

YBTE REPORT January- July 2023

- Total cost: **USD 4,912 + EUR 8,872** ("First Step" scholarships + support from the catholic school from Poland) / including administrative costs

1. Activities with girls from Beit Al Fatat

- **Saj Brunch in Beit Al Fatat – March 4**

What better way to kickstart our activities for the year in Beit Al Fatat? As we come to conclude everytime, life is all about sharing and we decided this time to have saj brunch (a Lebanese breakfast) with the girls. The bond between us is getting stronger time after time. And the girls were amazingly enthusiastic and anticipating our visit. Some of them were helping Dany and Marina baking on the saj while others were cutting the veggies and setting up the tables. Their involvement in the preparations was simply heartwarming.



Most importantly, the food was so delicious. The girls' big energy led us to start playing some music games. To tell you the truth, the heat of the competition was high among the girls and even more among YBTE members themselves and it turned out choosing a winner was not an easy thing to do. The investment of the team in this activity was a clear reminder to keep focused on the mission we are to carry on.

We have responsibilities towards them and towards our country and this is what is giving us the strength to keep going on, no matter what!

“Without a purpose life is trivial, petty, and pointless.”-unknown-

- **Beit Al Fatat Visit to Cultural Center – May 13**

We used to visit the girls in Beit El Fatat and hold activities with them. This time we decided we are going to do things the other way around and called to invite them to join us in the cultural center in Mar Mkhayel parish for the first time where we had plans to spend a special day with them. We greeted them with fun games and face painting, and then each girl received a cap with YBTE logo printed on it to wear while walking around the neighborhood and to let know they are family for us.

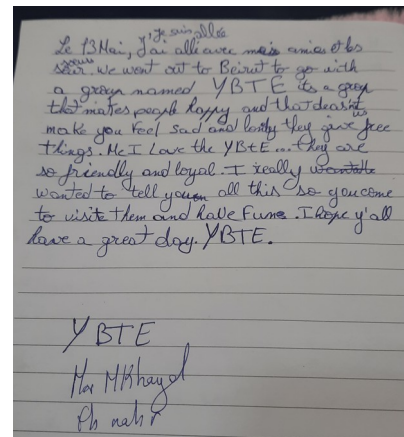


Hiba took the time to introduce the girls to the story of Wojtek the persian bear, adopted by polish army, who visited the region in WWII and then we continued our amazing day with a drawing session inspired by the Wojtek story where each girl received her Wojtek bag and had the opportunity to express herself by drawing figures on the bag.



And what better day than to enjoy tasty hotdogs for lunch?

We were touched and overjoyed when one of the girls wrote about YBTE in her diary; it proves that love always triumphs!



2. „First Step”

- **Easter Postcards at Notre Dame des Anges school – March 17**

This time at NDA, things were a little different. What was particularly heartwarming was the teachers genuine interest in assisting us. They recognized that our mission is more than just

producing postcards and taking pictures; it is a lifetime mission and the link that we are attempting to form with these children who are our future.



We are on the right track if we feel that raising and teaching a good generation is beneficial to the planet. Believe in your children because they have greater potential than we can anticipate.

- **Collaboration between 2 schools**

In January 2023, “Sumar Sleem” The Head of Mission in Domus Orientalis for Lebanon & Syria visited Poland. One of the main purposes was to create a contact between Zespól Szkól Katolickich im. Jana Pawła II school and the Notre Dame des Anges school located in Badaro, Beirut.

As a result of this visit, the two schools started to communicate together, and tried to hold two online meetings. But unfortunately, due to the internet connection issues in Lebanon, they couldn't. Undeterred by this challenge, they spontaneously found an alternative and started communicating through videos, photos, and text messages.

The students at both schools were also encouraged to initiate connections between each others. Facilitated by the support of their teachers and schools, this interaction took shape. Polish students took the initiative by creating two videos. One video presented an introduction of their country's location and the symbolism behind their national flag. Another one showed their activities during the break time.

On the other side, Lebanese students aged 14-15 shared some information about fasting and Easter traditions in Lebanon.

