

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace

Winter 2006 • Spring 2007  
Volume X Issue II

## Reflections on war

Seeds facilitate  
Camp dialogue

The Cyprus  
divide

Habitat for  
Humanity—India

Portland  
Color Games

Barrier  
Part II: On  
the inside

Plus  
your letters  
art & poems





*The Olive Branch* is a magazine written, edited and produced by youth from regions of conflict who are part of the Seeds of Peace program. All opinions expressed on these pages are those of the Seeds who write and edit for the magazine and are not necessarily shared by Seeds of Peace, any government, *The Olive Branch*, its funders, or its staff.

### The Olive Branch Staff

Eric Kapenga, Editor  
Manar Al-Natsha & Eli Shteinberg,  
Assistant Editors

### Regional Editors

(who identify themselves as coming from)  
**Afghanistan** Mir Akhgar  
**Balkans** Gent Salihu  
**Cyprus** Ersev Ersoy & Suleyman Gelener  
**Egypt** Khaled Sallam  
**India & Pakistan** Divya Moorjaney & Nijah Khan  
**Israel & Palestine** Ibrahim Abu Arafah, Shuki Hasson, Aya Zuaiteer, Oron Michaeli & Agam Rafaeli  
**Jordan** Dana Audallah  
**Turkey** Alp Kutlualp  
**USA** Joey Katona

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### Seeds of Peace

John Wallach, Founder  
Janet Wallach, President

### Program Staff/Regional Offices

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Seeds of Peace is a non-profit, non-political organization that develops and empowers young leaders from regions of conflict to work towards peace through coexistence and conflict resolution. A safe environment is created at our camp in Maine where these teenagers can air their views and learn the leadership and conflict resolution techniques required to end the cycles of war.

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COVER PHOTO CREDITS  
(CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT):  
NOA EPSTEIN, TOMER PERRY, IDDO  
FELSENTHAL, IDDO FELSENTHAL,  
TOMER PERRY,  
IDDO FELSENTHAL,  
ERIC KAPENGA,  
TOMER PERRY,  
IDDO FELSENTHAL  
FRONT COVER ART:  
IMAN AZZI, ELI SHTEINBERG  
BACK COVER ART: ROLA SAHER

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# From the editor

olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org

In this issue of *The Olive Branch*, we take a look back at some of the highlights (and low points) of the past year. This summer marked the first time that older Seeds facilitated most Middle East dialogue sessions at Camp. On pages 14 & 15, three of these facilitators reflect on their training and experiences leading dialogue.

The summer also saw renewed war between Israel and Hizbullah. Many Jewish and Arab Seeds in the north of Israel spent many long hours in bomb shelters during the month-long conflict. Members of the Seeds of Peace family followed the war in Lebanon and its aftermath through the reporting of Iman Azzi (2001) in the Lebanon *Daily Star* newspaper and the FoxNews blog of counselor Spencer Witte (2004 & 2005). On pages 16 to 18, six Seeds including Iman share their thoughts on living through the war.

You'll also hear about Seeds and events in Maine, Cyprus, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. We are currently working on stories from Jordan and the Balkans for the next issue. If you are interested in writing for *The Olive Branch*, or you have suggestions for stories, please write to Manar, Eli and me at olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org.

It's been a busy year for Seeds of Peace around the world, and your SOP staff is gearing up for an even busier one. As you read this, Seeds of all ages are working with staff to plan projects, workshops and events. If you are interested in participating, let us know!

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## "ALL — UP!" with Tim

Director Emeritus, Seeds of Peace International Camp

Dear *Olive Branch* readers,  
This installment of "ALL-UP!" is special. Maybe it has to do with my semi-retirement.

Anyway, I am going to try to express my feelings to all of you with the hope you will understand how I am feeling at this moment.

It is hard to put into words 14 years of love for some wonderful people. You allowed me and my family to share in your lives: your moments of happiness and sadness, your growth in knowledge, your desire to respect, to trust and to communicate.

Most importantly, you shared your desire for a just peace in your homelands.

I have said it before: Seeds of Peace is about the SEEDS. It is *your* organization. It will sink or swim based on your involvement, your commitment to each other, and your belief in respect, trust and communication as the watch words of the organization.



People who work for the organization will come and go, but a Seed is someone who has walked the walk of living together, eating together, talking together, playing together. A Seed is someone who has made the commitment to listen, to discuss, to learn from the other person. A Seed has decided to be the very best human being they can

be. A Seed has decided to be a part of the world. You are what is going to happen in this world.

My life has been quite full because of all of you. Yes, there have been bad times, but there have been good times, too. I will never be able to thank you fully.

Please never give up. Life is an ongoing struggle. It is not always fair, but it is what you make it. What is your legacy going to be?

Be safe.

All my love,



a look back  
**2006**  
 spring • summer  
 fall • winter



dining hall



pleasant lake



group challenge course



flag raising



world cup



washington, d.c.



tel aviv



gaza



ps prep



otisfield



hajime



haifa



tel aviv



jerusalem center



mumbai



cnn, jerusalem



color games



egypt

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cairo



jerusalem



camp



music program



bethlehem



camp



tel aviv



jerusalem



camping



color games



sports day



cairo



camp



color games



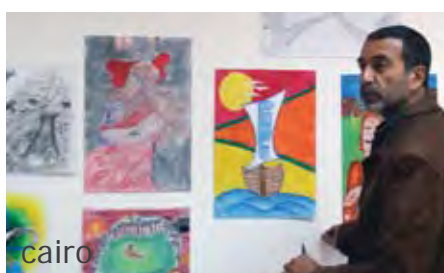
gaza



tel aviv office



new york



cairo



maine sky

AZZA EL SHERBINY, SYED FAHEEM AHMAD, NOA EPSTEIN, DOR KAIDAR, ANDY ARSHAM



# Letters

olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org



## ANSWERING THE SKEPTICS

Sometimes I'm asked by people who don't know about Seeds of Peace, and even by some Seeds, "What's the use of all of your activities? Can you change a thing? You're only teenagers!"

My answer to them is very simple: Believe in the individual—the greatest changes were made by people who believed in their destiny. They wanted to do something, and they did it.

Each one of us has so much power that we're not even aware of.

We may be 'only' teenagers, but 15 years from now we'll be adults with power and influence.

We are the future.

**Omri Rogowski**  
(Hertzliya)

## INDIA-PAKISTAN HOMESTAYS

After a long wait and a lot of effort, Homestays 2006 finally took place!

What makes Homestays so special is the fact that for one week, we Indians have the privilege of hosting the Pakistani Seeds in our homes and acquainting them with our lifestyles, cultures and families.

We spent the first three days in Karjat doing art and drama workshops, exploring who we consider "the other side" and why some people are considered "the other" by their society. Is it because their ideologies are different? Or is it because they are unable to communicate and reach out to their communities?

We didn't manage to come up with a consolidated image of who "the other" is for us as everyone had a different perspective, but it was definitely a thought-provoking exercise.

The days spent in Mumbai were equally fun, whether it was bowling, or shopping, or school presentations, or chilling at Barista (a coffee shop for teens) or visiting a temple and a mosque.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Feruzan, Sajjad, Tom and all those who made Homestays 2006 possible. I would also like to thank the Pakistani Seeds for coming and making the Homestays so enjoyable and memorable!

**Nazaqat Lal**  
(Mumbai)

A surge of warm air greeted us all as we stepped out of the airport. We were finally there, in the country which shares a long history and culture with our own—we were in India! The Indian Seeds were right outside to greet us; it was a wonderful reunion. Homestays had begun.

The best part of our stay in Karjat was watching the documentary *War and Peace* with its director, Anand Patwardhan. The documentary, which focuses on the problems emerging from the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan, was remarkable. The director was present with us when we watched it, and afterwards we had a question and answer session with him.

Then there was our visit to the Sai Baba Temple; the variety of songs by

Tom; and how can I forget the remarkable talent show—singing, dancing, guitar playing, poetry reading, acting and *Qawwali* performing. The Seeds could do anything!

All of us Pakistanis had the chance to see Indian lifestyles through our Indian hosts. We, along with our hosts, also went to their school and together gave a presentation at it.

Most important of all, we accomplished the goal of Homestays: we understood the other side better. It was amazing to see the love and respect we received from the people of India.

For me personally, the Homestays experience gave me the strength to reach out and hope for a better future, to strive for peace, because it has made me believe that the world in peace would be the most beautiful place to live in.

Seeds of Peace is magical ... and never was its magic more apparent than during Homestays.

**Muhammad Uzair Aftab**  
(Lahore)

## DARFUR



*Darfur: What our generation  
will be remembered for*  
—Mujib Mashal (ink & charcoal)

If you thought the genocide in Rwanda would be the last one we would witness because the world is more conscious and will prevent such a thing, you were mistaken. We are still to learn lessons from the 800,000 innocent lives we neglected to save because we were too busy with our own lives.

The excuse our leaders used regarding Rwanda was that they lacked sufficient information to see genocide was happening. But there's no such excuse about Darfur, Sudan: no one denies the fact that more than 350,000 innocent civilians have lost their lives and millions have been displaced simply because of their identity. Those who have survived the atrocities so far face the threat of starvation, torture, rape and death every day they open their eyes to this world.

Please write to your leaders asking them to take action against the ethnic cleansing that is going on in Darfur. This is our chance to show that we care about those who are abused and victimized. Those of us who have been victims better understand how crucial it is for the world to provide these innocents

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with support and care.

Neglecting this genocide, just like we have neglected many other crises in history and then regretted doing so later on, would be the biggest mistake of our generation. By writing these letters and taking action in other ways we would be showing the Darfurians that humanity and sympathy still exist in this seemingly heartless world.

**Mujib Mashal**  
(Kabul)

### JOINING THE ISRAELI ARMY

This month I'm officially going to be drafted into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Though I won't be doing combat service or serving in the Palestinian Territories, I still feel there are things I want to say before I enlist.

I've been involved in many discussions about the apparent paradox of Israeli Seeds going to the army. How can people who have devoted at least parts of the last three years to promoting peace suddenly go fight the very war we're trying to end? How does the green of Seeds coexist with the khaki of military uniform?

The main argument that has been advanced is that it's better for us to be there than for someone else. Meaning, if a Seed soldier is standing at a checkpoint, he is much more likely to have some understanding of the troubles of the people going through it than a random soldier who might decide to abuse his power.

I think it's a good point, but a very small part of this complex issue.

When asked why I am going to the army, the immediate answer is "to defend my country." Though some people might disagree with me, I think that the IDF was established with the sole purpose of defending the citizens of Israel. The Territories are only a small part of its duties. Even if tomorrow morning Israelis and Palestinians make peace and there's no longer need for a single soldier to enter the West Bank or Gaza, there would still be many, many people who would desire to destroy Israel and remove the Jewish presence from this region.

