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Welcome to ULYP's July newsletter! We've had a busy few months and we want to share our news, updates and successes with you, our friends and supporters. Ramadan Kareem everyone!

Program Wrap-Up

Since our last newsletter in April, ULYP has been very busy with several of our core programs – HAPPY, MOMs and BRIDGE.

In May the women of our MOMs program, funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy, celebrated their last day with certificates and plenty of music and laughter. This was the third and final module of MOMs for this year and we are very proud of all the women who have participated. They have gained confidence as women, wives, and mothers, improved their English and IT skills, and learned about child nutrition, communication, First Aid and reproductive health.

In June we said goodbye to another group of children as we concluded another module of HAPPY, funded by the Welfare Association. The children this term benefited from the improved playground and brand new outdoor equipment, now including parachutes, swings, scooters and a road system complete with signs and parking. We are grateful to the Australian Embassy Beirut's Direct Aid Program who funded the construction and purchase of these facilities, which we know will bring bigger smiles to the faces of many children for years to come.

Throughout the spring 150 11th grade students attended ULYP's SAT preparatory course at the beautiful campus of the American University of Beirut. During the 10 week course students received English and Math training in order to prepare them for their upcoming SAT tests later this fall. We are very proud of our dedicated and hardworking students and cannot wait to follow them further on their path towards higher education. A big thank you goes to AUB for the cooperation and successful conduction of the program.



Learning to Lead

29 Palestinian students age 16-18 spent the weekend at our campus in Dibbiyeh, learning about business proposals, working on their own socially responsible business ideas, and discovering the ins and outs of presentation and public speaking.

The 'Leadership Weekend' was the final activity for the oldest participants of this semester's Skills4Life project. Prior to the weekend, all students took part in several business

skills courses given by our partners INJAZ Lebanon. The final course was a one day leadership crash course during which they learnt about management structures, the qualities necessary for different roles, teamwork, leadership, how to start a project, and finally created their own entrepreneurial business ideas. Five winning teams, chosen through peer evaluation, were selected to go through to the next round.

The Leadership Weekend itself culminated in an exciting competition, where two members of each of the five teams pitched their idea in front of a panel of four judges. Each team had just seven minutes on the clock to show their PowerPoint presentation and explain their whole business concept, from vision and mission to management structure to budgets and profits. At the end of their seven minutes they were quizzed further by the judging panel. All the teams performed fantastically, especially given that for most this was the first time they had spoken in front of an audience, and they had been given just 10 hours over the weekend to refine their business ideas and create their presentations.

The prize for the competition winners, and the final stage for the leadership program, is the opportunity to experience internships in businesses around Beirut and Saida. ULYP, Welfare and INJAZ will meet with the students, help them write a personal profile, brief them in internship etiquette and discuss their internship preferences in order to give them experience in a sector relevant to their studies and future aspirations.

ULYP is very grateful to the European Union whose funding allows ULYP, Welfare Association and INJAZ Lebanon to jointly impact these students' lives through Skills4Life.



Play4Peace

Thanks to everyone who supported our recent play4peace campaign by donating or sharing our campaign with their friends. We managed to raise almost \$12,500 in donations on our JustGiving page, and thanks to offline contributions of \$24,000 we met and exceeded our fundraising target. We now have enough to start building our very own basketball court! Construction in Dibbiyeh began last week and is due to finish by the end of summer. We can't wait to start playing for peace on our brand new court!



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Vita Mundo

ULYP student Mahmoud Al-Abbasi recently participated in UNICEF's Global Challenge, creating innovative solutions to real problems faced by people living in at-risk communities around the world.

"My name is Mahmoud Al-Abbasi and I am a third year mechanical engineering student at the Lebanese American University. I became involved with ULYP in 2012 when ULYP started the first steps of SAT tutoring. I gained high grades in the Lebanese baccalaureate and I was granted a scholarship funded by Mr. Jalal Laham.