Furthermore, the school in Lebanon was sending videos and photos that captured their students engaging in various activities. This multifaceted exchange allowed both schools (teachers and students) to gain insights into each other's lives and cultures, fostering a deeper understanding and connection among them.



In addition to this collaboration, the teachers and students from the Polish school demonstrated an outstanding level of solidarity by providing financial assistance to the schools in Lebanon and Syria. Accordingly, and since the beginning of this year, they started to collect funds from various sources such as holding a charity concert, 2 Kermesse where the students sold cookies, a money collection among the teachers at the school and at the First Communion ceremony.

By the end of this school year, some Polish students sent handwritten letters to the students of grade 4 in Notre Dame des Anges school and to others enrolled in the First Step Program in Aleppo, Syria. The reply to them would be sent back in the beginning of 2023-2024 school year. Through this timeless tradition, the students were so excited exploring new horizons, and creating a bond that will endure across time and distance.

Coordinator's insight:

At the end of 2020, I joined Domus for volunteer work. It was my first experience volunteering with an NGO. A couple of months later, I was asked to be the coordinator of First Step Program in Lebanon. At first, I thought that it was just a duty to fulfill by sending some reports and photos and communicating with the school... And here the story began!! Maybe no words can describe my happiness while interacting with the students. Each time we go to visit them for a workshop or activity I see them smiling and happy to meet us again and ask to come more often!

The teachers started to help us and be more involved. What I can ensure is that First Step isn't just a Programme anymore. It's a source of happiness and joy. A way to breathe and communicate, a place where we receive more than we give. Looking at our children in the Program growing up is something so touching and impressive. I can see a bright future for those students, for us as a team, especially for me, and for this Program as an overall as well.

Melissa, coordinator for the First Step Program

3. The Book Corner in Mar Mkhayel Cultural Centre

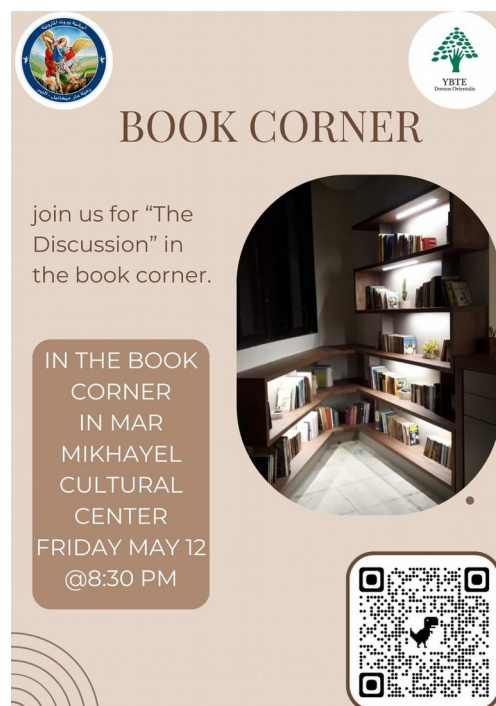
- **Inauguration, April 12**

Since education and culture are key topics of concern for YBTE, we had the pleasure to inaugurate the Book Corner in Mar Mkhayel Cultural Centre.

This spot is best described as a cozy quiet space where you can bring your own book to read or choose one from the various books that were donated to enjoy and relax. The place aspires to peace and can offer the perfect atmosphere for writing and working.

It's the place where we can meet and discuss the latest books we read, a great opportunity for communication and exchange.

Father Przemysław, the president of Domus Orientalis, was our first guest speaker for the inauguration of the Book Corner. He addressed the guests who shared this special moment with us with a word from the heart about the importance of culture and its effects on the human kind throughout history, a word that caught the hearts and minds of everyone there.



The poster features a circular image of a well-lit book corner with shelves and a table. Text on the poster includes: 'BOOK CORNER', 'join us for "The Discussion" in the book corner.', 'IN THE BOOK CORNER IN MAR MKHAYEL CULTURAL CENTER FRIDAY MAY 12 @8:30 PM', and a QR code. Logos for YBTE and Domus Orientalis are in the top corners.

