



ULYP Summer Newsletter

August 2019, Issue 29

In the beautiful sunny weather of spring and summer, ULYP continued to bring education to youth and children and they in turn blossomed. Our programs continue to grow in number and strength, allowing more and more students, from preschool to university, to unlock their potential. We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who has supported us during this period: donors, partners, staff, teachers, schools, and students. Our community is astounding and deserves the highest praise.

This newsletter highlights the activities, announcements, and achievements since the last issue.

Marching to the Tune of a new Award

In March, ULYP received the great news from Ockenden International that its Change program was being recognized with the 2019 Ockenden International Prize. ULYP submitted its first Change program, developed in partnership with the Asfari Foundation in 2018. A judging panel of six experts reviewed our submission and selected ULYP's program that provides a path to higher education, allowing young people the potential to develop in extreme circumstances.

According to Ockenden, "The judges said it won for its self-evident success rate educating isolated Palestinian and Syrian refugees, which will create a lasting legacy. The judges also felt that Change provides life skills, is transformative and should be a model project that can and should inspire other organisations with similar objectives."

Ockenden International was founded in 1951 and is one of the oldest foundations to support refugees and organizations who promote the dignity and self-reliance of refugees.



Learn, Inspire, Focus, Engage

Just like the title of this article, ULYP's LIFE program spread the joy of learning which was made possible by Taawon/Lebanon. LIFE targets 7th and 8th grade students who are at-risk of dropping out of their UNRWA school, Haifa. LIFE works closely with the school to support the children's education and offer intensive English and life skills both at the school and on the ULYP campus.

Through the focus on life skills, students improved their behavior and attitude towards learning, increasing their confidence as well as their likelihood for staying in school. Parent meetings reinforced these gains as parents were engaged as partners in the educational journey of their children. The program concluded in June with a field trip to Arnaoun Village in North Lebanon where the children engaged in outdoor activities, confidence & team-building, and recreational activities while exploring a new place.



LIFE Success Story: Malak

When Malak began the LIFE program, she was shy and struggled to pronounce words correctly and properly, relying on others to communicate for her. She had a hard time focusing and listening in class, often getting distracted by friends and classmates speaking to her in Arabic or bursting into nervous fits of laughter when asked to answer a question.

As LIFE progressed, Malak began to demonstrate improved self-esteem and confidence in the classroom. Games building on teamwork in both English class and expert sessions allowed Malak to share her individual talents and contribute to her group, boosting her confidence while allowing her to feel supported by her peers. During a discussion on how to behave in the classroom, Malak expressed her new understanding of the importance of listening and respect in the classroom. After this discussion, Malak began to embody some of the qualities essential to being a focused and successful student. Through learning to listen, focus and ask for help when needed, Malak was able to use her energy in order to better structure her learning and build foundations for future success.



التعاون
Taawon



L.I.F.E.

LEARN Inspire FOCUS ENGAGE

TLC for Tender Loving Care and More

At ULYP, TLC also stands for Together Lets Code, a program it had developed four years ago to offer young females the opportunity to believe in themselves and their technology skills. This year, and in partnership with Theirworld, TLC continued to be successful in its mission and taught 150 girls ages 10 - 15 from marginalized Lebanese communities along with their peers from Palestinian and Syrian refugee communities. Divided into three code clubs, each cohort learned how to code, working on Minecraft, Scratch and computing algorithms. These coding clubs also include ULYP's sessions on life skills, swimming, cooking and other activities that are contributing to not only enriching their education, but also giving them an opportunity to explore new passions and make new friendships.



Together
Let's
Code

Their
world

Building Foundations

The wonderful HAPPY program welcomed six classes to our campus this academic year for our interactive, holistic preschool program. Each group took part in four weeks full of lessons and activities designed to grow their comprehension of the English language through songs, art, play and more. The program brought us as much joy as it did the children, who often told us phrases like: "I wake up early when I have HAPPY," and "I prepared my clothes a day early for HAPPY, I was so excited".

