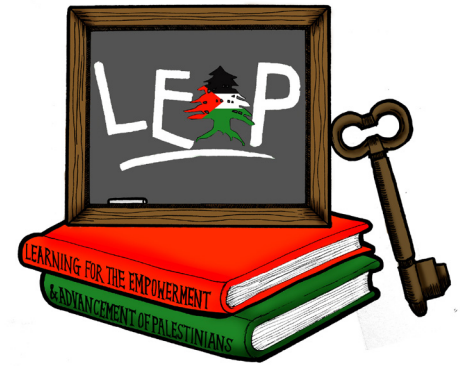


leap newsletter



a note from leap's co-founders

We are honored to welcome the new leadership of the LEAP Program!

When we first founded LEAP in 2010, we were taken aback by how little is known of the Palestinian refugee reality and how little refugees in the diaspora are brought into the discussion on the Palestine question. In an attempt to both amplify the voices of Palestinian refugees and bring educational projects to support young people in reaching their greatest potential, we founded LEAP. While a small drop in the ocean, its ripple effect has been profound and more than we could have imagined.

After eight years, we are passing on the torch. LEAP has become an extended family, and along the way we have had the absolute pleasure to meet some of the most passionate, conscientious, and beautiful souls from all over the world. While we will no longer serve as the Program and Education Directors, we will continue to support through this transition.

I have no doubt that the new Directors will continue the remarkable work of LEAP. I have seen their deep commitment to the Program over the years and I am confident that they will continue to serve the refugee communities in Lebanon with the utmost dignity, respect, and love moving forward.

Until Return,

Maryam & Fatema Zohny
LEAP Co-Founders

welcome leap's new leadership!

We are excited to continue the important and ever-necessary programming and work that LEAP provides. As directors, we are first and foremost committed to maintaining the core LEAP values throughout this transition and into the future. Among these values are a dedication to LEAP's two-fold mission of empowering students through education, and bringing awareness of the Palestinian refugee reality to our communities at home. An approach of mutual exchange between communities, in which LEAP volunteers and program participants learn from and teach one another, will continue to inform our decisions in all aspects of LEAP programming.

While change can be difficult and often challenging to navigate, as directors, we are so excited to move LEAP forward and continue to develop its content and reach as an NGO. We hope to focus on improving our curriculum, developing more sustainable donorship, and engaging more broadly with the community as to achieve our goals of elevating the status of Palestinian refugees and amplifying their voices.

In Solidarity,

Basma, Jackson,
LEAP Directors

Learn more about our new leadership team here!
<http://www.leap-program.org/about-us/leadership-team/>

new: project MUSIC!

LEAP is proud to announce the launch of Project MUSIC (Music in the Camps), which aims to equip refugee youth with musical instruments and to provide music education in the camps. LEAP will partner with organizations who share the vision of music as a formidable tool for empowerment. Together, we will raise funds and awareness, recruit volunteers, and provide other resources in support of the project. If you or anyone you know may be interested in supporting or participating in Project MUSIC, donating musical instruments, or partnering with LEAP in this endeavor, please contact Frank at frank@leap-program.org. Look out for the call for teacher-volunteer applications to which will launch soon!

Plans are underway for a benefit concert in Northern California organized by Zawaya, which will bring together the diverse community of the Bay Area in support of Project MUSIC. The concert will feature performances by the Aswat Ensemble and the World Harmony Chorus. Stay tuned for more details.

<http://www.leap-program.org/get-involved/apply-music/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bb46Txlskrs>

winter appeal

We are overwhelmed with gratitude to all who donated to our 2017 winter appeal. As a grassroots, volunteer-driven organization, LEAP survives on the support of many dedicated individuals. In total, our winter appeal raised over \$6,000 - that is nearly double what we have received in past years! These resources are vital to the success of our program and will be able to fund musical instruments for Project MUSIC, generator costs to power classrooms, and enrichment activities for youth in the refugee camps.

Tyler's Church Fundraiser. As a part of LEAP's two-fold mission to both provide academic instruction and raise awareness of the Palestine refugee reality, LEAP wants to highlight the efforts of Tyler, a 2017 SHINE summer project volunteer. Tyler connected with his Pastor back home at the Osterville United Methodist Church to set up an event to discuss his experience in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon--particularly Bourj el Shama. After the talk, Tyler announced that proceeds from the donation baskets at the next two Sunday services would go to LEAP. In total, Tyler's church fundraiser raised \$487. Even more exciting, several members of the church were so moved by Tyler's experience, they approached him after the talk for more ways to get involved with the program. Thank you so much to Tyler and all the members of Osterville United Methodist Church!

