

DEAR FRIENDS OF COEXISTENCES FROM NEAR AND FAR, THIS YEAR TOOK OFF IN MUSIC WITH THE ORCHESTRE JAUNE LIVELIER THAN EVER, AND ZAHAVA'S GROUP OF WOMEN INAUGURATED SPRING 2014. AS FOR THE BREAKING THE ICE TREKKERS, THEY HAVE UNTIL THE END OF AUGUST TO PREPARE.

BAL JAUNE

«Amène ta fraise» ! (*Pull out all the stops!*) Remember how the buzz word bidding us to come to the Great Ball of the Petit Nouvel An, on 10 January at the Casino de Montbenon in Lausanne resounded loud and clear and, as each year, we didn't need to be told twice. What a fantastic edition! As soon as the second tune struck up, the dance floor was jam-packed and remained that way until the small hours of the morning. The musicians burst with energy. The bar and food stand bustled. Everybody was visibly happy to be there. At the entrance, we counted 515 people and hope to net a profit of approximately 10,000 Frs pour Coexistences. And all that in an incredible atmosphere of dancing, music and joy. We come away a little giddy. Thank you so much for having contributed through your help, presence and friendship. So, next year on 9 January 2015, you can pull out all the stops!



ZAHAVA PROJECT / 24 - 31 MARCH 2014

Zahava's group of women have just returned home! Straight from Galilee where they live in small villages –it is said that some of them left their homes for the first time, they lived together for a week, sharing their daily life, staying with host families, some in mixed pairs of different religions. Christian, Druze, Jewish, Muslim, 23 women who have chosen to dialogue, under the leadership of Zahava, leader of this interfaith and apolitical group. For ten years, and despite the context, they persevere in their endeavour to get to know each other, her religion, her culture and her traditions. From different social backgrounds, varied professions, ages ranging from 29 to 78, they regularly meet at one another's houses.

Our program focussed on striking a balance: a day in Moudon to meet, on the one hand, to meet an interfaith dialogue group, led by Geneviève de Haas and, on the other, the women from the Soroptimist Association. Then, respecting each participant's faith, we visited a church and a muslim prayer space. Another day, another pleasure: Geneva with, in particular, a visit to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum. Finally, Lausanne, with a key moment: an encounter with the religious representatives of the Maison de l'Arzillier, not to mention a trip to the «mountain pastures» and a detour by the synagogue. On the Friday, just after a short Gruyeron and chocolate trip, it was time to welcome « The Shabbat Bride », that most sacred of all moments, of meditation and peace.

In a chalet in Charmey, in all simplicity, the women expressed the desire to remain among themselves, between believers, on their own, to pursue with no outside intervention, their demanding and ongoing dialogue for the construction of a common future.

The week was intense for both Zahava's group and the host families and other volunteers who gave their unwavering

presence and support. All this was carried out in close collaboration with the drivers of the Service of Civil Protection who were so very kind. Finally, everyone reunited for the farewell which always comes too soon!



FEEDBACK ON THE BREAKING THE ICE PROJECT / 15 - 29 AUGUST 2013

For the 4th year running, a group of students from the University of Haifa came for a trek in our Alps last year. Prepared of course by Olfat Haider during the spring, they arrived in Geneva on 15 August, accommodated for the first two days in the Kohler family's chalet in Fouly. The itinerary denoted a change in relation to the previous years where the trek took place around the Mont Blanc: transportation by road to the region of Saas Fee, departure by foot from Mattmark, passage to Italy with the plan to rally Zermatt by crossing the border once again via the Theodule pass (southern half of the Tour du Mont Rose), under the leadership of Jean Troillet and accompanied by François Feihl. A minor setback (Olfat sprained her ankle the second day, luckily nothing serious) forced us to adapt the road map: a few days stay in a camping site (Macugnaga), then transportation by taxi to Cervinia, and from there, on to Zermatt in short stages, by foot as planned. Thus, the participants were not frustrated by the hike on the glacier which they were so looking forward to! From Zermatt, return by road to La Fouly, then Lausanne, with accommodation once again fully ensured by the Kohler family until the return flight on 29 August.

As in previous years, the walk is not an end in itself but a way of reinforcing an atmosphere propitious to dialogue. This dialogue follows a path set by Olfat and her Israeli co-mediator –this year Erez Meltzer, in the form of different activities, in the evening, after having put up the tents. Emphasis is placed on the autonomy of the participants who are requested in turn to lead a discussion a theme by proposing a method to approach it (e.g. role play).

