commented at the end of the visit, *"You see that you have structure, but it is filled with love."*
- Another activity that connected us to a larger world was an amazing trip to the Safari Zoo in Ramat Gan, Israel. Students prepare for the trip by studying the habitats of animals they will see at the zoo. For a hands-on experience they create artwork of the different animals. This year as the bus pulled into the zoo, the students could be heard calling out *"Hello"* and *"Good Day"* to the animals!

- We were scheduled to take a field trip to the Israel Museum in October. Unfortunately, the students were not given the necessary government permits to visit the Museum. We are hoping to try again in November or December, as visiting the Museum would be such an enriching experience for our students.

Objective 2: To embody and promote a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church in every aspect of our work with children, families, co-workers and other professionals.

- As mentioned last year, we were required to separate our Christian and Muslim students for religious education classes. Our Muslim students continue to follow the mandated curriculum of the Ministry of Education and our Christian students are following the curriculum prescribed by the Latin Patriarch for Catholic schools. However, during daily assembly the students share with each other what they are learning and then pray together, which fosters a unified community!

Objective 3: To develop and implement individualized educational and therapeutic treatment plans for each child enrolled in our program.

- This year we held our first Parents' meeting in October. We had a historic number of families attend the meeting, which thrilled us! Teachers sent each family a thank you note for attending the meeting and for being such active partners with HCP.
- Some of the mothers said they would like to be able to attend the Incredible Years Parent group but are unable to get time off from work to attend. They asked if we would consider holding group in the late afternoon so they could attend. As a result, we are looking into the possibility of starting a group that would accommodate their schedules.
- After the meeting parents met with their children's teachers and discussed treatment goals and how the children were doing.
- As the result of a generous grant, we began a hot lunch program for our students in September. Many of the children would come to school with no breakfast and some were unable to bring



We're ready to go to the zoo, are you?



Newly hatched HCP student at Safari zoo!



Chatting up the sheep at the zoo



Our wonderful new chef, Rania, working her magic in the kitchen



Budding musicians enjoying music lessons



October's champion olive harvesters!

snacks for a mid-morning break. We knew that even after they went home some would have to wait for several hours before they had their main meal of the day, especially if their mothers were working. Lack of nutrition made it difficult for some of the students to focus and attend during class. Now, students receive 3 delicious hot meals per week such as chicken and rice with salad, and two days a week they receive nutritious sandwiches with lots of fresh vegetables like cumpers and tomatoes on the side. HCP feels even more like home with delicious smells wafting from the kitchen and the students and staff are loving it! Many of the families have thanked us via Facebook for feeding their children such delicious meals.

- This quarter we decided to increase the amount of time the teachers read aloud to their students. One of our goals to increase literacy in our students is to encourage a love of reading. Unfortunately, for many children the only books they are exposed to are textbooks. This often results in an aversion to reading. Coupled with the paucity of quality children's books in Arabic, not many school-aged children have access to good books nor are they interested in reading outside of schoolwork. The reading program has been such a success that a couple of students brought books from home for the teachers to read to everyone.
- In addition to reading time, students have now weekly opportunities to play board or card games to help them generalize and practice critical thinking skills, pattern recognition, math principles, as well as strategy planning and sequencing. Additionally, students can apply the skills learned in Dinosaur school while playin games such as; turn taking, cooperation, emotion regulation, sharing, and other social skills.
- This fall our students had the opportunity to participate in music classes. Everyone seemed to have a great deal of fun and enjoyed their lessons!
- October is olive harvesting season in Palestine. This is an activity our students love. We harvest the olives in the morning, feast on a delicious lunch and then the games begin! This year, we

had team relays which involved, balls, hoops and a significant amount of running back and forth.

- Dina Dinosaur and her cohort ,Wally, started Dinosaur School (the Incredible Years classroom program) with a bang. Since all of the new students attended an intensive Dina Dinosaur school summer program, we were able to do a quick review and get down to serious business immediately. Dina is determined that each student will earn all 8 of their badges this year, stay tuned!