I'm not joining the IDF because I believe our policy in the Territories is just or useful. I'm joining the IDF because for me, refusing is not protesting a specific policy—it's protesting the very existence of Israel.

By now I can imagine at least some of the things going through the heads of Palestinians reading this message: "Has he learned nothing?" "Can't he overcome the brainwashing?"

I don't expect people who suffer every day because of the actions of the institution I'm joining to have the least bit of sympathy for me. But this is one time when I'm not looking for it.

Joining the army is not going to bring peace any closer. It might even push it back a bit. But this is something I feel like I have to do. I was Israeli long before I was a Seed, and part of being Israeli is joining the army and defending my country, be it against Palestinian militants or anyone else.

Ideological speeches aside, I'd like to

## FAHAD ALI JEFARI

OCTOBER 27<sup>TH</sup> 1985 — JULY 1<sup>ST</sup> 2006  
DOHA, QATAR

**Seeds of Peace mourns the loss of Fahad (Bunk 12, II, 2000), who was killed in a car accident on July 1st, 2006.**

take this opportunity to thank everyone I've met in my three years in this organization. "Life-changing" is a word being thrown around a lot, but I really didn't understand its meaning before joining Seeds.

The experience I've gone through and the amazing people I've had the fortune to spend time with have profoundly affected me, and I want to believe that the things I've learned will continue with me throughout my life.

There are no words for me to fully describe how I feel about this organization and everyone involved in it, so I'll settle for "thank you."

**Sagi Ganot**  
(Holon)

### CAMP REFLECTIONS

Ever since I was a child, ideas and thoughts about Israel have built up in my mind. Observing the suffering and pain that Palestinians go through every day because of the Occupation made me view Israelis as the "bad guys" whose aim is to kill me and destroy my future.

After the past six years of fighting, my last drops of hope of having peace in Palestine and having a normal life evaporated, reinforcing this view.

Two years ago, I was selected to go to Camp. I had my own prejudices and stereotypes about the enemy, and people's attitudes towards organizations like Seeds of Peace discouraged me (many believe that they brainwash participants.) The idea of living with the enemy, side by side, seemed like one of the more impossible things in the world.

I then stepped into the magical world of Camp. At the beginning, the situation was awkward. But after spending many hours with Israelis I discovered that they are human: they have feelings, they have their own share of difficulties in life, and they have their own fears about meeting their enemy—me and other Palestinians.

We are all human beings, equal in rights and dignity. Labels, identities, and religions should not separate people.

As each day at Camp passed, a layer of fear was eliminated; at the end of the three weeks, I reached the conclusion that not all Israelis are evil and that

impossible things are made possible by determination.

Seeds of Peace changed my perspective on life, not only in terms of Palestine and politics, but also in terms of interpersonal relationships.

If someone was meant to reject the idea of coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis, that would be me. However, when I had the opportunity to talk with Israeli teenagers, to discuss the conflict, fight for my beliefs, and explain my point of view, I realized that I was one of the most fortunate people in the world.

**Anan Suleiman**  
(Ramallah)

This July I was chosen to go back to Camp as a Peer Support (PS). Me, going back to Camp—after two years, I got to return to the place where it all started!

The most amazing thing about the experience was the PS program. While the new camper program is all about meeting the other side, teamwork, communication and coexistence, the returning camper program is different.

If during my first time at Camp, I learned about independence, coexistence and conflict resolution, this time I felt I was developing communication and leadership skills, as well as responsibility and friendship.

Group interaction is very different, since we pretty much do everything together (17 girls and one bathroom ... you have plenty of waiting time to bond!).

Amazingly, our dialogue sessions were self-facilitated, and we had the chance to talk not only about the conflict but also about discrimination, Islam, women's rights in all religions and nuclear weapons.

I feel so fortunate being a part of this Seeds of Peace family, together with incredible campers, counselors and staff.

Above all I would like to personally thank the people who helped me through my summer as a PS: Sarabeth & Danielle (yeah Bunk !!), Tomer, Wes, and last, but definitely not least, Tim & Bobbie.

Thank you all for giving me such a powerful experience!

**Omer Duvdevani**  
(Rosh Ha'ayin)





Like other Palestinians, I have witnessed all kinds of destruction, humiliation and bloodshed. My mind created sad images and angry voices. I could hear the echo of people screaming out their frustration. I could see people drowning in their miseries. I could feel a hand trying to scratch out the word 'peace' carved in my heart.

Through Seeds of Peace I became conscious of the possibility of bringing together two societies and letting them coexist and rid themselves of all the anger that fills their hearts.

Now, I wonder: "If flowers of different colors and types can be planted in one type of soil, why can't two nations live in one land?"

I am sure that no two societies want to live in war and be miserable; on the contrary, all people look forward to living in peace and having their full rights.

**Nouar Qutob**  
(Jerusalem)

This summer was incredible. In three short weeks of Camp, my thoughts, opinions and life were drastically changed.

From the very moment I stepped off the bus in Otisfield, I knew I was part of something important.

Looking at pictures of my experience, I find myself almost nostalgic. One particular picture reminds me of what I learned and how much I changed. It is of a mural on top of the old wood climbing wall. In this picture, it is still unfinished, a reminder of how it progressed from a blank canvas to a vibrant and beautiful representation of the values instilled by Seeds of Peace.

Even more remarkable are the people in the picture. The four of us in front—Hagar, Ayten, Katie and I—are smiling and holding up our hands, which are completely covered in green paint.

In the background, campers and counselors are working hard to transform the plain surface into a work of art.

This scene is the epitome of Seeds of Peace. For three weeks, Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians and Americans worked together for a common goal. When we picked up our paintbrushes, disputes and differences were left behind.

Looking at this picture reminds me of the day it was taken. It was a breezy summer day in the woods of Maine. I can smell the combination of fresh air and wet paint. I hear new friends discussing which color to paint the sunflower petals, then breaking into our painting song: "Grab your paint & grab your rollers."

I can feel the green paint drying on my hands and the warm air against my skin.

I can see a potential masterpiece being developed by people of different nationalities and religions. They are too busy making the most of an unforgettable experience to remember for now the differences that brought them here in the first place.

I didn't know it at the time, but I changed that day. Small pieces of me changed every day last summer. I learned about friendship, acceptance, leadership, and most importantly, peace.

**Annie Butts**  
(Augusta, Maine)



See something  
you'd like to  
respond to? Your  
letters are most  
welcome!

Letters are edited  
for length,  
content  
and style.

E-mail submissions  
to [olivebranch@  
seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org)



coexistence acceptance  
• empathy tolerance •  
peace  
**Egypt**  
**Art**  
**Contest**  
**2006**  
peace  
• tolerance empathy •  
acceptance coexistence



Laila Mohamed Saad  
Modern Education School

2nd  
(tie)



Nadine Mourad  
Dr. Nermine Ismail School

2nd  
(tie)

BY KANZY KHAFAGY  
(CAIRO)

On December 9th, Egyptian Seeds of Peace Delegation Leaders helped organize the second annual Seeds of Peace/AMIDEAST Art Contest in Cairo.

**Seventy-five students, aged 12 to 16, from 18 different schools in Cairo and Port Said participated in the event. I was lucky enough to attend.**

**The students drew posters reflecting the themes of peace, tolerance, empathy, coexistence and acceptance.**

**I had a wonderful time as a Seed (2006) helping the Delegation Leaders and proctoring the students. I saw hands painting and minds creating while the main goal was challenging violence.**

The contest was judged by three prominent Cairo artists: Dr. Farid Fadel, Maged El Sigini, and H.E. Ambassador Youssry El Kouedy.

**The 12 best posters are the subject of the monthly pages of the 2007 Seeds of Peace calendar. All drawings have also been included in the calendar on a smaller scale.**

The award ceremony took place on January 9th. Seeds were present to answer questions **from participants and 250 audience members** about the organization and their experiences as Seeds.

The top three posters were drawn by Rola Saher (Port Said American School, back cover **of the magazine**), **Nadine Mourad & Laila Mohamed Saad.**



*"What he has done for me is something unique. He has opened my eyes to the world."*

—Omar (Ramallah)



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## Efrat Oppenheimer (Jerusalem)

EFRAT (1999) PARTICIPATED IN the Israeli reality television show *Ha Shagrir (The Ambassador)*. She competed against 13 other contestants in various tasks designed to improve Israel's image in the international community. Efrat, the youngest contestant, outlasted all but one participant, making it to the suspense-filled final episode.

## Joey Katona (Los Angeles) & Omar Dreidi (Ramallah)

BY EITAN PAUL  
(NEW JERSEY)

AT CAMP, SEEDS OF PEACE founder John Wallach always used to say, "Make one new friend." American Joey Katona and Palestinian Omar Dreidi took this advice to heart, making a meaningful connection that transcends borders, religions and cultures.

It didn't happen immediately. Joey and Omar met at Camp in 2004, but it wasn't until 2005, when they returned as Peer Supports, that their friendship really began.

"We were more acquaintances than friends during that first summer, but we spent nearly every second together during our second," says Joey.

In addition to participating in regular Camp activities together, Joey and Omar were bunkmates during the summer of 2005.

After Camp ended in 2005, Joey wanted to experience life in Omar's native city of Ramallah. As part of a trip to the Middle East with his parents, he visited Omar in Ramallah, despite US State Department warnings.

"I needed to see for myself what life was like in the West Bank. They were three of the most incredible days of my life," says Joey.

In Omar's eyes, "what Joey did was brave." "I thank him for that. I will never forget it."

This fall, Omar and Joey applied to colleges. Omar received a partial scholarship to attend Earlham College in Indiana, but still faced a huge financial obstacle: a \$10,809 gap.

Joey, who is now at the University of Virginia, wanted to help his friend make his dream of studying and playing soccer in the US a reality. He directed a fund-raising campaign, securing enough donations to help Omar pay for tuition at Earlham.

"What he has done for me is something unique. He has opened my eyes to the world. I am very proud to be Joey's friend and I wish that



**FRIEND IN NEED:** Joey (top right) helped Omar raise enough funds to afford college. Omar was 2nd in goal-scoring on his Earlham College team.

I could do something to help him. Someday I will," says Omar.

Omar spent this past Thanksgiving with Joey and his family in Los Angeles. He thanks Joey and his family for being gracious hosts.

