



# UNITE LEBANON YOUTH PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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## ULYP RECEIVES THE "SPIRIT OF HUMANITY" AWARD!

*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" – Nelson Mandela*

We are honored to announce that the Arab American Institute Foundation is awarding ULYP the 2016 Khalil Gibran "Spirit of Humanity" Award for Institutional Excellence. Our founder Melek El Nimer and our Director Nicole Eid Abuhaydar will attend their annual Gala in DC this April and receive the award. In their letter to us, they say that the Gibran Award is bestowed annually on "individuals and organizations whose work reflects the ideals of the great Lebanese-American poet by promoting inclusion, cooperation and greater understanding among people with diverse backgrounds", a vision that continues to guide the work of ULYP. The invitation further stated that "the work of Unite Lebanon Youth Project has created a space for the vulnerable youth of Lebanon – Palestinians, Lebanese, and Syrians – to believe success is possible even in the midst of physical, financial, and mental insecurity. You are leading a transformation towards unity and understanding between different nationalities that do not naturally interact and work together towards a brighter future. We would be honored to recognize your accomplishments in April." Previous recipients of the Award for Institutional Excellence have been, among others, Amnesty International USA, Search for Common Ground, Children's Defense Fund, and Habitat for Humanity. This is an incredible honor and we would like to congratulate each and every one of you, our dear ULYP family, friends, and supporters, for this wonderful recognition.

## ULYP PARTICIPATES IN AUB PANEL DISCUSSION



On March 16, our founder Melek El Nimer and our Director Nicole Eid Abuhaydar were invited to be part of a panel discussion organized by the American University of Beirut. During the lecture entitled 'Reversing Social Exclusion? Education and the Role of NGOs in Lebanon,' Melek and Nicole informed the public about ULYP's mission, our educational projects and how we combat social exclusion. The audience was familiarized with the BRIDGE program through the testimonials of BRIDGE alumni Hiba Shanaa and BRIDGE student Hiba Dahche who shared their personal experiences. A great way to acquaint a larger public with the work of ULYP!

## SUNNARA FUNDRAISER – TARGET REACHED!



In the last newsletter, ULYP announced the launch of its SUNNARA program fundraiser. The goal was to raise \$5,000 by 31 January. We are happy to announce that we reached 115% of our target! The funds raised will be used to support a new program that empowers refugee and underprivileged women by teaching them the skills to knit and crochet. The women will learn to create basic clothing and decorative items. Eventually, they will be able to generate an income by producing and selling their items. We would like to thank you for enabling us to reach our goal!

## YOUNG LEARNERS PROGRAM - THE 100 LANGUAGES OF EACH CHILD

*"Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow" - Anthony J. D'Angelo*



The start of each new year gives rise to new chances and opportunities. ULYP's start of 2016 was marked by the adoption of a new teaching methodology in our Young Learners program: the Reggio Emilia approach. ULYP's Young Learners program implemented in partnership with UNICEF gives our 5 year olds the opportunity to enjoy early childhood schooling while immersing in the English language. The newly adopted Reggio Emilia method is internationally recognized for its innovation. According to this approach, each child is endowed with 100 languages. The term "hundred languages of children" refers to the many ways that children have of expressing themselves. Reggio teachers provide children different avenues for thinking, revising, constructing, negotiating, developing, and symbolically expressing their thoughts and feelings. The goal is for the adults and children to better understand one another. Not only are children viewed through a different lens, teachers are considered the students' co-learners who facilitate the students' journey. This journey is especially visible during 'exploration time' where students are invited to see, wonder, and think about the 'provocation' in front of them. During this activity, the classroom is divided into several stations that invite students to learn and discover through play. While one station may consist of magnifying glasses and worms, another station might contain crystals and a sunbeam. In this way, the children are pushed to discover, while at the same time their interests are guiding the curriculum for the following week. Thus far, the children in the Young Learners program have shown remarkable change, being increasingly attentive and engaged in class while at ease when sharing their ideas, hypotheses, and opinions during exploration time. Moreover, their teachers have been engaged in this methodology and learning more about it to take it back to their programs and benefit all their students. It has been a promising start of 2016!