Objective 4: To provide clinically appropriate and culturally sensitive parent education, counseling and support services for the families of this region.

- This was an exciting period for our Incredible Years mothers' groups. Two groups graduated and 4 new mothers joined the "Group of Peace" which started late last spring. We caught the 4 new mothers up by providing separate groups until they had covered the required materials and could join the larger group. One of the new mothers shared how grateful she was for the Incredible Years group. She said; *"Thanks to 'special time" [that] I do with my son, I begin to know [understand] more about his feelings and his hurts. He is opening up during this time together."* How wonderful for both this child and his mother that they can forge these bonds, and how wonderful that the mother feels empowered to help her son!
- As previously mentioned, two of our former mothers' groups had a graduation ceremony. All of the mothers dressed in their finest outfits for the occasion and one mother had her hair and make up professionally done for the occasion. It was a wonderful celebration in the gardens of HCP and, along with their Incredible Years' certificate, the mothers each received a small gift. Several of the mothers shared that they had asked their husbands what gifts they were planning to give them for graduating! Included in the group photo were the two baby girls that were born during



Post olive picking games



Wally, in his school uniform and wearing his student of the week bracelet, helps Dina get school started!



Dina, greeting students and letting them know it's time to get down to business!



First parents's meeting of the school year

Each mother had to have their picture taken with their certificate and then a the course of the group. Interestingly, the mothers continued to show up for group a couple of times even though they had graduated! We are hoping sometime in 2019 to be able to start the advanced Incredible Years Parenting program. We have been besieged with requests by all four of the graduated mothers groups to offer the next level.

- In addition to the graduation, we held seven group sessions in the Incredible Years Parenting program.
- During this quarter we completed two assessments for families hoping to place their child at HCP and one consultation with a family in the community. Additionally there were four family counseling sessions.
- Our school social worker started her routine visits to assess the home environment of our new students. During one of these visits, the mother of a new student shared that her son said that the teachers at HCP *"were positive and supportive, the way teachers should be."*
- Of the nine home visits the social worker made during this period, seven were to the homes of our new students, one was to a mother in our Incredible Years group who was in the hospital and one was to a returning student's family.

Objective 5: To provide our staff with continuing education opportunities as well as regular support and supervision to further their professional development and increase job satisfaction.

- As part of our ongoing support and supervision, teachers are observed by our master teacher at least twice a year. After the observation, the teacher meets with the academic administrator and the master teacher, to review the findings. This Fall a new twist was added. The teachers were asked what support they felt they needed, what their future goals were and what would make these observations more helpful. All of the teachers were deeply gratified by the overwhelmingly positive feedback they

received and we look forward to their responses. Our master teacher said, *"We are fortunate to have such a stable and long serving staff. Over half of them (4 out of 7) have been with us more than ten years. It has been, and continues to be, a pleasure to observe their professional growth and development."*

Objective 6: To ensure a successful integration for our graduates in their next educational placement.

- All seven of our graduating families from June 2018 were contacted during this quarter by our school social worker to make sure each child had a secure placement.
- The four graduates that went to government schools are all stable in their current placement. One of the special education students returned to the United States and is, according to his parents, enrolled in a special education program and doing well. The other special education student 's placement is working well thus far. Of the two graduates who had placements in a vocational program, one student is in his "preparatory year" after which he will enter the vocational program directly.
- The other student who had a vocational placement is refusing to attend and insists he wants to return to HCP. It is not unusual for students to feel this way after graduation, but this particular student had extenuating circumstances, which made his transition particularly difficult. Our school social worker is working with the graduate, his family, and the vocational center to ensure that a creative solution is found.
- We met at the beginning of the school year with the families who would have students graduating at the end of this year to begin transition planning and identifying potential placements for their children. We found that initiating this process at the beginning of the school year helps reduce the stress and anxiety around leaving HCP and enables the parents to feel more empowered after graduation. As always, the parents are assured that they can rely on our assistance whenever needed.