Their relationship continues to grow, revealing what friendship can achieve.



nominate a Seed in the Lead  
[olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org)



## Omri Rogowski (Hertzliya)

OMRI (2006) PARTICIPATED IN an event celebrating the 60th anniversary of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) at the President of Israel's house in the presence of the President's wife. He gave a speech to her and the committee for Israel's local branch of UNICEF. The next day he participated in the Knesset Education Committee's meeting.



**UNICEF:** Omri (right) with Gila Katsav, the President of Israel's wife.

## Fahad Ali Kazmi (Lahore)

FAHAD (2002) RECEIVED THE President of Pakistan's Gold Medal from General Pervez Musharraf in July. It is the highest merit award, given to the best scout in a province.

Scouting is an international movement that aims to cultivate humanitarian values of peace, tolerance, service and universal brotherhood.

Fahad's scouting career began in 1998 and culminated in this highly prestigious award.

Fahad has also served as an intern with Children of Abraham, a US group that aims to build bridges between Jewish and Muslim students. He is also the winner of the Allama Iqbal Shield for debate and worked with UNICEF to raise HIV/AIDS awareness in schools.



**SCOUT AWARD:** Fahad (right) is awarded the Gold Medal by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in July.

## Abed Ereqat & Noa Epstein (Jerusalem)

ABED (1993) AND NOA (1997) coordinated a Palestinian-Israeli seminar for university students at a two-day Peace Now event at Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom in December. Twenty-six Palestinian university students (including 10 from Gaza and 11 from the West Bank) and 21 Israelis participated in the dialogue.

Initially, the West Bank and Gaza students were denied entry permits by the Israeli army. Peace Now (for whom Noa is the Jerusalem-area activities coordinator) successfully petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court for their entry, arguing that dialogue as an alternative to violence is in Israel's strategic interest.

Earlier this year, Abed and Noa improved their dialogue facilitation skills by participating in a Seeds of Peace course. Noa also facilitated Camp dialogue sessions this summer (see story page 14).

The two plan to continue their partnership.



**DIALOGUE:** (Top) Abed and Noa at the Peace Now seminar. (Below) Israeli and Palestinian participants get to know each other.

## Zach Ruchman (Connecticut)



ZACH (2003) WAS ONE OF 2,500 distinguished US high school seniors awarded a scholarship in the 2006 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Of the 1.3 million participants in the nationwide program, 15,000 were named as finalists, from whom the winners were selected.

Zach is currently in his first year at Princeton University where he is pursuing his interests in international relations and Middle East studies.

## Lior Lelchizki (Ashdod)

LIOR (2002) ESTABLISHED A volunteer organization in Israel called *Ah Boger*, meaning 'Big Brother' in English.

Lior and his colleagues locate students who face difficulties in various areas of life, including school, financial problems and violence within families.

They involve everyone in their activities to help the community: children, teenagers, grown-ups and senior citizens.

Today there are more than 400 people involved across the country. Lior and his colleagues raise donations and hold meetings once a week.

As founder and chairman of the organization, Lior was recently honored with the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence by Ehud Olmert and Education Minister Yuli Tamir, and the Young Leader Award by the President of Israel, Moshe Katsav.



**BIG BROTHER:** (Top) Lior and kids from his program with the mayor of Ashdod. (Below) Children, their parents & grandparents at an event.





Since 1993, Tim Wilson & Bobbie Gottschalk have been there. They were there at Camp, in the lake, on stage singing “It’s not that easy being green,” and of course they were always there for us Seeds when we needed them, with words of good advice, or with a laugh, a picture, or a moral to learn from.

Bobbie & Tim have made the decision to move from center stage to the sidelines. Tim is coaching high school football in Maine, while Bobbie has joined the SOP Board of Directors.

Tim & Bobbie, we present these letters of appreciation to both of you, with great love from all of us.

**Manar & Eli**  
Assistant Editors



There are things in life which you never forget. I know that Bobbie’s smile is one of them, along with her hug, her support, the night when I was declared a PS; these are all the happiest moments of my life. Now, I have the opportunity to thank her for all she’s done for me and somehow to hope that I can make her happy for a tiny second while she reads my note. Thank you, Bobbie. I may be far away from Camp, but you are always close to my heart.

“All-up!” This is how the happiest day of my life started. We had the chance to wake up the whole Camp, and I admit we were scared to ask Tim to let us do it. His response was this huge smile on his face. It’s one of those moments you never forget. It’s a lesson I learned: how much difference a single smile can make in another person’s life.

I have this picture in my album that I used to consider my personal trophy: a picture with Tim, in his golf cart. I really needed moments like that at that point in life. Back home people were not able to understand how much these things meant to me, but I know the difference you made in me.

Thank you for all those happy moments; I know that people who have you and Bobbie in their lives are blessed.

**Igballe Ferati**  
Macedonian

Bobbie made it so much easier for SOP to become like “family.” During my five years as a student in the US, Bobbie was a mother away from home, a person always ready to offer support and advice. And to do so happily and out of love. Bobbie, I don’t think I can ever truly express to you how much I appreciate all that you have offered.

**Adham Rishmawi**  
Palestinian

Tim. First, I admired you as an eloquent orator shaping how we viewed our experience as campers, and then second, as a director and boss guiding your staff into creating the best possible experience for our campers. From my very first time at Camp as a camper through my time as a counselor you seemed to have high expectations of me that you never let down. I admired and respected you so much that I pushed myself to try to live up to your standards and I can only hope that I began to.

I can’t even begin to put into words how many of my Camp images include you and I think you can only begin to imagine how those experiences changed me and the direction of my life. And all I can say to that is: thank you.

**Hannah Lantos**  
American

Something I’ll never forget from Tim: “Respect is not given, it is earned. The only way you will be disrespected is if you allow people to.”

**Sami Ammouss**  
Jordanian

Bobbie was always a safe haven for us. I knew that just her being there, knowing that whenever I felt homesick, frustrated, stressed out, hopeless—one look at her gave me relief and hope and put a smile back on my face. She represented for me a kind of Seeds of Peace Mom: receiving a hug from her was like I’d flown back thousands of kilometers and had my family next to me.

Her insights on SeedsNet, her NFB’s (Notes From Bobbie), everything she said makes me feel that she’s been the person who kept us together as Seeds, always remembering the good values we’d learned. Her words always touched our hearts and minds.

I wish you the best of luck in your new role in the organization as the voice of us Seeds on the Board of Directors.

**Khaled Rasmy**  
Egyptian

Tim, you helped me at times no one else bothered. Thank you.

**Tareq Arow**  
Israeli

Tim has a way of making you feel important by listening—not just hearing—to what you have to say.

**Becky Garland**  
American

How could Bobbie not be an inspiration to Seeds? With her calming looks and patient smile, she has influenced many of us, perhaps more than she thinks!

Her contributions to the Seeds Family will never be forgotten. Today if we miss our days at Camp and hope to feel that peaceful atmosphere once again, Bobbie is at the top of the list of people we should be thankful for.

**Ersev Ersoy**  
Cypriot

Bobbie never stops giving and never anticipates taking.

**Ahmed Helal**  
Egyptian

Tim is one of the single most incredible, inspiring people I’ve met. During Camp, I would begin my day next to the bell with Tim, where we would talk before lineup. His ability to impart wisdom through one anecdote or story is incredible. I only wish that future Seeds could learn from him the values he taught us.

Living in the same city as Bobbie, I have been lucky to develop a relationship with her after Camp. I quickly came to learn that Bobbie’s apartment is not just hers, for she has graciously adopted all international Seeds studying in the States. Through spending time at Bobbie’s home during breaks and holidays, I have made many wonderful new Seeds friends who I was not necessarily at Camp with.

**Allison Vise**  
American





I learned a lot from both Bobbie and Tim. From Tim I learned to be "classy," to do the JOB, that "service is the rent you pay to live on this Earth," to be the best person I can be, and to be very proud.

From Bobbie I have learned that kindness and patience are all that you need to be equipped with to help the world in a positive way. She is an amazing person.

I wish you both the absolute best in your days to come.

**Aidan McIlhenny**  
American

Tim was just like a father to me. Once I asked him for a big favor and he really did his best to help me. His assistance changed my whole life. I don't know which words would give you your due, but I tell you, "Thank you, my dearest father."

**Sara Jabari**  
Palestinian

Through the tranquil nights of Camp to actual tragedies, I have known Bobbie. Through times happy and sad I have always felt Bobbie there. What Bobbie means to many of us cannot be penned at all. But in my attempt, I can only recall the care and support Bobbie has shown me.

I remember my first time at Camp: I was 5 ft., 5 inches. Standing next to her, taking a picture, Bobbie told me, "You are going to return all tall and handsome one day, and I will wait for that day."

Her words always stayed with me through times when my own friends deceived me after returning back home from Camp. They called me a "Hindu/Jew-lover" and it was Bobbie who helped me continuously.

Bobbie gave me my purpose of moving on and making the difference happen. "Be the change you want to see," she would always say to me.

After an achievement in life, I wrote an e-mail to Bobbie thanking her for all that she does. Part of her reply was, "My dear Hassan, your maturity is the best present for me. I love to watch you grow. Nothing else is needed. Anything else is icing on top of the icing on the cake." That's Bobbie for you: she just loves to watch Seeds grow!

It is the winter of 2006 and I am 5 ft., 11 inches, knocking on the door to 6 ft. And Bobbie, I and many others thank you for Seeds of Peace, for all your love, support and most importantly yourself; for this has made all the difference.

**Hassan Raza**  
Pakistani

Once, Tim took me for a ride on his golf cart when I was upset. He shared with me the struggles of his life and expressed to me how grateful I should be for the opportunity to be at Camp and also how lucky I was to act as a representative of my country. He told me that it was my duty to try to make the future better.

At times, Tim aided campers more than the facilitators, Delegation Leaders, and Peer Supports, thanks to the words that he provided in his daily speeches. He helped direct campers on the "right" path. I am proud to say that I was one of his campers.

**Omar Dreidi**  
Palestinian

I still remember Tim saying, "If you're going to do something, then do it right." I always liked that phrase.

**Haytham Borhan**  
Egyptian

Tim was like my father. My father passed away when I was 7 years old, but when I talk to Tim I feel again that my dad is with me. I respect him so much; he always encouraged me to be the best.

**Dalal Taya**  
Israeli

In 1998, five of us spent an entire week with Tim, driving around the East Coast to prepare for an SOP Gala Dinner. During this time we all formed a very special bond with him. Before the trip, I was scared of Tim: he was intimidating, he yelled, and when he put his hand up, everyone was silent! During the trip, we'd spend hours in the van talking, joking and laughing. I learned a lot from him and about him, especially his great love for young people and how much he believes in them.

**Passant Adly**  
Egyptian

Camp was an unforgettable experience for me, and most of it thanks to you, Tim. I won't be exaggerating to say that you were my second father during those amazing three weeks.