„There’s something inside each one of us that helps us understand ourselves”; and Father Marek continued, „and there’s nothing better than this moment that gives us the conscience of what makes us happy and what makes us sad”;

- **Next Steps**

Let’s take a retrospective journey through the recent events at the Book Corner, where literature and culture intertwined to create captivating experiences:

On Wednesday, April 12 - inauguration.

On Friday, May 12, Ibrahim Nawfal and Marina Abi Aad, our coordinator, led an engaging discussion about their chosen books, igniting conversations that spanned literary worlds.

On Friday, June 16 Father Elia Mouaness unveiled the art of active reading in his lecture, „How to Read a Book” ; enriching our approach to literature.

On Friday, July 21, Emmanuel stirred thought with a discussion on a thought-provoking book, challenging perspectives and broadening horizons.

These events wove a thread of connection among literary enthusiasts. The Book Corner stands as a testament to the enduring power of literature in our lives.

Coordinator’s insights:

This cozy Book Corner is actually helping me become more comfortable around people. In today’s world, communication is crucial. This Book Corner, with its ups and downs, is making me better at dealing with others. I am really thankful for the team I am a part of. They are all trustworthy, brave, and really creative. We don’t always agree on everything, but it feels like having a family. I am filled with anticipation for this project. My aim for this book corner is to spread happiness among people. My own encounters with reading have shown me that it has the power to bring more happiness than anything else since it uncovers truths that are scattered worldwide— truths from different individuals, nations, and eras. The path to true freedom lies in embracing the truth. And only when we are free can we genuinely discover happiness. This Book Corner is here to provide guidance and ambiance for people to read so they overcome the falsehood omnipresent in this world and become free and happy. Observing the happiness that our efforts bring to people is something I cannot underestimate. It brings me a profound sense of satisfaction. And lucky us, fruits of our work are starting to show. After each gathering, people express their joy with simplicity and love, and this reminds me of the purpose of my life: be happy and make others happy. The prospect of witnessing the growth of this book corner, similar to nurturing an infant, excites me.

I’m so grateful for the mistakes I make, as they are the stepping stones for my personal growth and the refinement of my actions.

Per aspera ad astra, et pervenimus ad astra!!!

Marina, coordinator of the Book Corner project



4. *Young Gardens of Lebanon – July 11 till July 26*

A fruit of the “Gardens of Lebanon” project ripened this summer. With the help of the parish, we scouted young talents with ages ranging between 9 and 16 years around the community to participate in the workshop that expanded over 3 weeks and the following exhibition that was held for their artworks.

First, an introductory meeting with the participants and their parents took place to explain the purpose of this workshop and ensure everyone is onboard to kick start the wonderful journey of not only painting a picture but also pouring the inside emotions out through colors and shapes. The workshops also included Ms Raja, an amazing woman who helped us recruit the participants and wanted to be part of the journey as well.

5 sessions were held to achieve the final project.

This was the vision of our art teacher Romy whose final aim is to create a collage of the printed pictures on the paintings made by the participants. She helped the kids get out of their artistic comfort zone and explore new styles and media to then create art masterpieces. Our art teacher from Poland, Magda, joined us on our last day of the workshop. She gave the children a new activity to expand their imagination.

At the end of the 5th session, an exhibition of the participants’ final artworks and the artworks of young talents from Poland was held. Family and friends were invited along with members of the community in Mar Mkhayel to come and see the final results and the transformation made by these amazing young talents. All participants in Lebanon received certificates of participation to “Young Gardens” as well as a small gift from Magda.

It was a big motivational moment for all including the participants, their parents and other children who attended and started to ask when we will hold a 2 nd version, knowing that the artworks were taken to Poland, where an art exhibition will also be held there, same as the art pieces that were brought here to Lebanon to prove once again that art is a universal language that can always bring people together.



Coordinator insight: :

„As the project coordinator, I was touched by the participants’s dedication. Despite challenges like transportation and extreme hot weather, some even adjusted their summer plans to join. I found the children’s independent choice to engage, driven by their passion, truly heartening. Their careful and enthusiastic approach to their art was evident and inspiring to me. As a person majoring in arts, it was nice to get to know people that also shared the same love and passion.”