## ARTISTS & ACTORS – BRINGING OUT THE CREATIVE SIDE

*"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." — Maya Angelou*



As part of CIRCLE II, implemented in partnership with UNICEF, our Artists and Actors (A&A) program offers a weekend immersion in the arts to beneficiaries from remote areas in Lebanon. During this module, 30 children and youth from the North participated in the program on our campus. They engaged in hip hop dance and choreography, drama sessions on human rights, made wind chimes, and learned about sanitation and hygiene. The program concluded with a local event where the children performed their sketches and dances in front of an audience in Nahr el Bared Camp. The performance schedule included a play on violence against children, a hip-hop dance performance, and a play on children's right to education. It was attended by the ULYP team, UNICEF's Senior Program Assistant, and the children's parents.

## HARMONY – OUR NEW GENDER BASED VIOLENCE PROGRAM COMES TO AN END

*“The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance” - Nathaniel Branden*



ULYP's HARMONY program, funded by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, utilized the power of peer-to-peer education to spread awareness against gender based violence (GBV). The closing of HARMONY was held on February 26 in the presence of two representatives from the Canadian Embassy. On that day, 24 students and 2 teachers took part in a Training of Trainers that provided them with the tools necessary to raise awareness on GBV in their communities. The partici-

pants were trained on how to conduct a session on the issues of gender and GBV, focusing on public speaking, and the importance of body language in bringing across a message. The second session consisted of a role play in which the participants were asked to present the videos they had developed and produced. The closing ceremony not only allowed the participants to evaluate the program, it also provided a platform to showcase the 13 final short films and celebrate their achievements. The sketches will be disseminated in the coming months on social media and are an important part of the peer-to-peer sessions on gender and GBV that will take place in the communities. Stay tuned!

Here is what one participant had to say about the program: “In our society, we see men as stronger than women. However, this program gave us the opportunity to view each other as equals while collaborating in different projects. Boys and girls here do not act with superiority or inferiority, we are just friends and peers on the same level. We are now aware of this issue and we know the difference between violence and respect. It might not change the world but I think this will forever change our mindset. We will never forget this message and this feeling. This in turn, will change the world, as we are the future!”

## FRAME BY FRAME – THE KEY TO DIALOGUE

*“The best way to solve problems and to fight against war is through dialogue” - Malala Yousafzai*



ULYP is excited to announce the launch of its new program, FRAME by FRAME, funded by the European Union. This cultural exchange program promotes dialogue between youth from different backgrounds in Lebanon through first understanding their own cultures and then learning how to share it with peers from other cultures. Not only will dialogue and cultural exchange be promoted among youth from Beirut, the North, South, and Bekaa; it will also involve 80 youth from European schools in Europe and Lebanon.

Ultimately, this program aims to deepen the participants' knowledge and awareness of each other's cultures, while enhancing social cohesion among them.

## **LIFE: LEARN | INSPIRE | FOCUS | ENGAGE – MOTIVATING THE UNINSPIRED**

*"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." – Aristotle*



Another new program that has been launched by ULYP in 2016 is the LIFE program: Learn|Inspire|Focus|Engage, funded by the Welfare Association. This project targets children at risk of dropping out who have lost their motivation to learn by enhancing their English proficiency. The English classes are held in the participating schools, while LIFE's activities on resilience and conflict resolution will take place once per month at ULYP's campus. LIFE also focuses on the parents and their role in supporting their children's education and keeping them in schools. Through training sessions before, during, and following the project, the parents are provided with the knowledge and tools to help their children and ensure there is a conducive environment for learning in the home.

## **LAUNCH OF ULYP'S ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**



We are proud to announce the launching of ULYP's Alumni Association, ULYPAA. This event was a process that culminated in an event that took place on Friday March 25 at the Golden Tulip Galleria Hotel. Forty of our university graduates attended this event and discussed the value of alumni associations. We all agreed that while each student is a member of his or her alma mater's alumni association, they are also members of the ULYPAA. The goal of ULYPAA is to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between ULYP and its alumni. At this happy event full of smiles, and after a brief opening about ULYP's mission and vision, the alumni filled out a survey identifying their wishes and goals for the Association. Then, each cohort of a graduating class met on their own to nominate and elect their representatives to sit on the committee governing and managing the Association's activities. The results were then shared and everybody enjoyed a lunch together.