**Hadar Ben-Sasson**  
Israeli

Tim leads by incredible example. His mere presence inspires the best in people because we all know that he is sincere in his words and in his extraordinary commitment to justice and equality. Tim taught us how to respect those we thought had nothing in common with us and to work with our entire selves to realize what may seem impossible. And he led us every step of the way.

We all wish you the best, Tim. You will make one hell of a football coach.

**Micah Hendler**  
American

I didn't understand the concept of Seeds of Peace until I met Bobbie. She is not only a friend to me, but I take her as a role model. You can talk for hours and she's still there, listening to what you have to say.

**Dana Audalla**  
Jordanian

Tim is a man of deeds rather than words; his mere presence conveys his strong character. His determination and devotion are second to none. His streetwise and plainspoken honesty are his trademark. He's imbued with a vision and his hard work to implement it inspires others to do the same.

Even his severe appearance can't hide the sparks of humor in his eyes or the wide smiles that spread across his face in light of our silly misdoings as youth ...

And above all this is his huge, kind heart and his humility. Tim, indeed you are a man of many blessings.

There are only so many of us who were lucky to introduce you to our lives. Fewer than those were lucky enough to introduce you to their hearts.

Frank Sinatra captured aspects of your personality better than my own words:

*For what is a man, what has he got?  
If not himself, then he has naught.  
To say the things he truly feels;  
And not the words of one who kneels.  
The record shows I took the blows -  
And did it my way!*

And a heck of a way it was.

**Meital Cohen**  
Israeli



read more  
messages online @  
[www.seedsofpeace.org/  
olivebranch](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/olivebranch)

PHOTO CREDITS: HASSAN RAZA, OLA MEDANAT, DANA AUDALLA,  
ZACH RUCHMAN, MIKE GARBER, SAWSAN SAMARA,  
IDDO FELSENTAL, FAHEEM AHMAD





**BEEN THERE**, done that, got the t-shirt: Seeds brought new understanding to the challenges and opportunities of dialogue.

# Seeds facilitate Camp dialogue

For the first time, nine older Israeli and Palestinian Seeds trained to become facilitators for a key part of Camp: dialogue sessions.

**W**hat is facilitation? According to the dictionary, it's helping a discussion—helping dialogue and helping the participants. I hope that we managed to do that this summer.

During the last month of 2005 and the first couple of months of 2006, a group of Israeli and Palestinian Seeds met every Friday to train as facilitators.

We Seeds learned to facilitate by observing a second group of non-Seed students from the Al-Quds and Hebrew Universities who were meeting the



**Iddo Felsenthal**  
(Jerusalem)

observed this student dialogue group through closed-circuit TV at the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem.

The thing about observation is that in

“other side” for the first time.

This dialogue group was facilitated by Walid Hamed and Ariel Huler, who also organized and directed our group of facilitators-in-training.

Each week we

the beginning it is boring. At first, all we saw was a bunch of people our age talking over and over again about subjects that we'd discussed a thousand times already. What could be interesting about that?!

Well, after a few meetings and after talking about it with the other participants, we found those little things that make the facilitator a much better observer than most: the undercurrents of things, the motives for different sentences and expressions.

**CONTINUED:** SEE IDDO, PAGE 30

PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT): BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, ARIEL HULER, IDDO FELSENTHAL





**CO-FACILITATORS:** Sawsan (Ramallah) and Dor (Kfar Saba) find out who will be in their dialogue groups at the start of Camp this summer.

## Seeds reflect on journey to new role as facilitators

**A**t the beginning of 2006, I had the chance to train to become a facilitator. After years of being disconnected from Seeds of Peace, I



**Mira Mukarkar**  
(Bethlehem)

wanted to know more about the meaning and role of facilitation—the core of the Camp experience.

It had been eight years since I was a camper. During these eight years, I took part in many SOP activities, but still I had

doubts: living in a region of conflict isn't easy and a person can drift away, carried by the emotions of anger, rage, hatred and hopelessness.

The construction of the Wall on my grandfather's land had resulted in the cutting of 300 olive trees he had planted and the loss of the land, and I had to quit my job in East Jerusalem because of the IDF closure forced on Bethlehem, my city of residence.

In the beginning of July the war with Lebanon started and seeing the scenes of destruction on TV, together with other scenes in my daily life, made me think twice about going to Camp again.

**M**y favorite part of Camp was dialogue; I never missed a chance to participate. In May 2005, I took part in a uni-national



**Maisa Totry**  
(Haifa)

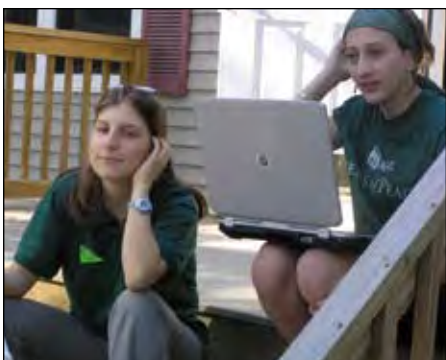
dialogue group held among Palestinians living in Israel. I was fascinated to see the different points of view that reflected the previous stages I experienced as a Seed—the phases I went through during my own per-

sonal process.

Later that month, I joined a group of older Palestinian and Israeli Seeds who were learning how to facilitate. This was done by observing a group of university students being facilitated in a dialogue group at the Center in Jerusalem.

After that my Jewish-Israeli co-facilitator and I started practicing our facilitation skills with a group at Haifa University. We also had a few sessions with older Seeds. But our first real experience as facilitators was at Camp this summer.

For the first time in the history of Seeds of Peace, Middle East dialogue sessions were facilitated by older Seeds from the region.



**A JERUSALEM** dialogue group (top) facilitated by professionals is observed via closed-circuit TV by older Seeds training to lead at Camp. Below, co-facilitators Noa and Suha prepare for dialogue at Camp.

**CONTINUED:** SEE MIRA, PAGE 30

**CONTINUED:** SEE MAISA, PAGE 30



# witness to war

34  
days of  
war

IT WAS A BLAZING summer. But it wasn't the sun that burned us. It was the flame of war. Like everyone in northern Israel, I had to face the reality of living in a bomb shelter, being excluded from the outside world for a whole month, and



hearing about soldiers, other citizens, and even relatives being injured or worse.

In this way my story is no different than that of thousands.

The real challenge, on a more personal level, was going through this experience as a Seed. When you are filled with anger, anguish and the desire for revenge, it is remarkably difficult to remember the values and morals that make you a Seed of Peace. How can I be tolerant when my life is in real danger? How can I remem-

ber that the enemy has a face, when it is endangering hundreds of thousands of my people?

And yet I find myself realizing—just as I did back in August—that we must. Though I am confident in my country's righteousness, and my political opinions tell me that Israel must fight fiercely

and without hesitation, I am bound to remember that somewhere over the border there is

**haifa**

**or bainhoren (2005)**

another side, which suffers as well. I realize that beyond the lines there are people who are victims of my country's clash with Hizbullah.

I want to believe that just as I agonized over the sight of dead Lebanese children and countless refugee families, someone in Beirut or Tyre grieved over Karmiel's ruined streets or over an Israeli mother who buried her daughter, killed by a Katyusha rocket.

UNLIKE MANY SEEDS of Peace campers, I had never witnessed war.

I lived in Bunk 2, sandwiched between a boy-obsessed Palestinian-Israeli and a boy-obsessed Jewish-Israeli. I sat, sometimes squirmed, in white plastic chairs during dialogue sessions, listening to clashing histories and heart-breaking stories.

I didn't know tragedy then but having seen it now with my own eyes here in Lebanon, I am even more committed to seeking justice in the region.

As I type, thousands of anti-government demonstrators are camping out here in Beirut, in hopes of forcing the resignation of the Lebanese prime minister.

This week a 20-year-old Shiite man was shot in the neck. Last night my friend was driving on the road to the airport when a group of masked thugs hurled cement chunks at her car. They didn't bother to ask which side she supported;

PHOTO CREDITS: IMAN AZZI, ELI SHTENBERG





# 1.3 million

## Israeli & Lebanese civilians displaced

# 1,350

## Lebanese & Israeli deaths



# 6 Seeds

## share their experiences



**HAIFA & BEIRUT IN WAR** Far left: Iman Azzi (New Hampshire, 2001) in a Beirut neighborhood. Top: Haifa Central Post Office hit by a Hizbullah rocket. Bottom left: Rocket damage in Haifa. Bottom right: View of Haifa's harbor, its ships sent out of rocket range, with the city of Acre visible across the bay.

the terror has trickled down to where it can affect anyone. I'm sure other Seeds know the feeling.

On July 12, Hizbullah captured two Israeli soldiers, killing three others and provoking a 34-day war. Seven months later the soldiers' whereabouts remain unknown and security, both in Lebanon and in Israel, has been significantly undermined; I may be on the verge of living through my second war in a year.

I moved to Beirut after graduating from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. My grandparents were from south Lebanon and I was eager to find a life in this country, too.

After two weeks of unpacking and laying on beaches, I found my new home under attack, a part of the tumultuous Middle East I had studied in books. I watched the sky glow red as Israeli planes destroyed Lebanon's airport. The

next morning Israeli ships approached the coastline.

Every night in bed, I heard Israeli shelling, knowing that somewhere close a family might be losing a loved one. When the war ended, crushed and burnt photo negatives lay on the streets, physical evidence of families and memories torn apart.

During the war, nearly a quarter of Lebanon's population was displaced. I saw many thousands seek refuge near my apartment, and we began to fear internal clashes.

I understand that there was pain and fear on both sides of the border, but I can only describe how it felt to be in Beirut.

With the implementation of UN Reso-

lution 1701, northern Israel returned to life while Lebanon was focused on rebuilding a nation—dozens of bridges, thousands of homes and miles of highway were decimated. Hizbullah emerged arguably stronger, perhaps proof that such movements cannot be destroyed by force.

I had no idea how my world—the whole world—would change a month after I left Camp in 2001. The need for dialogue hit home with the tragic events of September 11th as America entered the world of terror and changed the rules of the game. Everything became black and white, us and them, cowboys and evil-doers, but—and now I can say this from experience—when you're caught in the middle, these extremes threaten the truth and any peaceful solution.

**beirut**  
iman azzi (2001)



**I'D LIKE TO THANK** Hizbullah for making my summer a magical one. This summer I had to try to sleep thinking about my uncle and three cousins who were fighting in Lebanon. This summer I had the joy of moving my paralyzed father from the living room to the bomb shelter every half hour as the sirens went off and hearing my nephew screaming in fear.