Three friends and I decided to participate in the 'Global UNICEF Challenge 2014'. Two of my team mates, Jad Abdo and Mohammad Hammad, were also ULYP students studying mechanical engineering, and our fourth team mate, Ryan Abi, studies graphic design. The main concept of the UNICEF challenge is to innovate new solutions for the current problems in Syrian refugee camps. After many visits to the camps we realized that waste is a vital problem.

We are the 'Vita Mundo' Team and our project is about creating a compact fully-automated waste sorting machine that diversifies waste efficiently into five categories: iron, aluminium, glass, plastics, and organic material. In our design we are focusing on the motivation to use the machine by adding a machine that gives the user a voucher that would permit him to retain a symbolic amount of money after using the machine.

If we won the competition it would be a great chance to extend our work to make the full design of the Vita Mundo Machine and improve it because we still have new ideas to try. The winning team of the UNICEF challenge will be guided by investors to test the machine on the ground and assess success and failure. So I guess if we win everything is possible! Our plan is to keep expanding our dreams and always seek success. My plan as an individual is to see this work progressing and to keep innovating. Thanks for your time, thanks for the support."



Ahla Fawda!

On Sunday 1st June, ULYP participated for the first time in the annual Hamra Spring Festival! The beautiful weather provided the perfect background for our games and activities, which included decorating ULYP caps with paints and glitter, a Wishing Wall, the 'throw the hoop' game, and 'how many sweets in the jar?'. We also handed out Peaches for Peace, freshly grown at our campus in Dibbeyeh!

We raised some money to go towards our Play4Peace campaign, but most importantly we raised our profile by talking to members of the public interested in our work, handing out flyers, and even appearing briefly on Future TV!



We would like to thank all the student volunteers who participated throughout the day, and everyone who stopped by to talk, take part, and donate – we couldn't have done it without you!

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Prosteel – Working all Day and all Night

Yousef Rmayed, one of ULYP's students studying civil engineering recently took part in the Prosteel 'Permanent shelter design after earthquake disasters' competition.

"I was invited by my lecturer, the head of the Civil Engineering department at Cyprus International University, Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Balkis, to join 2 architecture students in a group to represent our university in a competition. The competition was entitled "Permanent shelter design after earthquake disasters" and took place in Van, Turkey. She chose me due to my hard working study and high grade achievement – I have the highest grades in the civil engineering department at the university.

There were 30 groups from other Turkish universities who also took part in the competition. The groups were made of architecture students to work on the structure and design, and civil engineering students to create the design and calculations. These structures were to be made from steel only with no reinforced concrete used! My team, formed of 2 architectural friends Öznur and Elif, started our design and analysis more than a month before the submission deadline, with hard work, searching, trying to find the best solution available, and using the best methods of analysis and design. We sometimes worked all day and night, facing conflicts and difficulties and doing our best to solve them!! Sharing our experiences between each other, we all worked together as a team create our design. We won an Honorable Mention Prize from Prosteel 2014 for what we created. We are proud of what we have done, including both design and analysis!

I joined ULYP in 2010. I graduated from Cyprus International University this semester, at the end of June, and am now looking for a scholarship to complete my Masters study in the field of construction management.

Of course I would like to thank you all at ULYP, and special thanks and regards to Mrs. Melek. I am here in this situation and position because of her valuable effort and the uncountable help she gave and is still giving for me. From my deep heart I thank her very much."



My 6 Months at ULYP

We asked Etta, a current intern from Holland, to share with us her experience so far of Lebanon and ULYP.

"I came to Lebanon in August 2013 after completing my BA in History in Amsterdam to continue my studies at AUB as a graduate student at CAMES. My first five months here were difficult. I had been wanting to study the Middle East and at the same time experience the culture and people first hand, but I didn't manage to achieve this through a university degree. I didn't learn as much about Lebanon and its people as I had hoped and I wanted to be more active, more involved and to contribute to a cause I truly believed in.

That is when I heard about ULYP.