The ULYPAA governing committee has the following members:

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From ULYP:

1. Melek El Nimer: ULYP founder
2. Nicole Eid Abuhaydar: ULYP director
3. Salim Karroum: ULYP scholarship committee member
4. Diab Tabari: ULYP scholarship committee member

From the Alumni:

1. Ahmad Tuhaibish: ULYP Class of 2013
2. Alaa Othman: ULYP Class of 2013
3. Mohammad Mirhiji: ULYP Class of 2014
4. Lama Kilzar: ULYP Class of 2014
5. Hiba Mawed: ULYP Class of 2014
6. Fouad al Banna: ULYP Class of 2015
7. Hiba Shanaa: ULYP Class of 2015

### BRIDGE TO A BETTER FUTURE



This February, the Bridge Program launched the second module of its University Preparatory Course (UPC). Students who completed their first modules last summer and fall are now receiving the second round of preparatory counseling and lessons. Every Friday, these 140 students from all over Lebanon come to the AUST campus in Beirut for 5-hour sessions. Currently, the students are receiving remedial English and math lessons from

American University of Science and Technology (AUST) teachers, as well as counseling on successfully completing and submitting university applications, and how to register for the SAT in May of 2016. This module consists of a total of 9 sessions, at the end of which students will sit for their first SAT exams. This module is funded by the Welfare Association, while UNRWA covers transportation costs. Bridge is also currently accepting applications for the scholarship program. So far, Bridge has received 269 applications, and is receiving more every day. The students who eventually get selected will receive scholarships to universities in the upcoming fall.

### FROM PARTICIPANT TO TEACHER: JAMILA'S SUCCESS STORY



Jamila was a student in our Most Outstanding Mothers (MOMs) program earlier last year. She worked with our volunteer, Susi, on her English grammar, conversation, and accent. Jamila made so much progress and showed such great potential that ULYP began discussing the idea of her coming back to teach the next module. Building on her English skills, Jamila worked hard to pass the teacher exams that ULYP gave her. She passed with flying colors and is now volunteering on the ULYP team teaching English to the new group of MOMs. Jamila is now teaching the beginner MOMs group with the help of Susi, while still working on her advanced grammar. Her enthusiasm is contagious to all. Jamila goes above and beyond with lesson planning and active learning in the classroom. Her students become so engrossed in the English language learning that they rarely want to leave to go to break. The evaluators who came to observe her class found her to be an effective teacher. Not only are the women inspired by her story, Jamila herself has experienced a transformation as well. She now feels hopeful and fulfilled. She says "I now feel like I can be a better mother to my own children because I am working hard and following my dreams myself."

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: "I THANK YOU MISS JULIA"

In this section, we put the spot light on one of our volunteers to thank them for their time with us and their contribution to our success. This month, we thank Julia Day who was with us from October to December 2015. This is what she had to say about her time at ULYP:



"Every morning at 8 o'clock comes the bus to the school. Up jump kids, up jump kids..." They know it by heart and they love it. Jumping up and down and imitating the honk of the bus's horn "One: peep, two: peep, peep...": ULYP's Young Learners. Upon their arrival to the beautiful ULYP campus in Dibbiyeh, my last bit of morning sleepiness was gone and I switched into a state of full focus and attention. During my internship at ULYP, I spent every Monday morning on campus in the Young Learners Program, teaching 25 preschoolers basic English. As the weeks passed, I got to know each one of those 25 personalities a bit better, the loud ones, the shy ones, the quick

learners, and the ones that took a minute more of your time. The children soon opened up, were less shy, and felt more and more comfortable. During the rest of the week I worked in the office with whatever was needed: organizing, evaluating, running errands, and a lot more which allowed me to get an insight of ULYP's work making programs like Young Learners possible. I also especially enjoyed working on the HARMONY program, aimed at raising awareness against gender based violence. It was so inspiring to me to see how engaged boys and girls were in the project. "I thank you Miss Julia", said 5 year old preschooler Mohammad, before taking the school bus back home. Thank you too, all of you, and especially ULYP for making this amazing experience possible.

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