Fortunately, the closest rocket to my house hit a mile away, but it didn't stop



my house from shaking or my neighbors' windows from exploding.

As a person who speaks Arabic and as a Druze, watching Arab media made things worse.

Seeing it praising Hizbullah and seeing the Arab and Islamic nations doing nothing to stop them from polluting the

**daliet el-carmel**  
shukri hasson (2004)

Quran and God's name and the beautiful Arab culture made me furious.

The fact that many Arab Israelis were killed during the war

shows that terrorism has no religion.

The war did not change a thing in how I view peace or coexistence.

Until we value human life more than land, we will never achieve peaceful coexistence.

**I WAS IN HAIFA DURING** this war, but my heart was in Lebanon, where the army destroyed schools, streets, bridges, and killed more than a thousand innocent Lebanese.

Along with other Arabs living in Israel, I saw discrimination: we didn't have public shelters to hide in and we didn't receive the support other people did. The whole world saw how houses in Wadi al-Nisnas, an old Arab neighborhood of Haifa, were destroyed by Katyusha rockets.

Personally, I was not afraid of death,



but I was afraid for people on both sides. I was afraid

for my mother who had to go to work every day. And I was afraid for

Lebanese who faced the constant threat of buildings collapsing on them.

I joined Jewish-Arab political parties and organizations in protesting against this horrible war, against the meaningless killing, and against the massive destruction.

**haifa**  
haitham amal (2001)

We called on the Israeli government to stop it—we saw the people being killed in Beirut and Haifa. But the majority of Israelis wanted to

continue the madness.

I am afraid for the future, but we must not give up. We can't stay passive; we have to say in a loud clear voice that we want peace and an end to the Israeli occupation. We have to go out into the streets with courage and say we want silence in the Middle East, that we want to live this one life in peace.

**A** I SAT IN ONE ROOM with my family during the war I was taunted by the hope that soon it would all come to an end. Yet the war kept going on and on for weeks and the lives of innocents were taken.

I viewed the war in many different ways. I was stricken with horror when I saw the pictures from the demolished areas of Beirut, the dead bodies and the homeless people.

I was horrified by the amount of people dying every day in Israel and in Lebanon.

I remember the last few days of war, as with each siren came the sound of falling rockets. During these days the sound was getting louder and the rockets were



falling closer to my house—I can't

recall a moment in my life when I felt this kind of fear. I tried to stay

calm for the sake of everybody else, and for myself as well.

I found myself sitting all day long with the people I love the most—my family—trying to find happy things to talk about between each news report and each alarm. We used these days to bond and enjoy the time we had together; we watched movies, we talked and even laughed.

**acre**  
nady assayyed (2005)

For me, this was a war that did not serve the needs of any side. It damaged the lives of people on both sides,

people who now have a different life from what they had before.

This war is over, but another one may break out in the future if the wrong steps are taken.

Agatha Christie once said: "One is left with the horrible feeling now that war settles nothing; that to win a war is as disastrous as to lose one." And I myself have come to understand that I am not fond of the game called war, because even if I win the war, if there is war, I will always be a loser.

**I LIVE IN THE NORTH OF** Israel, so naturally the war had a big effect on me. But when it started I wasn't home—I was in the center of the country with my sister. We heard about the rockets in the north on the radio. I panicked and immediately called my parents to check how everybody was. I was really scared because I didn't know what to do or what my family was going through.

During the war, I spent most of the time away from home, away from danger.

I stayed at my family and friends' houses and had to carry a big bag on me wherever I went. I felt like a refugee. I



never thought I would miss home like I did.

My friends from Seeds of Peace supported me a lot during this time, letting me stay and eat at their houses, listening to me and making me feel better. I was worried about my family that stayed in the north; every time I called my parents I asked them two things: "Is everybody alright?" and "Do I still have a house to come back to?" ...

**misgav**  
shavit reshef (2005)

When I was home, the air raid sirens kept going on and off. It was scary and stressful at first, but

then it became mostly irritating. Every once in a while the rockets hit really close to where I live and the explosions made the windows shake. Soon we could tell the distance of the hits from the intensity of the explosions. Fortunately, no one I knew was hurt.

Now the war is just a bunch of bad memories, a month of constant worrying.

Hopefully we won't have to experience anything like that again next summer.



# poems

## What Separates Us

What separates us is the ocean  
between your home and mine.  
What separates us is the time on  
the clock in each of our rooms.  
What separates us is the land  
that we live on,  
The schools that we go to,  
The things that we learn.  
What separates us are the  
things we believe,  
religions,  
Or lifestyles,  
Or inherited hate.  
What separates us is the  
language we speak,  
The friends we have,  
The sports we play,  
The music we listen to.  
What separates us is the color  
of our skin,  
And our hair,  
The shape of our eyes,  
The way our bodies are built.  
The things that separate us are  
only obstacles,  
Tricks and blockades.  
Their only purpose is to test our  
minds,  
To keep us from realizing  
That I am just like you.

— Andrea Lavoie (Maine)

## When peace comes back to my life

When peace comes back to my world  
Nothing in life I will ever lack  
My soul will attain mirth and joy  
My heart will never sigh sad  
My feelings will dance a spiritual dance  
My emotions for bliss will get a chance  
Life's fragrant breeze in my heart will  
blow  
My joys no limits, no bounds, will know  
When peace comes back to my world  
Nothing in life I will ever lack  
Birds of peace will sing their best  
No hatred can destroy their nest  
With eternal beauty with fragrant  
aroma  
Every withering flower will blossom  
Their smile will ensure my hope's  
revival  
My dreams will come true with peace's  
arrival  
When peace comes back to my world

Nothing in life I will ever lack  
My heart will sing mirthful songs every  
day  
Stars and moon will never cry for my  
sadness  
For all my sorrows will change to  
happiness  
When peace comes back to my world  
Nothing in life I will ever lack

— Mahbuba Ehsani (Kabul)

## War: The Truth Unfolded

Down the ages conflict was  
sown,  
Seeds of hatred that have  
grown,  
Into trees of violence and  
derision  
That have shaded the world in  
illusion.  
As time passes by,  
Clouded becomes the once  
clear sky,  
With the smoke of artillery,  
And the mist of treachery.  
Tears do stream from tender  
eyes,

As the nation's future cries.  
Bitter tears of regret and sorrow,  
Wash away hopes of a better  
tomorrow.  
A blind witness man has  
become,  
To this sight so gory and  
gruesome.  
As nations yet run the armament  
race,  
Putting scruples to disgrace.  
Orphaned by conflict,  
abandoned by humanity,  
The future generations will  
portray a stark reality,  
Of war and its relentless futility.  
Do we not regret?  
Must we just fume and fret?  
Does no heart feel remorse?  
Or has each heart become a  
dumb corpse?  
The present and the future  
generation,  
Will make the amends and bring  
salvation.  
Removing the scourge of  
hostility,  
Eradicating warfare and its  
futility.

— Divya Moorjaney (Mumbai)



'The Palimpsest'  
—Hassan Raza (Lahore)





**THUMBS UP:** Ten Indian and Pakistani Seeds, including Sana (left) and Andrew (right), volunteered with Habitat for Humanity building homes with and for low-income Indians in November.

# The house that IndoPak built

**H**abitat for Humanity builds homes for the poor around the world by funding their construction and sending volunteers to carry

it out. I felt proud and privileged to join both Indian and Pakistani Seeds in building houses in Lonavala, India.



**Andrew John**  
(Lahore)

As we lay bricks, set up scaffolding, painted doors, shifted materials, and lay the batons and tiles, we not only had fun but also had the chance to interact with the residents on a closer and more personal level.

I had been to India three times, but never before had I experienced anything like this. The work that week was indeed tough and demanded a lot of effort, but there was a pleasant feeling of doing something really good.



**HELPING HANDS:** (From left) Shyam, Akanksha, and Zuneira paint a house at the Habitat site.

On the first day, local residents with garlands in their hands gave the 2,000 volunteers from around the world a warm traditional welcome to beating drums.

We worked in pairs on different teams—an Indian and a Pakistani Seed on each team—and on different tasks, another chance for Seeds to strengthen the IndoPak bond.

A few skilled people led the rest of the inexperienced team in construction. Together we successfully accomplished our daily goals under their guidance.

Finally the day arrived: we completed the houses and handed them over. The residents received their own houses and thanked us with blessings in their own individual ways—an emotional moment for everyone.

As always, parting with Seeds from India was tough: we had all developed mutual trust and friendship.

I will always cherish this as one of the proudest moments of my life. It gave me a sense of pride to have done something that made a difference in the lives of others.



discover more online  
[www.habitat.org/jcwp](http://www.habitat.org/jcwp)

PHOTO CREDITS: VISTASP MEHTA, RAHEELA ZULFIQAR



**T**hough I'd been briefed about the program and the work we'd be doing, I was still fairly unsure of what to expect, save that I was going to meet my "enemy friends" from Pakistan after two long years, and for that I was excited.

But the experience in that small village, near the tiny town of Lonavala, was exciting in itself.

Welcomed in traditional Indian style that could not have been warmer, we were given our first glimpse of the work site: 100 houses in various stages of construction, people from all over the globe hard at work, cement, concrete, translators, media, power drills, paint ... all coming together with infectious energy.

Yet despite witnessing this awesome sight, not one of us really knew what we were in for until we actually got to work ourselves. Over the next three days, we scraped hardened cement off door and window frames, then painted them, carted over 300 blocks of concrete each weighing about 7 kg., slathered cement, and drilled.

Then came roof-building, an activity that added a whole new dimension to the term "hard work." It involved carting lots and lots of tiles, building scaffolding, then balancing precariously on it while doing more drilling, and finally laying the tiles. At the end of each day we were exhausted. I, for one, discovered muscles in my body I never knew existed. And yet it wasn't the effort that stuck in my mind, but the immense amount of fun that went into doing it.

I worked on House No. 47 with an interesting set of people from the Netherlands, Canada, and the US, and also with friends from just across the border—friends who are usually so difficult to meet.

The one thing that struck me throughout, and that I mentioned each time I was asked what Seeds of Peace had to do with Habitat for Humanity, was the fact that this event truly was the practical application of the Seeds of Peace philosophy: Pakistanis literally building homes for the Indian poor.



**Parinaz Vakil**  
(Mumbai)



**JIMMY CARTER:** The former US president (right), a Habitat for Humanity regular, talks to Indian and Pakistani Seeds at the Lonavala site in India.



**TEAM SOP:** (Back row, from left) Vistasp, Shyam, Qasim, Sana, Raheela and Andrew. (Front row, from left) Akanksha, Sasha, Parinaz and Zuneira.