Help Bring Project SHINE into it's 9th Year! We are just a couple of months away from the start of Project SHINE! Help us bring this summer experience to over 400 refugee-youth in the camps of Lebanon this summer. Make SHINE 2018 a reality by generously contributing today!
<https://www.youcaring.com/theleaprogram-1157340>

leap volunteers share their experiences

amith

ASPIRE volunteer, fall 2017

Obtaining comprehension of the English language at an early age is vital for Palestinian students to have access to what limited opportunities exist for them in exile. Through the ASPIRE program, I taught English to children (ages 3 to 9) in the Bourj al Shamale Refugee Camp full time. With the help of my co-teachers, Salma, Rawan, Asma, and Sawsan, I taught 4 English classes during the day, tutored students who were behind in their classes, and led 3 three afterschool English language programs. I saw that almost all of the students involved in the program begin began to pick up strong English skills after the first month!

Some aspects of the program were emotionally difficult for me. While I was growing closer to my students, co-teachers, and staff, Donald Trump and his Israeli counterparts were drastically escalating their war on the Palestinian people. What was normally a political issue became increasingly personal during my time in the camp. But the community was hardly submissive or pliant. I witnessed how Palestinians in the Shatat in Lebanon continue to express solidarity for their national liberation -- with or without the assistance of westerners -- through mass mobilization, demonstrations, and organizing.

<http://leap-program.org/leap-testimonials-amith/>

frank

SHINE volunteer, summer 2017

The LEAP volunteer experience has so many rich dimensions to it...Yes, there are some challenges. The muggy and hot weather. The intermittent loss of electricity (and hence loss of the cooling fans). The cramped and uncomfortable living spaces. But there are wonderful elements too! Spectacular sunsets. Swimming with sea turtles in the Mediterranean, every day if so desired. Of course who could forget the Lebanese food? If you're really lucky, on a muggy night like any other, you'll hear one of your students who happens to live a few buildings down the street, spontaneously playing the melody, on her saxophone, of a song that you taught her in music class. A tear may roll down your cheek with a big smile and know that the universe is telling you, beyond any doubt, that you are supposed to be here, now. And yes, the experience can be THAT profound.

<http://leap-program.org/leap-testimonials-frank/>

mike

SHINE project coordinator, summer 2017

SHINE volunteer, summer 2015

Having participated in LEAP's SHINE program both as a volunteer and as a coordinator, I can truly say the experience changed me deeply and was incredibly rewarding...Teaching the amazing children of the Bourj al Shamale and Rashidieh refugee camps proved, by far, to be the most important and rewarding part of the program. I had never taught English before, yet found myself completely taken by my English class. I still keep in touch with my coworkers and students in Lebanon, and find myself constantly inspired by them. Like one time, when For example, I once came to the rewarding realization that one of my creative writing students wrote a better Haiku than I did!

<http://leap-program.org/leap-testimonials-mike/>

jackson

SHINE education coordinator, 2014

I never expected that two small children in oversized t-shirts pulling me into a river would be so fun. In the midst of my reflections after first volunteering with LEAP, I came to realize something: the most interesting, most visually salient moments of my time in Lebanon had been those enveloped in laughter.

I volunteered as an Education Coordinator with LEAP in 2014, having worked with refugees for several years, but never having been able to work in a context quite like this one. Nestled in the south of Lebanon are several Palestinian refugee camps teeming with life, vivacity, and community. The camps are not without struggle, and it is for this very reason that LEAP and its volunteers strive to work with the communities every year to make any progress that can be made toward the empowerment of children living there... But beyond the struggle, I discovered a fuller picture of a people determined to live in love and laughter. What I find to be the most beautiful part of LEAP is that moments of tears and frustration are so often succeeded by moments of love and smiles. Laughter abounds in places you wouldn't expect.

<http://leap-program.org/leap-testimonials-jackson/>

donate

thank you for empowering Palestinian refugee youth through education! leap is a grass roots volunteer program and operates as a labor of love. leap sustains through generosity of its community, please donate and support our 2018 appeal. please donate:

<http://www.leap-program.org/donate/>

report back

project SHINE report-back at hunter college

“On February 15, 2018, LEAP joined the Palestine Solidarity Alliance at Hunter College for a report-back and information session featuring Project SHINE alumni who shared about their volunteer experience as well as the implications of the recent U.S. decision to significantly defund UNRWA.”