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Previously having directed a summer camp through CISV, which aims to create global friendship by bringing children together from all over the world, teaching them respect and mutual understanding, I was sold the moment I read about ULYP's work and their mission to do the same for the different isolated communities in Lebanon. I was very happy to be accepted as a volunteer at ULYP and started with them in February. Over the last couple of months I have not only worked in the office, helping with administration, the implementation of programs, and grant applications, but I have also worked at ULYP's campus in Dibbiyeh, helping out at the HAPPY program with a lovely group of Palestinian 5 year-olds.

The warm, friendly and inclusive character of the office and the countless opportunities ULYP has given me to develop my skills and talents, allowing me to improve and grow as a person, has led to occasional accidental references to the office as 'home'. Hopefully I will be able to stay with ULYP a lot longer and I will truly miss and never forget my colleagues and all the students after I leave."

Mind Your Power

Alaa Maarouf, a ULYP student studying computer engineering at LAU, took part in the Microsoft Imagine Cup, a competition which brings together young tech innovators to solve some of the world's greatest challenges.

"This year's Microsoft Imagine Cup in Lebanon comprised of 18 teams of students from universities all over the country. The panel of judges assessing our designs included professionals from journalism, TV, banks, entrepreneur schemes and venture capitalist firms. My team, Mind Your Power, consisted of four students from LAU and BAU, each with a different area of study, allowing us to tackle every aspect of the design.

We created the Power Console (PC), a Windows phone application providing remote access to home activity through monitoring and controlling power consumption. PC is a user-friendly app accompanied by a central hardware port to which home devices are connected, monitored, and power-controlled through a specialized network and by means of specialized equipment. PC offers a solution to both economic and environmental sustainability: it not only provides users with a handy means of remote power control, but also serves as a 24/7 monitor of home power consumption rate, and consequent finances. We made it to the second round of the competition where we gained 2nd place overall in the citizenship category. It was a great experience, more like a dream come true! I am determined to make this the beginning of more achievements in the future.

I discovered ULYP in 2011 after asking about scholarship programs. I studied really hard to get the scholarship as I knew it was a once in a life time opportunity that would change my life and the life of my family. I am very delighted that I am now part of the amazing ULYP family!

I believe that education will help me implement my ideas to improve the miserable conditions of many families. I know that ULYP is not waiting for anything in return, but I feel that I have a great responsibility to work hard and pay back this debt to my society. I am looking forward to being a committed leader in my community. I have optimistic dreams for the future and I will keep working hard to make them come true!"



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An Eye-Opening Experience

Fabian joined ULYP for three months in April. Before leaving we asked him for some thoughts about his eye-opening experience.

“Before beginning my internship at ULYP in early April, everything I knew about Lebanon revolved around information from my university studies: discouraging reports about bombings and a visit to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in The Hague. This all changed in December 2013 when a good friend and previous ULYP volunteer, Sonja, told me about her work and convinced me to go to Lebanon.

From the start it was clear that the environment at ULYP’s office was supportive and highly inclusive. This was very important to me as I had never worked in an NGO before and it was much easier to get up to speed and contribute to ULYP’s work. My tasks in the office varied greatly, ranging from helping to write proposals for funding to updating the office’s social media in order to raise ULYP’s profile and spread information about its mission. Having signed up for administrative work rather than teaching, I was glad to occasionally accompany colleagues to ULYP’s campus and get an idea of how their work is put into practice in the field.

3 months in retrospect, I now realize I knew little about Lebanese society, customs and its diverse population. At ULYP I gained immeasurably valuable insights not only into the vast “NGO-World”, but into Lebanon and its society too. I am grateful for this experience for two reasons: first, I am much more appreciative of the benefits which have been provided for me at home. Having taken social services offered in Austria and Switzerland for granted most of my life, I learnt to better understand the aspirations of people in crisis-prone countries. Secondly, having met the beneficiaries of ULYP’s projects, I have a deeper appreciation of the problems, needs and challenges which people living in Lebanon face. My time here has been fruitful and eye-opening, and I intend to come back in the future.”



Coming Soon

Look out for our first ever annual report, due soon!



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