It certainly isn't a sight one sees every day; it's probably unprecedented. And yet here we were, working side by side, speaking the same language, discussing Bollywood and spicy food. If this doesn't epitomize what Seeds of Peace stands for, it is difficult to imagine what does.

On the last day, the homeowners finally inaugurated their homes before the strangers, now friends, from all across

the globe who had helped build them. Some volunteers and homeowners said a few words, a sentence at a time to facilitate translation. But the emotion that filled those two-room homes, the satisfaction on the faces of the volunteers, the sheer glee radiated by the faces of the new homeowners and the gratitude in their eyes required no translation: the same soul stirred in us all.



Last issue  
part I:  
on the outside ...



< Michal

"I criticize the path of the Fence and the constraints it brings, but not its purpose. The Fence and Wall are both necessary and detrimental to human life."



Dan >

"I want you to know that the Wall doesn't just harm Palestinians and violate their rights. It protects me and my family."



< Sharihan

"We all know that there are solutions to stopping the bombings that are carried out in Israel other than a cage."



Sivan >

"I think the "Anti-Terrorism Fence" should be built on the Green Line and not through Palestinian farmland."

This issue ...

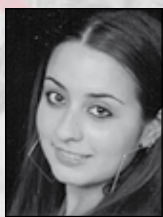


read  
part I online  
[www.seedsofpeace.org/olivebranch](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/olivebranch)

Barrier  
for people?  
or  
Barrier  
to people?

part II:  
on the inside





**L**IVE IN THE CITY OF TULKAREM, which is located right on the Green Line. Standing on our roof a few years back, I could see the beginnings of the “security fence” that Israel decided to put up. It looked like a snake winding its way across the farmland, going around the settlement that has grown many times its size since I

was a little girl.

Standing next to the Wall, as I have had to do many times during recent months, I see a giant hand, with its palm facing me, saying, “Stop, you’re not allowed to live beyond this point and you’re definitely not wanted in Israel.”

I used to be so hopeful that I could make and keep friendships with my Israeli counterparts from Seeds of Peace. Unfortunately, because of the restrictions that the Wall puts on Palestinians traveling to Israel and Israelis coming here, it’s been almost impossible to keep connections alive after leaving Camp. Despite this, I refuse to let my dream of being an active part of the peace process die.

There are many times I’ve asked myself, “Is it worth all the trouble, time and sometimes danger to cross this barrier to get together with people who are considered our enemies?” I tell myself yes, every time. What we young people do together may only encourage peace and understanding within our own group, but at least it’s something. It’s a start, it’s a tree that we plant in hopes of harvesting fruit in the future.

If young people work and sacrifice for peace and co-existence with determination and strength to overcome the obstacles put in their way, maybe the adults that run our countries will finally recognize this work, learn from it and do it themselves. At least that’s what I hope for, and that’s why I refuse to let this big, ugly, forbidding barrier prevent me from going that difficult and sometimes frightening extra mile and being an example of what can be accomplished.

— **Khadrah** Jean AbuZant (Tulkarem)



**T**HE WALL WAS MADE SO THAT the Israeli people can live in peace. And it is true that they now do live in peace. But they don’t remember us: the Wall has not brought *us* peace.

It is like a storm, destroying everything in its path—land, olive trees and houses. It creates two countries from one and requires

us to get Israeli permission when we want to visit our capital city.

Is this peace in their minds? Because if Israelis who want the Wall really wanted to live in peace, they would help create peace for us, too. The Wall will not improve the situation. It will only make it worse.

— **Assil** Al-Shareef (Bethlehem)



**I**T IS REALLY HARD TO IMAGINE that in the 21st century a whole nation might be confined within walls. You can’t help thinking of a prison when you look at the Wall—my city of Tulkarem is just another prison cell in the West Bank.

My whole community is affected by this barrier on many levels: physically,

financially, and above all, mentally.

I know several families that suffer on a daily basis because of it. Family friends had to relocate and abandon their lands and agricultural jobs because of the Wall. One family’s home is located outside the Wall. Its members now have to wait on an IDF officer for hours until the gate is opened so that they can leave. I’m sure others’ lives have been significantly affected by the Wall, but their stories are not heard.

It frustrates me to see how far one would go in the name of security. Rather than trying to promote dialogue and coexistence, Israel continues to construct the Wall, disregarding our homes, lands and olive trees. This Wall is not going to be the answer; rather it is going to harvest hatred. It seems to me we should all work for a resolution that promotes peace and coexistence based on justice for all.

— **Ahmed** Halta (Tulkarem)



**S**PEAK IN THE VOICE OF EVERYONE who has to wait at checkpoints every day. I used to go to school without passing through any checkpoints, but now the Israeli Wall and an Israeli army checkpoint separate my house from my school.

I never expected that the daily wait at checkpoints to get to the other side of the

Wall would be as hard as it is. Even though my school is close, I leave my house early in the morning, an hour or more before the school bell rings. Every day I do the same thing: wait with crowds of people at the checkpoint to get to school, in both cold winter weather and in the heat of the sun.

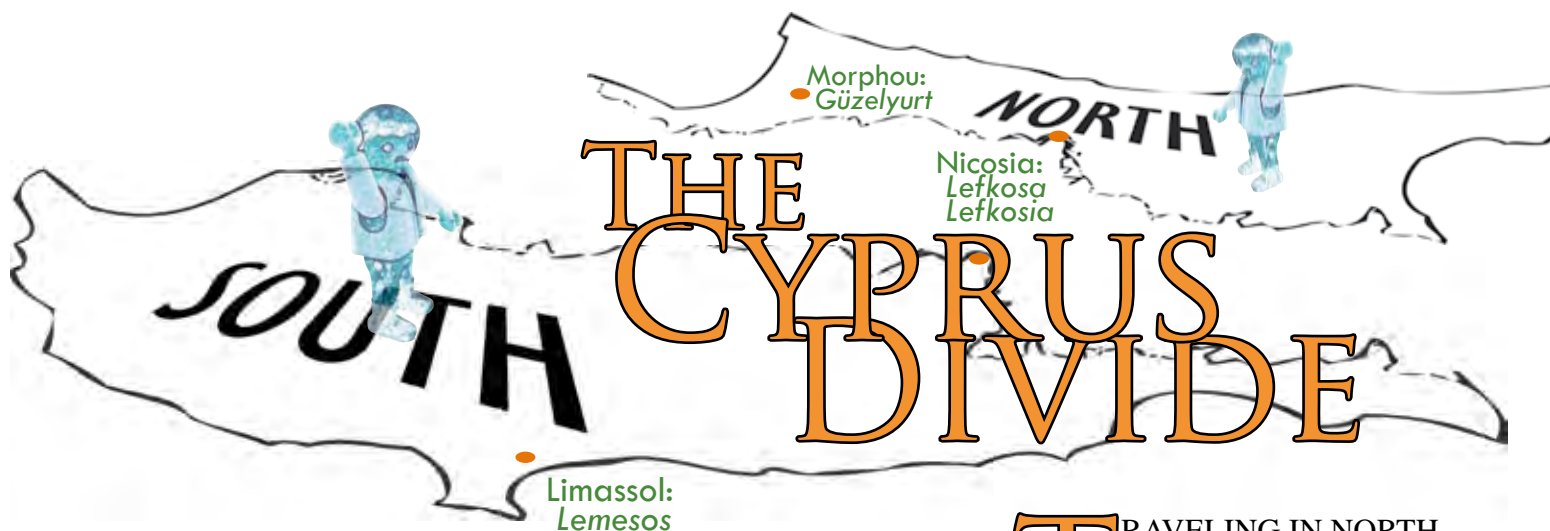
I’ll never forget the tough times I spend getting to my school on the other side of the Wall. I’ll never forget the way Palestinians are treated by the Israeli soldiers. We are like toys in their hands.

I want to feel freedom in my country. I want to be able to move from one place to another just like any human who has the right to move with freedom in her country. What we need is a solution to end this situation, to end standing at checkpoints, to end these restrictions. We need a solution that can ease our lives and allow us to develop and that reduces these obstacles to our future.

We, the new generation, will be the decision makers. If we are determined to achieve peace, then we will, and these obstacles will vanish.

— **Hiba** Abdeen (Jerusalem)





**W**E ALL NEED TO decide on something: do we, Cypriots, want to find a solution to our political situation or not? Because none of the aliens—the outsiders—are going to resolve it for us. I want to find a solution for my country, but that solution is not going to come through the European Union or the United Nations.



**Resat Saban**  
(Morphou)

In the case of the EU, Greek Cypriots can now use their veto rights on everything related to Turkish Cypriots. I have lost my faith in the power of international law after the entry of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union in 2004. The EU constitution says that countries cannot become members of the EU while they have political problems.

In the case of the UN, it is not a fair arbiter of conflicts because its members do not act equally. The US, for example, can do whatever it wants in the name of fighting terrorism.

I have spent the last few months reading books on Cypriot history. We are so naive to so easily believe in the history that was taught to us! We Cypriots, north and south, have made heroes out of the people of war, people like Rauf Denktaş

in the north and Georgios Grivas in the south. In other words, we are worshipping those people who made us this heaven of a prison!

One thing is certain: we do not learn our history as it actually occurred. We all study our island's history, but I do not believe that governments teach their citizens true history. In politics, governments need people who accept their actions. In this sense, they are propagandist. This may sound pessimistic, but there is one important thing that we all forget: *we* create governments and can change them when they do not care about our hopes.

Nationalism separates us, for nothing. It is interesting how France, the birthplace of nationalism, has gently removed this ideology and right now is one of the main members of the European Union and shares its sovereignty with other nations.

The majority of Cypriots keep silent, waiting for someone to solve the conflict, while at the same time stigmatizing the other side—attributing negative adjectives to each other.

My friends, it is time for us to look forward, to secure peace in our country. I know you all know these words, but I want to reiterate them: "Treaties are negotiated by governments. Peace is made by people!"

**T**RAVELING IN NORTH Cyprus as a Greek Cypriot was an experience which really shocked me. Being able to see places that I had only heard about, like Pentadaktilos Mountain and the Castle of



**Philippos Yiapanis**  
(Lemesos)

Kantara gave me real pleasure.

At the same time I felt sadness for not being able to travel there for all this time. And I thought to myself, why did we have to come to this point? Why is it that I had to wait until

I was 21 years old to see the other side of my country? Why can't we all live together?

While traveling around North Cyprus, I was really amazed by the fact that many Turkish Cypriots I encountered could speak my language. This gave me courage that peace is possible because Greek and Turkish Cypriots used to live together.