Chloe, coordinator of „Gardens of Lebanon”

5. Elderly Week in Mar Mkhayel Cultural Center – June 12 till June 19

Planning for the elderly week started as early as April to plan a special week for the elderly in the neighborhood who often don’t get the chance to go out and enjoy their time due to their age condition or simply burdening circumstances. Fr Elia, the parish priest who believes in the mission of YBTE pushed for this project aiming to help the elderly to sail along with us through the hardships and the challenges of aging. And the result was the fruit of an amazing collaboration between the parish volunteers, Barrad el Hay and YBTE.

A group of elderly people were called for a meeting on Wednesday June 7, simply to get to know us and to tell them about our vision where the cultural center starts to become their place to go and to enjoy. We call them our partners now, because their cooperation is key to the success of this project. And the fruit was ripening fast: they gave a name to the project: **“We Still Can”**.



We started the next Monday as the day to talk about old songs and movies. One of them turned out to be an actor in the past and even had a music band!

Tuesday was awareness day with a trainer coming to offer them how to exercise at their age. Along with memory games to recall popular proverbs and quotes.

Wednesday was the day to indulge them with a hairdresser and our ladies got a manicure service. Thursday was the day we took them to Beirut Park by bus where we could spend some time in this wonderful forgotten place.

Friday was the day when Fr Elia and Elie Abu Saba showed up as a surprise and played guitar and sang along with them, then shared a brunch before we all agreed to continue our activities in the future on a weekly basis.

The elderly’s invitation to be involved in decision making and the emphasis on them representing the memory of the golden sixties of Beirut was truly a big step into incorporating them in parish life and in becoming more proactive, each in their way.

6. Chiyah Park

- **Mother's Day March 21**

A Mother's love is the fuel that pushes her child to accomplish the impossible.

On Mother's Day, the municipality of Chiyah prepared a brunch in the Chiyah Park in honor of all the mothers in the neighborhood, with members of the municipality, both men and women, taking care of the amazing mommies along with good music just to give the perfect celebration atmosphere.

Our contribution aimed to provide 200 coupons from a nearby hairdresser for the ladies to indulge them with some me-time.

The hairdresser took his time to style the hair of a few mommies on the spot while others received coupons to go pay a visit to his salon and benefit from the coupon



- **Kermess – May 24**

Every now and then, the municipality of Chiyah organizes a kermess for the area's children in the Chiyah Park.

The kermess included food and beverages kiosks, fun games for the children and the parents as well. A memorable day for the whole community who had the chance to come and enjoy some family quality time without burdens.

YBTE offered rewards of little bags of candies for those participating in the kermess games.



7. Support for 3 Children training at Fightlife Lebanon/ The Bumblebees

Yes the circumstances are only getting worse and people have to compromise a lot. But what about that kid who shows how much he or she is talented in sports and eager to train? What about those parents who are torn from the inside because they cannot afford enrolling their child in a gym to get proper training? Well, yes again! Such a kid deserves to be given the chance to train for one year. And what better than Fightlife Lebanon Club founded by our dear friend Jack? This little gym with a big heart has kids coming to train for martial arts with young Vasken, the promising champion. We are indeed big fans of the club and follow up with the rising of both Vasken and Dzhovag in MMA fights while watching them grow to be role models for the youth. Little talented ones were chosen to benefit from a full 1 year subscription. Thank you Fightlife Lebanon for the great work!

8. YBTE in JMJ Portugal – July 28 till Aug 8

So YBTE girls worked hard and prayed even harder to get the chance to go to Portugal and take part in the International Youth Day in Lisbon and meet the pope. They traveled all the way to Spain then to Portugal along with the Neocatechumenal Way group from Lebanon and embarked in an unforgettable journey that changed their lives forever.



They got to meet with the Polish Youth in Lisbon and even noticed that their breakfast included Polish apples and couldn't help but notice that they traveled all the way there to have a taste of a Polish fruit! We don't believe in coincidences anymore!

9. Therapy of „K.” family – Hiba is continuing it, in 2023 23 sessions were held

10. Dany's workshop – we supported him to develop his workshops by buying new tools