

## IN THIS SECTION:

Waldorf parent Shepha Schneirsohn Vainstein liked her school so much that she started organizing people to use Waldorf to create a better world.

People on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota think Waldorf can help sustain their whole culture.

In Vermont, Heartbeat Lifesharing has so many wise ways of making community that they now need a proper space for it.

The Avalon Initiative just organized an important gathering to work on rediscovering the fundamental inspiration of teaching.

The soul or psyche is the center of anthroposophy's picture of the human being. The late William Bento has helped get anthroposophic psychology established in North America.

Every role an actor takes on is an initiative, and Maria in Steiner's mystery dramas is a very special challenge.

What do anthroposophical doctors think about vaccination? Read their statement on page 29.

# "Imagine the Potential"



"Seeding the Middle East with an educational philosophy that embraces life, learning, the arts, the earth and all the children."

Waldorf alumna and teacher Karen Gierlach recently shared with Members of the Section for the Social Sciences a report from Shepha Schneirsohn Vainstein, president of reGeneration, on a Waldorf teacher training event in Palestine. We pass it along, prefaced by reGeneration's vision statement, goals, and key activities, including its work in development of "social capital." — *Editor*

**Vision.** Children of all faiths growing up in the Middle East have a basic right to experience a wholesome environment that cultivates the empathic foundation, the motivational drive, and the personal and social resources to be able to create a sustainably peaceful, productive, and prosperous society as adults.

**Goals.** Contributing to the field of social change and equal access to education, reGeneration seeks:

- To back grassroots, interfaith and multicultural education with social technologies that fosters cooperation between Jews and Arab in Israel.
- To bring educational achievement among Arab citizens of Israel and Palestinians of the West Bank on par with Jewish Israelis through increasing access to high caliber education for all children; and,
- To cultivate a diverse cadre of interfaith supporters who use their financial and human capital to promote our mission.

### Objectives:

- Support Ein Bustan, a joint Jewish-Arab Waldorf school in Israel
- Build the capacity of Tamrat El Zeitoun, the first Arab Waldorf School
- Introduce and facilitate the development of Waldorf education in Palestinian schools in the West Bank Strategy
- Organize Waldorf education workshops and training for Arab Waldorf teachers
- Support programs in California that focus on overcoming preconceptions and building bridges based on our common humanity.

**Background and Strategic Context.** On five continents there are over 1,000 Waldorf educational institutions, community epicenters fostering wholesome environments in the classroom and in the home. This growing global educational community is creating a ripple effect promoting UNESCO's values of equality and tolerance, transforming families and ultimately society worldwide. In the Middle East, outside of an initiative in Egypt, there are no Waldorf schools in the Arab world.

In Israel the number of schools using Waldorf



reGeneration Vice-President Noor-Malika Chishti ritually pours water over the hands of Shepha Schneirsohn Vainstein at the concluding ritual of Celebration of Abraham where the organization's interfaith work and support of educational projects for Jewish, Christian and Muslim children in the Middle East was honored at the Celebration of Abraham in Davis, California, in January. We each washed the other's hands and the breaking of a loaf of bread together symbolized of respect and connection.



Tamrat El Zeitoun — an Arab interfaith Waldorf school educating children from kindergarten through fifth grade in northern Israel.

educational techniques has steadily increased in the Jewish community since 1989 when the first school started with 13 children. Today there are more than 4,000 Jewish children in 16 Waldorf schools in every major city in Israel. Additionally, in Israel there are over 100 kindergartens using these methods and three Waldorf high schools opened in the 2009/2010 year. The annual student growth rate is over 10% per year.

Consistently each year approximately 60% or more graduates from the Waldorf high school in Israel sign up to perform an extra year of volunteer community service to work with Jewish and Arab individuals who are homeless, drug addicted, or orphaned—in comparison with 2% of Jewish high school graduates overall. Waldorf school graduates in Israel testify that the values they received in school had a major influence on their decision to do volunteer service benefitting the community.

reGeneration's initial phase included conflict resolution training for faculty and teens in Israel, support for our Palestinian Teacher Training, and support for a high school peace leadership program in the Galilee. The high school program was a two-pronged educational model promoting Jewish and Arab coexistent participation in Israeli society while addressing the high drop-out rate and low performance for matriculation of Israeli-Arab high school students from a public high school. Though the high school program in itself was successful, we made two critical observations. One was that we saw that the educational gap between Jewish and Arab high school students was too large to try to effectively remediate at such a late stage of development.

From this observation we decided it was far more productive to support an equal education for both Jewish and Arab students from the earliest years. We also observed how important it was for the Jewish and Arab communities to share a common goal in which they could work together to achieve.