On the way back, I noticed something: a small bird was flying over the Green Line dividing north from south, passing from our side to the occupied territories. It was free to go anywhere it desired. No restrictions existed. Peace knows not north or south in Cyprus!

 for more on Cyprus go to  
[www.seedsofpeace.org/olivebranch](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/olivebranch)



The Mediterranean island of Cyprus has been divided since 1974. A referendum on the (Kofi) Annan Plan, which would have united the island, failed in 2004. The south then joined the European Union.  
—The Editors

**T**ODAY, BOTH TURKISH Cypriot and Greek Cypriot mainstream politics are hopeless with respect to solving the confounding “Cyprus problem,” especially after the last push of the Annan Plan that completely failed to open the door to a new era for Cyprus. A stark contrast of “Yes” from the Turkish Cypriot majority and “No” from the Greek



Mehmet Ratip  
(Lefkosa)

for the Annan Plan did not embrace the new state of affairs expressed in the draft text of the plan as it is. The plan was simply a compilation of long pages full of legal and technical minutiae. Most voters read it selectively through the lenses provided by their own individual social contexts.

Interestingly, some pages were left empty to be decided later via further negotiations. Most voters did not find this

Cypriot majority seemed to sweep away the “Yes-Yes” minorities of both sides and ossify the “No-No” sayers as living evidence of the unwillingness to end the Cyprus deadlock.

Those voting “Yes”

problematic, seeing it as symptomatic of the hope that the best is yet to come.

Turkish Cypriots are *politically* profoundly bored—this boredom being a sign of the deadlocked history of the past and still empty pages of a new history of the present. In this sense, it is understandable how some Turkish Cypriots of the internationally non-recognized and *closed* space of north Cyprus expressed with their *open* “Yes”—in the controversial Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s terms—their state of being *open to a closedness*.

The majority of Turkish Cypriots primarily voted “Yes” for the openness and emptiness characterized by those blank pages that signify the pure potentiality of what is still unthought—not for a more modern legal constitution defined to the letter.

**A**PRIL 23, 2003, IS A turning point in the history of the Cyprus conflict. This is the date on which the borders separating Turkish and Greek Cypriots were opened, though still under restric-



Ersev Ersoy  
(Nicosia)

tions, allowing people to go visit their homes and places where they grew up—places they had not been able to see for 29 years.

Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the two sides of the tragedy

in Cyprus, took advantage of this opportunity with great excitement, showing their enthusiasm by forming massive crowds at the borders.

My family, one of the families who had to immigrate from south to north Cyprus, also felt both the happiness and the bitterness of being able to see their village, the home which they had been missing and longing to see for so long.

The trip we took by car to their old home and town was like a journey

through memories. Everyone recalled the old days and rushed to tell their own stories of childhood. They discussed old friends who lived where we were about to go and whether they were still alive or not.

This was such a strange sea of emotions ... memories belonging to long years of shared lives with former Greek Cypriot neighbors that were brought to an abrupt end by the conflict as people were forced by war to migrate, leaving their friends, houses and land. It was like as if they were watching the rest of an unfinished film.

They felt both enthusiasm and curiosity. The closer they were to their village and their land, the more they felt, the more they were influenced.

Perhaps among life’s most precious treasures are the house you were born in, the house where you took your first steps, the tree from which you built a swing, your school. Treasures that have lived in memories for 29 years and whose every detail is remembered and longed for.

I was quite shocked to see how en-

thusiastically old friends welcomed us when we finally reached the village. Why couldn’t these people, who felt so close to each other and missed one another, live together peacefully instead of being prisoners of war? Why did they have to leave their homes and cover their memories? And why did they only watch their friends migrate, or flee under force, abandoning everything they had?

On the return north, everyone was unhappy. Their curiosity had been satisfied—they had visited places which until now were only memories, but had new questions. Why were their houses burned? Why were their gardens ruined? And of course, how was the conflict in Cyprus going to be solved? How would we create a future in which what has happened in the past is not repeated and people are not again forced to leave their houses?

A journey through memories had changed into a journey of questions in the mind—questions that are still being asked.



# AFGHANISTAN THROUGH THE LENS OF A 16-YEAR-OLD SEED

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ZUBAIDA AKBAR (2004)



I enjoy  
photography  
because every  
time I take a  
photo, I feel I  
have recorded  
a moment of  
life that has  
significance  
to me.

**ACTRESS Marina Golbahari (Osama) in Jowzjan.**



**ABOVE (from left): Woman in Kabul's Bird Market, Girl at Ashora commemoration in Kabul, Woman studying in Karte Sakhi.**



My interest in photography began three years ago when I took a training course in Kabul.

**MEN WATCH** Bushkazi, the Afghan national sport (similar to polo).



**ABOVE (FROM LEFT):** Young boy playing in his house, Girl peeking through door, Cleaning man in Kabul orphanage.



I then took pictures for a children's magazine in Kabul and was an intern for the Parwana book project about Afghan women social activists.

**CARPENTER** in Herat.





# Portland - style COLOR GAMES

**MAINE SEEDS**  
USE KEY CAMP EVENT  
TO BRIDGE DIVIDES  
BETWEEN 90 STUDENTS  
IN PORTLAND SCHOOLS

**W**E ALL KNOW Color Games at Camp are a crucial experience. They strengthen connections between people from different ethnic, religious and political backgrounds by bringing them together creatively through sports and games.

We Maine Seeds decided that we wanted to offer our Camp experience to high school students in the Portland, Maine, school district.



**Leila Hunter**  
(Portland)

The Portland schools are all pretty divided (of course, nothing can compare to the divisions we see at Camp). The separations within the schools have something to do with pride. The stereotypes against each school rear their ugly heads and refuse to be held back. The Maine Seeds wanted to see if we could bring together a group of these students with the first-ever Portland Color Games.

We first interviewed with the grant organization YouThink! and received \$1,500 to get the show on the road.

After a series of setbacks, we met the marvelous Wil Smith who guided us through each task; he was, in essence, our knight in shining armor.

There were also Maine Seeds who bled green for Seeds of Peace: the event would have failed if it weren't for this group of amazing enthusiasts.

After meetings with the principal and guidance counselor of each school, we



**MAINE SEEDS:** Leila (left) talks Message to Hajime logistics with Blue Team Coaches Ilham and Will during the Portland Color Games in October.

were finally down to the last night before the kickoff to the Games. We stayed up through witching hours thinking of crazy scenarios and ways to fix them. With around 90 boys and girls from each of the six high schools in Portland, everything had to be in order.

On October 7th we rose bright and early and prepared ourselves for the day ahead, not quite sure what to expect.

The schedule for the Portland Color Games was based on the Games at Camp—we tried to make it as similar as possible to hopefully achieve the same effect.

We started off with an opening ceremony, sorted teams, had a rope-tug, and went into the first session of All-Star events. After lunch, we did some scoring and team cheering and completed the second session of All-Star events, which was followed by Message to Hajime and the closing ceremony.

It was an incredible experience seeing people from different schools, people with different beliefs and pasts, working together as a team during the Games.

Sadly, we didn't have a lake to jump into, so the White Team came running out with silly string and sprayed the winning Blue Team, then the Green Team.

When I was at Camp, my Blue Team coaches passed around green strings that we wore around our wrists to show sportsmanship—respect for the Green Team. We put this same idea into effect at the Portland Color Games.

One friend of mine who participated in the Games still had this green string tied around his wrist a few weeks later. When I asked him why he still had it on, he told me that he thought that the idea of sportsmanship was a great one and that the Games were one of the best experiences he'd had during his high school career.

This filled me with absolute joy.

PHOTO CREDITS: BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK





# MEET YOUR SOP STAFF

LESLIE



**Director, Camp (and new mom)**

I began at Seeds in 1998 as a counselor and haven't missed a summer in Maine since.

I began working full time in 1999, assisting Tim with Camp preparations and serving as head counselor for several summers. I have worked in various aspects of programming, including regional programs and year-round events with American and Maine Seeds.

Now I'm back to working primarily on Camp. This summer will be my son Sam's first on Pleasant Lake and he's looking forward to it!

DANIEL



**Director, Delegation Leaders Program**

From 2004 to 2006, I worked with the Delegation Leaders at Camp--as something like the counselor for the grown-ups. During the year, I was a Lecturer at Harvard University.

This past winter, I moved to Jerusalem. I am happy to be in the region with so many friends.

MAI



**Director, Palestinian Programs & Ramallah Office**

My first contact with Seeds of Peace was in 1999 as a First Session Delegation Leader. In 2004 I joined the DL staff.

I now run Palestinian activities in coordination with Seeds, Delegation Leaders and educators. My job is to also make sure the Ramallah Office is open and running soon.

OMAR



**Director, Jordanian Programs**

I have been with Seeds of Peace since 1997. My first mission was to select Jordanian campers and Delegation Leaders.

After that I became SOP staff as manager of the Jordanian Delegation Leaders Program.

I now run programming for all Seeds and Delegation Leaders in Jordan.

TOM



**Director, South Asia Programs**

I began in 1996 on the programming staff for the Delegation Leaders and later became the Director of Education for the DL Program.

My new position is Director of South Asia Programming (Afghanistan, India & Pakistan).

HAYA



**Director, Israeli Programs**

I've been involved with Seeds of Peace since 1998. I have been a Delegation Leader at Camp five times: 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002 & 2003.

I now direct programs for Israeli Seeds, parents and Delegation Leaders.

EYAL



**Managing Director, Tel-Aviv Office**

I started with Seeds of Peace this summer. Before this I managed human resources for companies. My experience working with youth began in the Boy Scouts. I also founded an adoption agency.

I hope to create new opportunities and connections for all of you!

INESSA



**Coordinator, Delegation Leaders Program**

I'm from Yerevan, Armenia. In 2005, I worked as the Delegation Leader Coordinator. I interviewed DLs for my Masters thesis at Brandeis University.

In 2006, I returned to Camp to work with DLs. This year I moved to the region to work even more closely with the Delegation Leaders!

MOHAMMED



**Director, Palestinian Programs (Gaza)**

I've been involved with Seeds of Peace since 1999. Two of my kids are Seeds (they were at Camp in 1999, 2002 & 2003).

I was a Delegation Leader in 2004, and now I run programming for all Seeds and Delegation Leaders in Gaza.

BARBARA



**Executive Vice President, Programming**

I have been with Seeds of Peace since 1995, serving as a Vice President and as Director of the Delegation Leaders Program.

In my new position I will be directing all programs for youth and adults at Camp and in the Middle East & South Asia.

JAWED



**Director, Afghan Programs**

I became involved with Seeds of Peace in 2005 when I took responsibility for the Afghanistan program, based out of Kabul.

I attended Camp in 2005 (first session) as a Delegation Leader.

