

**DEAR FRIENDS, SUPPORTERS AND MEMBERS OF COEXISTENCES,
BETWEEN MATURATION AND PREPARATIONS, THESE LAST MONTHS HAVE BROUGHT US SOME
NEWS FROM THE PAST GROUPS AND CLARIFIED OUR 2012 PROJECTS.**



BAL JAUNE 2012

The prom started gently with romantic French songs then picked up pace to create a lovely evening. Coexistences was present through the president's speech and an information booth.

We are happy to inform you that this year too has been very good with some 4'900 Francs collected for our 2012 projects! Roughly the same amount as last year. We wish to thank in particular all those who have given of their time (and their delicious culinary specialties) leading to a successful evening.

MORE ECHOES FROM THE 2011 PROJECTS

PLEASE FIND BELOW A LOVELY MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM THE YMCA 2011 GROUP PIECE OF PEACE:

"Dear Coexistence families,
The whole YMCA group would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We all miss you a lot and

hope that you are doing well. We will never forget the amazing summer that we spent with you all.
Hope you have a good time during the holidays,
WE LOVE YOU ☺

The YMCA group, Piece of Peace 2011."

AND THIS ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE ORSIÈRES BOROUGH, ABOUT THE 2011 SUMMER'S MONT-BLANC TOUR:

«At the coffee shop terrace, in la Fouly, a few youth discuss and rest. Like the other walkers of the Mont Blanc tour, it is clear they have been tired by the adventure. Two reasons to that: the changing weather, combining rain showers to coolness, and the distance, further more in altitude! But never mind! They are used to challenges, as a matter of fact far greater than those of weather and physical effort!

They are here to challenge the unthinkable, that is dialog, for these youth are Israelis and Palestinians and they study at Haifa University. This trek should allow them to go beyond

what divides and opposes them. This project is the realisation of Coexistences, an association based in Lausanne, among which some of the members have a holiday residence in La Fouly. Coexistences promotes the encounter which will create a mutual knowledge which allows the coexistence of two people with different cultures and religions.

Switzerland, at peace for two centuries, is an ideal place to create the dialog and the friendship, over and above the differences, in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

The commune administration was happy to pay tribute to the association's initiative by meeting all those taking part to the initiative, which is supported by the local mountaineer Jean Troillet. An aperitif and local specialties were offered which were well valued by stomachs visibly happy to

welcome precious energy... An immense Thank You and Bravo to these youth and the accompanying team for their courageous action. Attempting fraternity when everything leads you to fighting is an act carrying immense hope!
M. Abbet »

A PORTRAIT OF OLFAT ON HAARETZ

Last, at end of January, the online edition of Haaretz published a long portrait of Olfat Haider, the Palestinian leader of our two projects, the climb of the Mont Blanc in 2010, and the Mont Blanc tour in 2011.

<http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/faster-higher-stronger-1.409502>

and the Hebrew version at

<http://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/1.1625713>.

François provided us with this summary :

Olfat comes from a fairly well to do family of liberal leaning, with an engineer father and a social worker mother. Her two brothers and her sister are all top ranking sportsmen, just like her who was a member of the national volley-ball team. She experiences intensely the contradictions linked to her Arab woman status in Israel: in the Palestinian society, her free lifestyle and the fact that she is single is often met with incomprehension; at departures for international matches abroad, she underwent the humiliating controls at the airport that all persons of Arab origin have to suffer, this despite the fact that she was a member of the national team.

Along the same line, Olfat recalls a disquieting story. Due to her physical look, she cannot be easily differentiated from an Israeli woman. As a sport instructor, one day she manages a group of children in a swimming pool. While busy taking care of a Jewish boy, a friend drops by and talks to her in Arabic. The little boy asks which language is this one, and learning it, realizes his instructor's origin. Panic cries, the whole swimming pool is put upside down, a polite but firm request is made by the family that the boy is put into another group with another instructor...

To Olfat, the idea to use activities such as trekking and mountaineering to bring closer people belonging to antagonistic groups took shape during the "Breaking the Ice" expedition, which in 2004 led a group of 4 Israelis and 4 Palestinians to climb for the first time a mountain in the Antarctica. After that, she followed a specific training in the US at the "Outward Bound" organization, which is specialized in helping to integrate minorities through the media-

tion of outdoor activities. With the competences thus acquired, Olfat started to lead Jewish and Arab teenagers living in Israel, in treks in the US. Later she got a financial support to continue this activity in Israel, in partnership with Doron Erel (whom she had met during the Antarctica expedition, and who later became the Israeli leader of the 2010 Mont Blanc climb). Unfortunately the funding dried up, and it is then that the connection with Coexistences took place, for the two projects you know.

To Olfat, at the heart of her action is the creation of strong personal bonds, which is facilitated by the challenge of having to face together the difficulties of lack of comfort and stress linked to open air activities. Once these bonds are established, the debate of political issue can take place on different grounds.

The Haaretz article finishes very nicely with the end of the little boy's story at the swimming pool. At first the father asked Olfat to forgive his son's reaction. «I have no reason to feel a grudge against him» she answered, «this is what he sees at home». Afterwards, the boys requested to join back his group where all his friends were. "But I am an Arab" objected Olfat. Answer: «So what? I want to be with my pals».