Because of the unprecedented growth of Waldorf education in the Jewish community and the nascent development of this humanistic education within the Arab community, reGeneration decided that the most effective intervention for equal opportunities in education in Israel was to support two pilot education programs, Ein Bustan, the first Arab/Waldorf kindergarten in Israel and El Zeitoun, the first Arab Waldorf School in Israel. Both

of these programs, along with our Palestinian Teacher Training have a high potential for positively impacting society in the Middle East. Today we support an education in the Middle East that builds resiliency in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim children while promoting new capacities for this generation to shape a stable and sustainable future for all.

## Building social capital

reGeneration is a member of Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), a coalition of over sixty organizations, and the United Religions Initiative (URI), a coalition of grassroots interfaith organizations from over seventy countries around the globe. The two schools it co-sponsors in Israel, Ein Bustan and El Zeitoun, are affiliated with the Inter Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues.

Last November a concert, "Together in the City of Angels," launched the newly established Southern California

Muslim-Jewish Forum. reGeneration worked with sixteen Jewish and Muslim organizations to establish the Forum as an umbrella body to strengthen Muslim-Jewish ties in the Greater Los Angeles area. Everything from the event committee to the performances are examples of Muslims and Jewish working together. Members of the forum are the Academy of Jewish Religion California; Bayan Claremont Islamic Graduate School; Beth Shir Shalom; Claremont Lincoln University; IKAR; Islamic Center of Southern California; King Fahad Mosque; Malibu Jewish Center and Synagogue; MECA Young Professionals; Muslim Public Affairs Council; New Ground; Pacifica Institute; re-Generation; Sufi Order International; Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills; Valley Beth Shalom; and the Wilshire Boulevard Temple.



## Teacher Training in Palestine

*Letter from Shepha Schneirsohn Vainstein*

Palestinian educators in Jenin in the West Bank are enthusiastically talking about their wonderful ten days at the recent West Bank Waldorf Institute [WBWI] held at Al Quds University's Open Campus in Jenin from February 15 to February 25, where we were able to produce a West Bank version of the Public School Institute held at Rudolf Steiner College for the past twenty-three years.

One hundred twenty eager Palestinian kindergar-

ten and grade school teachers came from throughout Jenin to be part of this immersive workshop. The WBWI was a window into how to provide an engaging and healing education for Palestinian children growing up under the chronic stress of conflict. The Palestinian educational community welcomed learning methods on how to educate children in a manner that promotes creative thinking while cultivating a culture of safety, peace, and respect in their classrooms.

The teachers learned about recent research showing powerful advantages that high quality early childhood education bestows, whose major benefits can emerge much later in the adult lives of their students. Palestinian kindergarten teachers began to learn how to create these environments for young children while grade school teachers learned how to give engaging lessons using the arts, movement, and singing games developing a multiplicity of skills.

In an overflowing room of 180 people, the program was emceed by WBWI's Coordinator, Dr. Rola Jadallah, who recently had been inducted into the Women in Science Hall of Fame of the United States Embassy in Amman, Jordan. The opening ceremony included comments from the Governate of Jenin, Jenin's Director of Education, the President of Al Quds University in Jenin, psychologist and Director of WBWI Dr. Wael Mustafa Abu Hassan, myself, and Rudolf Steiner College Chair of Early Childhood Education, Lauren Hickman.

With initial attendance way beyond the expected number, it turned out that word had spread throughout the Al Quds student body that a great class was being held on the top floor of their university so the first few days we had a huge number of unregistered drop-ins until we tightened our check-in procedures with our administrative assistants. Even then we had forty kindergarten teachers and eighty grade school teachers in attendance. It was very touching



WBWI's Waldorf teachers (left-to-right): Aida Awad, Lauren Hickman of Rudolf Steiner College, California award winning teacher, Anna Rainville

to be told how much people enjoyed the WBWI faculty who taught with great patience and such open hearts. Thankfully, filmmakers captured on video the first two days and the final three days of these historic moments. This footage will eventually become part of a documentary on Waldorf education in the Middle East, scheduled for release in 2017.

One of the highlights of the WBWI was to see how the Palestinian teachers cherished Aida Awad, the founding kindergarten teacher from Tamrat El Zeitoun, the Arab Waldorf school in Israel. The Palestinian teachers knew Aida had studied in Hebrew at a Jewish Waldorf Teacher Training in Israel and that she had transposed what she had learned into Arabic and the Palestinian culture. They appreciated her warm welcoming demeanor and were amazed by her ability to captivate children in such a magical and tranquil way.