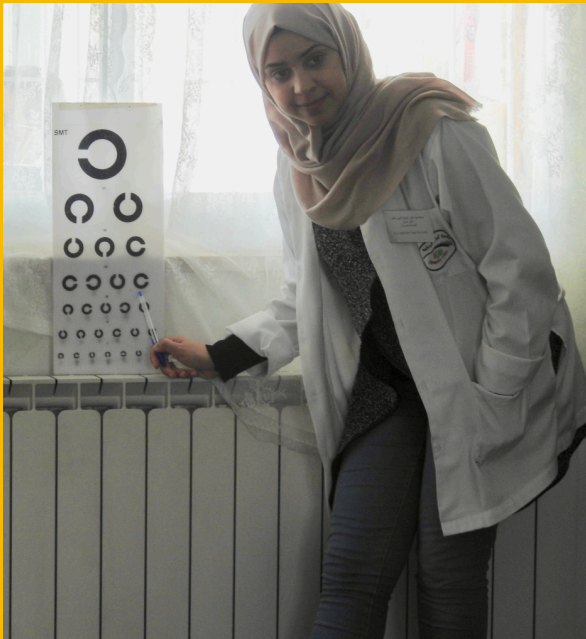
Games Day!



One of the mothers receiving her Incredible Years certificate!



Graduating mothers along with the two incredible babies born during their group



House of Light conducting vision tests with our students



H.S.H Princess Monika visiting with students



A special visit from the Bethlehem Lion's club!

It also helps to know that we will follow and work with them for two years to ensure a successful transition.

Objective 7: To collaborate and coordinate with other organizations and/or treatment providers involved in the education and treatment of children and families.

- The start of the school year is always a busy time for everyone. One of our first tasks is to make sure that all of our children have thorough hearing and vision screens to rule out or treat any problems that would interfere with their ability to learn. This year, we had both hearing and vision tests as well as dental check ups.
- Dr. Walid Al Hirsch, a local dentist, provided all 34 of our students with dental check ups. Unfortunately, only one student had completely healthy teeth. Parents were sent a copy of their child's dental health report with recommendations and follow up information. Last year we had seven students win the healthy teeth award, so this was a surprise. Dental hygiene and preventative maintenance is not widely promoted in Palestine. We will, however, be preparing a health unit on dental hygiene and hope to motivate students to take better care of their teeth.
- Our seven new students all received hearing tests this quarter and all were found to be within a normal range.
- The House of Light provided vision checks for 34 of our students. Surprisingly, 16 of our students are required to wear glasses. Test results indicated that 9 of these 16 students needed to have their prescription adjusted. All of the parents received copies of their child's vision reports. Our school social worker will follow up with the families to see if they need any assistance in following through on the recommendations.
- This quarter we were fortunate to receive visits from two organizations that provide scholarships to HCP students. We are so grateful that these organizations are able to visit in person not only because they get to know HCP better, but they are to see for themselves

what a difference their support means to these children. Comments from two of our new students illustrate how grateful they are to attend HCP. One student shared that every day he walks by his old school and his former classmates beg him to return. He said to them: *"No, I will not return because I like HCP too much. The students there [at HCP] allow me to share and they listen to me."* Another new student said he was recruiting all his classmates from his old school to join him at HCP!

- We were honored to receive a visit from the Bethlehem Lions Club. The Lions Club was interested in learning more about HCP.
- In addition to the Lions Club, we were most grateful that Princess Monika, from Bridges to the Holy Land, was able to visit with our students.
- During the month of October we hosted two student interns from the University of Stavanger School of Social Work, Stavanger, Norway. The interns attended mothers' group, helped in the classroom and went on home visits with the school social worker. One of the interns wrote; *"One thing I specially liked during my time at Holy Child Program was attending the mothers' group meetings. I learned a lot about how it is to be a woman in Palestine, the positive and negative sides, how it is to raise a child and the importance of having a person to talk to...It was [a] really positive experience and I can see that the mothers and the fathers benefit from the program."* The other intern made a particularly poignant comment in her evaluation of her time at HCP. She wrote: *"The children really love their teachers, and I can see that the teachers really love the students back."*



Birthday celebrations



Our two interns from the University of Stavanger with Director Iskander