Alongside the improvements in the children's learning, HAPPY also supported their teachers' and parents' understanding of early childhood development. Preschool teachers observed ULYP teachers and attended a training session hosted in ULYP's new training room in Beirut. This session explored early childhood brain development, learning stages and the impact of trauma and displacement. The teachers reported learning a number of new skills and noted that the children were better prepared for the next stage of their education as a result of HAPPY. This was validated during ULYP's visits to the preschools in the camps and gatherings where we were proud to see so much of the HAPPY methodology transferring to these classes. This year, HAPPY directly impacted 140 children, over 100 parents and 18 teachers.

happy

The spring and summer of 2019 were busy for SHARE! We are working with 80 middle school children residing in and around the refugee camp of Shatila in Beirut. Students attend weekly sessions of English in the new center for Social Support Society in Shatila and enjoy full days of English, sports, arts and drama sessions on ULYP's beautiful campus. As the summer comes to an end, we want to say good luck to our oldest SHARE students and welcome a new young group to this wonderful environment of spreading hope and reviving education.

The SHARE program, supported by the Beit Jiddi Foundation, grew this year to include HAPPY as a way to build the foundations of preschoolers who may become future SHARE students. Next year SHARE will celebrate its fifth year of changing lives!



Bridge Star: Noura

Noura is a participant in our Bridge Program and has recently passed her Foundation year at the University of Malta with flying colors. In her own words:



“For 18 years, I have been living in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon called “Ein Al-Helweh”. This camp -with all its flaws- empowered me to see what is beyond the walls surrounding it and to break barriers between countries to finally settle in Europe as I have fortunately gotten a scholarship to study at the University of Malta. Honestly, I have always wanted to leave Lebanon since refugees’ future there is uncertain and depends on the political climate in the region with all its turmoil and danger; however, I always had in mind the idea of coming back and contributing for change. For that, I chose to study Social Work abroad since this field of studies gets you closer to marginalized groups and since I am [in] one of these groups, I may be able to offer more help. Europe has offered me diversity, openness, knowledge, and freedom. Personally, this benefited me because I met many nice, hardworking, knowledgeable, and open-minded people and academically, it gave me the power to explore and learn by myself.



The hardships always pushed me forward, never backwards because I believe that education, especially for refugees, is the first and last resort in contributing to the prosperity of a country and one’s success.”

Noura has already made noticeable change. Director Stefania Agius Fabri of the International Office at the University of Malta stated, “Apart from her excellent academic record Noura has really distinguished herself for her participation, her insight, her thirst to learn and willingness to contribute. She has in fact engaged in a volunteering experience in Malta for part of the summer. We look forward to having Noura joining the Degree programme in October and am very thankful that we have been blessed with an excellent student who is truly deserving of this scholarship.”

Change Starts with Education

Our students are hard at work in the Change program developing their English skills and expanding their horizons through discussions on topics that range from modern art to life skills to respect. This summer has been lively, and we have seen great improvement and growth overall in both English performance and confidence - skills that will enable them to become positive change makers in their communities.



This summer, Change students engaged in a unit surrounding the book *Who Moved My Cheese*, a motivational short story about the consequences of not being able to adapt to life's changes. Students used the book's themes to reflect on their own life situations and how they can better adapt to changes occurring around them. As one student said during a class discussion, "Change is the only constant in life." We are excited about how adept and eager our youth are and remain proud of their commitment to improving their own lives and thus, the lives of those around them. Change is a component of the program ULYP is implementing in partnership with the Abdul

Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund targeting the secondary age students. Change will continue for one more year and graduate its 300 participants in August 2020.

CHANGE
...starts with education

Towards Tertiary Education and Beyond

Another component of the same fund, the Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund is supporting undergraduate and specialized diplomas. More than 150 students are benefiting from this program and are pursuing their degrees and diplomas in five universities in Lebanon and abroad. Of these, six students concluded their one-year programs and graduated: five with teaching diplomas and one from the Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Program. Our graduates are now equipped with new sets of skills that correlate directly with employability.