Also greatly appreciated by the Palestinian teachers were classes taught by Lauren Hickman of Rudolf Steiner College and nationally-recognized Waldorf consultant Anna Rainville, who has taught at Rudolf Steiner College's Public School Institute for the past twenty-three years. Waldorf alumna Karen Gierlach provided classes on adult development based on the reflection of each individual teacher's own unique biography. Group singing was provided by Julia Anna Katarina, an English Waldorf graduate, musician, and opera singer who is fluent in Arabic. In addition, reGeneration's Middle East Liaison and Way of Council trainer, Itaf Awad, worked with seventeen Palestinian school counselors giving them an experience of how the Way of Council can

teach their students deep listening skills and build a sense of community. The work with Itaf was so valued by the school counselors that Itaf has made plans to continue to come from Israel to Jenin to work with them once a month. Before giving my own lectures on the developing brain of the young child, I met with Itaf's group of Palestin-

*It was deeply gratifying to see how we were connecting the Palestinian educational community to a global Waldorf educational community embracing all children, regardless of religion, race or nationality.*



Aida Awad, WBWI's "Waldorf Rock Star"—Math Lessons for Grade School Teachers—Handcrafts for Kindergarten

ian school counselors who informed me that televisions are ubiquitous in preschools and kindergartens throughout Palestine. I therefore included a talk on how the American Academy of Pediatricians has recommended absolutely no screen time for children under two and how recent research in brain development validates the holistic Waldorf approach to educating young children in a manner that physically helps the brain grow more primed for creative thinking and executive functioning. We all made a strong case for keeping television out of the kindergarten and Aida Awad highlighted the daily rhythm in her classroom as a model of how the Waldorf kindergarten's calm and consistent routine serves as an important foundation, a healing environment for children growing up in stressful conditions.

It was deeply gratifying to see how we were connecting the Palestinian educational community to a global Waldorf educational community embracing all children, regardless of religion, race, or nationality. For further highlights please see West Bank Institute of Waldorf Inspired Education on Facebook [[www.facebook.com/WBIWIE](http://www.facebook.com/WBIWIE)].

*“What is next?”* Although we are waiting for the results of our pre- and post-surveys, it already has become apparent that the Palestinian teachers hunger for more exposure to Waldorf methods for their students. Training to become a Waldorf teacher requires a significant time commitment and deep inner work to learn how to embody the Waldorf approach. We developed a Committee for Palestinian Waldorf Inspired Education to field applications from Palestinian kindergarten teachers who want Waldorf early childhood education training. We are in the midst of refining criteria for the selection of these teachers and soon will be developing the program and its accompanying budget.

It was extremely moving to see the faces of these Palestinian teachers glow in joy from what they were learning, knowing that these experiences were creating an educational foundation from which their own students will benefit. Something truly magnificent happened in the West Bank! If we are persistent, it can only bring something good and productive to the troubled Middle East.

Shepha Schneirsohn Vainstein co-founded *re:Generation* [[regenerationeducation.org](http://regenerationeducation.org)]. She received her Masters of Counseling Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute and is a psychotherapist practicing in Los Angeles specializing in trauma recovery and personal empowerment. She is a facilitator of Nonviolent Communication and the Way of Council. A long time Waldorf parent and advocate, she continues to volunteer at her local public Waldorf-Method school, the Mariposa School of Global Education in Agoura Hills.

# Lakota Waldorf School Building

by Truus Geraets

It has been a miracle that some 150 people responded to send a message of support to the Lakota Waldorf School [[www.lakotawaldorfschool.org](http://www.lakotawaldorfschool.org)] and a check of \$10,000 earmarked for building. We understand that building a new class room is now urgent, as a big recruiting drive will bring in many new enrollments, and because the school has now two buses to pick up children from further afield.

Our check, we hope, will stimulate bigger building grants from other sources. The administration is currently talking with a log cabin builder from the Black Hills, to make a proposal of building a tipi classroom out of wood. Another piece of good news is that an experienced Waldorf teacher by the name of Barbara Booth has committed herself for a year to be the mentor for the teachers.

Administrator Isabel Stadnick's own children, who grew up on the Reservation, are now both studying Waldorf education at the Goetheanum in Switzerland. The older one is presenting just now [April 2015] her thesis about the future of the Lakota Waldorf School, where high school students could learn trades in workshops and sell their goods in retail outlets. Also, how to make the Lakota Waldorf School an interesting destination for tourists. All this with the aim to make the Lakota Waldorf School ultimately self-sustaining.

Because it may take a few years to work towards the realization of this fantastic plan, let us continue to show them our support in keeping the ball rolling, the ball, which has already been pushed by so many people. We can't thank you enough for that.

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