FERUZAN



**Director, Indian Programs**

I went to Camp as a DL with the first-ever Indian Delegation in 2001. I volunteered for the Mumbai follow-up program from 2001-2003 and became country coordinator in 2003.

I've been a teacher and curriculum development educator since 1984, working specifically in the field of peace education since 1993.

AZZA



**Director, Egyptian Programs**

I have been involved with Seeds of Peace since 1998 when I first went to Camp as a Delegation Leader.

I went again in 1999, and ever since I have helped select the Egyptian delegation that goes to Camp each summer.

Now, I run all programs in Egypt.

EVA



**Director, Multinational Programs**

I started working for SOP as a counselor in 2000 and was hired full time in 2001. In 2004-2005 I ran the Beyond Borders program and then coordinated the Education Program.

This year I'm organizing binational and multi-national programs, so if you have ideas or want to get involved, let me know!

SAJJAD



**Director, Pakistani Programs**

I have been involved with Seeds of Peace since 2002 when I went to Camp as a Delegation Leader.

I organized follow-up programs in Pakistan in 2003.

I attended Camp again as a Delegation Leader in 2006.

NASSIM



**Coordinator, American Seeds & Education Programs**

In September 2005, I started what was supposed to be a six-month internship at the SOP NY office. Six months turned into nine, at which point I was lucky enough to stay on as a counselor at Camp.

I now run the American Seeds and Education Programs in the US and enjoy every bit of it! And yes, Nassim is a girl's name in Iran!



# seeds as facilitators: continued

## IDDO, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

After observing the dialogue group, we sat down to analyze the sessions, to talk about the hidden and the overt.

The most important thing I learned from watching the student dialogue group was noticing what others would call trivial or irrelevant. These things always connect somehow to the general discussion: they affect it and shape it.

Coming back to Camp was a shocking experience. Last time I was there it was still the 20th century. Coming back as a facilitator was even more shocking. We were seeing a well-known process, but we weren't ourselves going through it; we weren't able to participate in the discussion like usual.

We knew how hard it was for the kids—we had been there and the experiences from our years and our sessions, from our discussions and arguments, were still vivid in our minds.

In a way, this is what made us good facilitators. We were there. We still are. We understand the “process” because we were the kids who went through it. We know what dialogue is all about, because we went through dialogue and are going through dialogue all the time. We know what Seeds of Peace is about because we are the Seeds.

Suddenly everything we learned in the training course became relevant. This time we weren't only watching, we were facilitating. It was hard not to think that the future of the group was in our hands. We looked for those hints, those hidden messages, those undercurrents, and we actually found them.



**MAISA & IDDO** teamed up as co-facilitators to lead Camp dialogue groups this summer.

Then suddenly everything I learned in the course became irrelevant. I was there, with no real time to think things through: where I needed to react, to calm down and heat up, to reflect to the group what they're doing, what they're actually saying, what they're hearing. This was no longer pure analysis—this was show time and every remark I made or didn't make affected the group.

Suddenly, we each had a co-facilitator. Someone who was probably our opposite, someone whose every thought was different, and now we had to work together, make contact without speaking, agree without discussing things first, help and support each other.

If there's something the course didn't prepare us for it was this: working with a co who's your anti. The most amazing thing was that the Chinese philosophy of yin & yang really worked here. I found myself thanking the good lord for

having an opposite as a co. Someone from the other side who saw things I'd never see, who noticed things I couldn't have noticed.

Most importantly, someone from the other side who understood me better than most people, including my closest friends.

I don't know if I'm a facilitator. I think we did a good job this summer, though. We did it well because we went through it as kids, because we're still going through it. We did well because we all had amazing co's.

However, I'm convinced that next year—with more training, more learning and more practice—it'll be even better.

## MIRA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

After struggling within my inner self I decided to go. And now I am so thankful I went.

I had the chance to look at the Camp experience from a different angle; the experience helped me realize what the point of Camp is really about. My co-facilitator (an Israeli) and I had deep discussions while preparing for our sessions. I witnessed miracles in facilitation: kids from different backgrounds and nationalities, with different ideas and beliefs, listening to each other. As they told their personal stories, I watched transformation within their inner selves.

After eight years of involvement with Seeds of Peace, I now truly believe in its mission and the experience of Camp.

## MAISA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

We were paired in teams of one Palestinian and one Israeli. I was the Palestinian facilitator: I lived for three weeks as nothing but a Palestinian. This identity, which is one of the components of my personality, became my whole identity at Camp. This new identity played a big role in molding and reflecting the process of self-realization.

The most powerful and influential part of the experience was the support I received from my fellow facilitators, especially my co-facilitator. The fact that all of our facilitation groups were going through the same journey gave me a sense of relief and security. Our interaction, the dialogue and the intense exchange of ideas and thoughts charged with repressed emotions (from the sessions with the Seeds) contributed significantly to the amazing time we had at Camp this summer.

By having leadership positions within the organization, we are being prepared as Seeds to play influential roles in our societies in the future.



PHOTO CREDIT: IDDO FELSENTAL



# interview edie maddy-weitzman

Dr. Edie Maddy-Weitzman received a doctorate from Boston University in 2005. Her dissertation is titled *Waging Peace in the Holy Land: A Qualitative Study of Seeds of Peace 1993-2004*. Oron Michaeli (2005, Ma'ale Gamla) discovers more about her research.

## ORON: Why did you choose to study Seeds of Peace?



EDIE: In January 2000, when our staff at the American International School in Israel, where I work as a high school counselor, was planning our annual program to commemorate Martin Luther King Day, I suggested we invite a group from Seeds of Peace to speak with our students. Six Palestinian and Israeli Seeds came to our school. I was privy to rare scenes in the Middle East: Israeli and Palestinian youth

warmly greeting each other upon their arrival and working together to make a joint presentation.

At the time I was engaged in preliminary research for a doctoral dissertation, focusing on the phenomenon of acculturation. I had already spent several months reading and writing my proposal, but once I heard these Palestinian and Israeli youth speak, I knew immediately that they should be at the heart of my inquiry. I found myself spending the next five years as a researcher of this program. It has been quite an amazing experience.

## How did you gather information for the study?

My research focused on understanding the experiences of Palestinian and Israeli Seeds. I was especially interested in learning what happens to them after the Camp program. The research model I used consisted of a qualitative paradigm in which information was obtained mainly through observations and interviews, as well as reading documents written by the participants. I visited the Seeds of Peace Camp in Maine for a few days in 2000 and 2002 to observe Camp activities and dialogue sessions. During the course of five years I interviewed close to 30 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds—a few of them were interviewed more than once—as well as several staff members. I also spent several hundred hours observing the activities and conferences of the Seeds of Peace regional follow-up program.

## What did you find most important about the program?

I think what is especially important is that the Seeds of Peace program uses what is referred to in the literature on peace education as a “mixed model” approach, in which both individual and group identities can be expressed. Opportunities are created for Seeds to interact and get to know each other both as individuals and as members of groups in conflict. For example, at Camp participants can interact with each other on a personal level during mealtimes, sports, and other activities, discovering common interests and forming cross-group friendships; they can also interact as members of groups in conflict during the daily dialogue sessions in which issues pertaining to the conflict and the external reality are addressed. The daily facilitated dialogue meetings at Camp are critical so that the participants can share personal experiences about their own lives, speaking about what it is like to live under conflict, and also learn about the other side’s narrative and experiences.

Another very important component of the Seeds of Peace program, in my opinion, is the ongoing follow-up program. A major shortcoming of many peace education programs is the short-term nature of their interventions. Few peace education programs operate with the same participants for more than one year. In contrast, Seeds of Peace conducts long-term follow-up programming for participants, geared to their developmental needs. For example, some programs include academic components, focusing on timely themes, such as the role of the media during conflict, and the teaching of professional skills, such as conflict mediation. Furthermore, Seeds of Peace empowers

alumni by involving them in the planning and implementation of activities, thus giving participants a sense of ownership of the programs. Also very impressive is the fact that the organization has made a commitment to hiring alumni as counselors and facilitators at Camp and at regional centers.

Opportunities for Seeds to participate in follow-up programs when they return home are critical. It has been a major challenge to continue with such programming during the past few years of increased conflict and violence. At such times, it is important to respond to the needs of the communities and deal with the reality of the conflict. It’s important to solicit input from participants to see what type of programming would be most appropriate.

I think the fact that Seeds of Peace is providing both uni-national and bi-national programs is very important so that the participants can choose to be involved in activities that best meet their needs. Also, it’s helpful that there are various channels of interacting with others, such as SeedsNet, *The Olive Branch* and the In Your Shoes program.

## What are your conclusions from the study? Is SOP helpful?

Some of the themes that emerged from my interviews and observations were that the participants increased their understanding of the conflict and its various narratives. Many of the Seeds reported that as a result of their participation in the program their own self-esteem and self-confidence increased and they learned important communication and leadership skills.

Today some of the graduates are pursuing professions related in some way to the ongoing conflict, hoping to make a difference. One Palestinian Seed said she wants to become a history teacher and teach in a way that children “are not given a message to hate or be prejudiced or feel superior.” “I would also like to let them know that yes, you have been taught history that way but someone else in a different part of the world has studied the same incident in a different way.” An Israeli said he intends to focus on peace education for young children and encourage them to learn Arabic. “I think in the books, don’t leave out anything, tell everything and give all the facts,” he says. “Get the kids educated towards peace and hope that Palestinians will do the same. And learn Arabic so you can talk to the Arab people in Arabic.” Others are studying media and communications, hoping to influence how the conflict is reported in their communities. Still others are studying law, political science, and international relations, with plans to impact their society’s legal and political systems. I do believe that some of the Seeds will end up being leaders in their chosen fields. Hopefully, they will have a chance to impact the nature of the ongoing conflict.

It is quite a challenge to conduct programs such as Seeds of Peace during a time of increased conflict and a lack of top-down peacemaking initiatives. Some people argue that during such periods, peace education programs cannot succeed and should not be held. Yet, I believe it is important that people-to-people programs such as Seeds of Peace continue. Perhaps a Palestinian Seed from 1993 best expresses why it is critical for programs like SOP to continue to function:

“Today we have people on both sides who are opposed to the peace process and the idea of peace ... the voices of extremism became stronger. That’s why I believe Seeds of Peace should survive because I think that Seeds of Peace is the enemy of the extremists. Peace is established between enemies, not friends. I think Seeds of Peace plays the most important role when the gaps between the people are very great, when there’s hatred and misunderstandings. It’s important that the Seeds of Peace program goes on.”





"the world is in war, but I  
see there is still hope for a  
better future, where instead  
of a soldier there will be a  
doctor ... "

— Rola Saher (13)

First-place winner 2006 SOP/AMIDEAST Art Contest