After the news of the central role Gershon Baskin (facilitator of the religious leaders of March 2009) in the release of Gilat Shalit, this long article on Olfat is an extremely encouraging sign for Coexistences: it is very comforting that these persons with whom we run projects are appearing in the press. This is a testimony to the quality of those with whom we work, to the fact that they are the new generation, or the emerging generation of dialog and the bridge between the two societies. As such, these articles will also help us in our fundraising effort.

2012 PROJECTS

WE ARE HAPPY TO CONFIRM YOU THE TWO 2012 PROJECTS

MONT-BLANC

the Mont Blanc tour will take place between August 23 and September 6. Olfat has started recruiting the participants and everything is progressing smoothly.

Contact : francois.feihl@chuv.ch

YMCA

we will also host between July 6 to 15 a group of youth from the YMCA which this year will bring together the best participants of the past 2-3 years (among them Omer-Piece of Peace2011, Margalit-PeaceBomb2010 already came in Switzerland).

To raise the profile of the YMCA and to ensure that it participates in a more obvious and active way to Jerusalem's intercommunitary life, a one day intercultural event will be

organized at the YMCA towards the end of September 2012. The group we will host this summer will be the group organizing this event under the leadership of Shira (one of «Piece of Peace»'s facilitator who is also an experienced event organizer) and of Mona. The youth have started working and all their efforts are geared toward the definition of «my culture, your culture», the choice of events and then the organization per se. The trip to Switzerland will allow them to reflect upon the process and work on the dialog required to organize this event. The stay will run as usual with a few days in the mountain followed by a stay in Lausanne.

The work groups Voyage and Host Families are being set up. We invite you to contact Halina should you wish to take part to one of the work groups or to be a host family.

Contact : halina_sandri@bluewin.ch

AND TO END THESE NEWS, A WELL WORTHY ONE!

A WOMEN'S STORY

We have the immense joy and emotion to inform you that after nearly 3 years, the Mothers group which emerged in 2007 on the model of that of their own children and which had imploded when the Gaza war broke in December-January 2008, met the past 27 of February! 11 of the 14 women who made the trip to Switzerland met up for an emotional evening, as told by Sylvie:

A WOMEN 'S STORY

«In September 2006, after the success of the «Girl's dialogue group» of the same year, the mothers came to YMCA and asked: «And what about us, the mothers?»

A group was created in 2007. Mothers and some friends of them gathered every week, talking, sharing, crying, fighting, and hugging. They discussed about life, about family stories, about their narratives and their understanding of the conflict, about identity, and culture, and women's roles... They travelled together for a week-end to Tiberiade, and one year after, they decided to continue meeting.

They met at the YMCA, at the homes of each other, under Succoth, after the Ramadan, sharing food and talks, and they continued their route, their process, with courage, despite all what was happening around.

In 2008, the group was invited for a 10 days trip to Switzerland, and in the supportive and warm environment created by Coexistences, they went on.

Back home, they invited each other. One of the meetings was planned on Saturday 27/12/2008 for Hanukkah at the home of one of the participants. The same day, the Gaza war broke... The Israeli participants came. The Palestinian participant didn't. The group's Palestinian facilitator Douaa offered to watch Palestinian TV channels so the Israelis could grasp the impact from the Palestinian view point.

An exchange of mails started. Heavy, painful mails that brought anger, guilt, frustration... the women stopped meeting, the wound was profound, on both sides. And some of the participants clearly stated that they did not want to meet anymore.

On Monday, 27/2/2012, 3 years later, the facilitators of the group Sylvie and Douaa, decided to invite the women to gather again, bring food and stories, and sit again for an evening...

Twelve women hugged, and cried, and spent a long evening together. They spoke about their career, their children, the changes in their lives, they spoke about life. At the end of the evening, S. asked Sylvie and Douaa: "Why did you invite us?"

We told them about our need to know how they are doing, and that the group was left with hard feelings after the Gaza war, that the situation wasn't getting better, but that time had passed and that it might be the moment to sit again. S. started: "I personally had a painful story, and I was not sure I would come. But now that I saw everybody, I am thankful we met." M. continued: "Yes, the very fact that we sit here today, shows how time helps to grow. We came here tonight different, much more mature, and aware of our differences, accepting them, and sharing what we have in common, our womanhood, our motherhood, our struggle

for life". A. added: Yes, we don't agree, we are different, we have different points of view, and we know it. Besides, I like you, I feel close, I have friendship for you, we have had a huge experience together, and I am really happy and thankful for the initiative."

Dear women, dear mothers, dear companions of a long way together, thank you for having come. And to those who didn't come, we had a friendly and respectful thought.

Jerusalem, 27/2/2012, Sylvie and Douaa

SOIRÉE DE SOUTIEN DU 13 MAI 2012 AU CINÉMA CITYCLUB, PULLY

Our next event will be a cocktail diner on Sunday May 13 at the City Pully. You will receive more detailed information further along. Do publicize well this event around you as this

event will help us further collect funds for our two 2012 projects.

Until we have the pleasure to meet you that evening, we wish you a wonderful spring,
With our warmest regards,

Fiuna
For the Communication group and the whole of the association