Farah not only graduated with a teaching diploma but also received the Award of Excellence in Practice Teaching during her practicum. Prior to receiving this opportunity to obtain a Teaching Diploma, Farah had graduated from university with a BS in Mathematics, yet could not secure a job. Through this fund, she is now able to pursue teaching positions and in fact is sought after in the job market.



عبد العزيز الغرير
صندوق تعليم اللاجئين

Celebrating Education



On July 25, ULYP held its fifth Celebration of Education for our Bridge graduates. ULYP class of 2019 broke the record with 32% of the 94 graduates completing degrees with distinction, high distinction or top of faculties.

With standing ovation, Ricardo Karam was this year's keynote speaker whose words were inspirational to the students and audience at large: "Today, I want to talk to you about what time gives you in return: I want to talk to you about stories. Stories: the most precious things we carry with us - not just as individuals, but as communities, nations, and cultures...As I set out to tell my own story, I've realized that heroes and heroines didn't always work under the spotlight. Many of them, in fact, work in silence. You are the heroes and heroines, you must tell your stories...The Arab world is thirsty for role models. We need people to make us believe that a brighter future awaits us. That we are still allowed to dream. As you build your own futures, you have the opportunity to build, along with them, the futures of every country."

Two graduates then took the stage and addressed the audience of donors, board members and friends of ULYP with powerful and touching words:

"I believed in the mission that educating young women from the Middle East is the key to making it a better place to live. It was weird for people to accept that idea that a girl is traveling by herself to study abroad, and for what, trying to pursue a degree in the medical field and destroy her social life in the process... I wanted to change people's perspective towards girls and women like me. Education has no limits! My gender or some oblivious social constraints should not be a cause for stopping me from fulfilling my dream."

Wardah Al Akrah, Manhattanville College
BS Biology & BA Psychology (minor), Class of 2019

"I would like to congratulate my fellow graduates and friends on their success and ULYP on their continuous achievements... As a Palestinian girl, I was aware enough of the importance of education, and getting a degree was my purpose in life... the power of knowledge is the only way to survive and reach anywhere in this life, especially as a refugee... My motto in life is to never give up, believe in yourself, challenge yourself, and at the same time own your weaknesses as long as you are working on making weakness your strength. Finally, wherever the flow takes you, you will be fine as long as you have the will to reach."

Rama Al Hindi, LAU
BBA Business Administration, Class of 2019

Thank you to our wonderful donors and to everyone who attended this ceremony. Without your contributions and support, this success could not be possible.



Volunteer Spotlight: DukeEngage

This summer, we were again lucky to host volunteers from the DukeEngage program in North Carolina. Ten enthusiastic, reliable and devoted volunteers joined our own local volunteers and together they implemented Bridge's first component, the University Preparatory Course (UPC). UPC works with the top 150 Palestinian students enrolled in UNRWA secondary schools in Lebanon. These students, in the summer before 11th grade, engage in SAT prep and receive college and career guidance as part of UPC.

We were pleased that some of the volunteers were of Middle Eastern roots. Hopefully, their volunteering experience helped them better understand their identities and more importantly, the untold stories of Middle Eastern aspiration and potential. On our behalf, we can assure that their counseling efforts left a memorable impact on the UPC students.

As a result of the long-term collaboration between ULYP and DukeEngage, a former UPC student, Nour Kanaan, will be joining Duke University this fall. We are incredibly thankful to the previous DukeEngagers, and specifically Jake McCarthy, who guided her during the application process. We are proud of this lasting partnership and look forward to collaborating with future cohorts!



Looking Ahead

This fall, ULYP is excited to announce that two programs will be relaunching in addition to our current programs! Stay tuned for updates in the next newsletter about Rainbow, #Respect and much more.