For the first time, Olfat succeeded in assembling a group which struck an almost perfect balance: six girls (three Arabs, three Jews) and five boys (three Arabs, two Jews). The minor setback mentioned above was in no way an obstacle to the dialogue process, on the contrary. The group turned out to be exceptionally united and dynamic. Back home in Israel, the participants have often met up, sometimes with participants from the previous years. With the support of the Deanship, they organised an exhibition on Breaking The Ice, in the form an exhibit of 50 photos taken during the four years of the project, shown for two months (until mid-March 2014) in a very busy passage in the main hall of the University of Haifa.

BREAKING THE ICE PROJECT END OF AUGUST – BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER 2014

Once again in partnership with the University of Haifa and under the leadership of Olfat Haider, a new group of students is currently preparing for a 14-day visit scheduled for the end of August –beginning of September.

Breaking The Ice would not be possible without the support of our donors (the list is too long to be given here but you will find it on our website), from the Kohler family who so generously make available their chalet in Fouly and even their house in Lausanne, the Service of Civil Protection who ensures gratis all transportation by road across the Swiss territory, and finally all the active members of Coexistences who give of their time for the organisation of the project.

ADOLESCENTS EN DIALOGUE PROJECT POSTPONED TO 2015

In continuity with the origins of the association, we wanted to host, in August 2014, a new group of adolescents including Israeli Jews and Palestinians from Jerusalem. The project was to take place in partnership with the Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace, which has a long-standing commitment in education towards democracy and against racism.

However, since this new partner functions differently, we have been unable to pursue the project without first ensuring the funding required for this visit.

We are now working on the realisation of the project for 2015.



NEWS FROM THERE

From mid-January to mid-February, François Feihl spent a month on the University of Haifa campus to follow an intensive Hebrew course in a private capacity. He was in a good position to appreciate the positive effects of Breaking The Ice since many of the participants are still studying there and they gave him a particularly warm and touching welcome. Some interesting information:

- Bassem (2012), invited all the members of his group to his wedding, telling them to bring their friends: this was an opportunity for certain Jews to take part in an Arab wedding.
- Naomi (2012) created a discussion group including Jewish pupils from the Leo Beck School in Haifa, an institution in favour of equality and plurality and Druze pupils from her village.

In addition, the University authorities have recently shown increasing interest for the project. Over and above the support mentioned above for the photo exhibit:

- Tamer (2013) was invited to present Breaking The Ice to the delegation of a Californian university who were visiting the campus.
- The President of the University of Haifa expressed the desire to show our film « Where are the Frontiers » on a trip to the United States.
- During François' stay on the campus, Breaking The Ice was the object of an official presentation, with the participation of a top leader of the University, Ami Ayalon who is a prominent figure in Israel and co-author of a peace initiative, "The People's Voice" with Sari Nusseibeh, President of Al Qods University in Jerusalem.

NEWS FROM HERE

Creation of a Facebook page

Following changes on Facebook, the Coexistences page created in 2010 under Causes (tool dedicated to associations) had become difficult of access. Fiuna has therefore created a completely new one uniquely on Facebook.

To date, and within only a few days, there have been more than 100 "likes" and several "shares" show up. Such a good result in such a short time is extremely encouraging and bodes well!

You can find the same information in a more convivial way: brief recap on the expected groups and summary of their visits. But also answers to the usual questions: Who are we? What do we do? How do we operate (citizen, apolitical, non-confessional initiative; voluntary members)? Not forgetting the notifications for support dinners and other public events (Bal Jaune, Cafés Coexistences...). Profile of our « fans »: first and foremost from Israel and the Palestinian Territories, then Switzerland, Germany and finally Italy; more than 55% are women, mainly young (25-35).

From concept to action

Jan de Haas, vicar in Moudon, has made an original proposal to future newly weds who don't want to make a wedding list: to make Coexistences the beneficiary of their marriage vows. This is just a beginning so there are no financial results for the time being, but a fantastic idea which is highly symbolical and which has allowed other associations and institutions to collect money. Apparently, two couples have already chosen Coexistences.

SAVE THE DATE

SUPPORT EVENING:

SUNDAY 25 MAY 2014

AT THE REFUGE DES 4 VENTS

IN PULLY

Hoping to see you at each port of call in 2014, we wish you a lovely spring.

The communication group and all the work groups of the association.