

YEARLY REPORT

2007-2008

Introduction

A very active year for the Friends of the Disabled Association...and its **thirtieth** in its assiduous and perseverant march for the social integration of people with special needs started in 1978!

More motivated than ever to continue its mission, FDA was able to implement many activities to improve the quality of its services in the rehabilitation domain, and organize several events to promote public awareness as to the rights of people with disabilities for social inclusion.

September 2007

The scholastic year started with our traditional yearly “**Ramadan Bazaar**”, held on the 5th, 6th and 7th of September at the Holiday Inn Hotel in the Dunes Mall on Verdun Street (Beirut), where a new collection of our students’ products from the vocational training section at Idad Center were exhibited. The collection included for the first time a selection of creative furniture woodwork for decorative purposes, along with a very elegant display of mosaic products, ranging from jewelry boxes to fancy coffee and tea trays as well as original tea-boxes, picture frames, and even mosaic-reproductions of selective pictures. Of course, all our delicious pastry products were exhibited in very attractive arrangements, along with the traditional “Ramadan baskets” which attract a huge number of our bazaar-dwellers each year...

Starting the 17th of September, our annual **in-service staff training program** started on a daily basis: Idad educators and therapists all attended the professional workshops on behavior modification techniques, designing the Individualized Educational Plans, and psychomotor training given by Director Rita Merhej, as well as a special presentation on the TEACCH Program for autistic children by Special Educator Hadi Riachi, and an

introductory presentation by Speech Therapist, Stephanie Nasr, on dyslexia and dysgraphia which are commonly encountered in our students.

October 2007

The scholastic year officially started on October 1, 2007 and it was a great joy for everyone, students and staff, to re-unite after the long hot summer holiday! This year was also very important for us because we inaugurated our **Early Intervention Section** by admitting 4 toddlers with intellectual disabilities and provided them with a rich array of early intervention services, based on the Portage model, emphasizing parental partnership.

As the holy feast of the “Fitr “was approaching, a devoted friend of the Association, **Mr. Abdallah Al Jammal** threw a big **Iftar party** at the Al-Saha Restaurant in the Beirut suburbs for all our students and staff members on the 6th of October 2007, and on the 11th of September, we celebrated

Id Al Fitr at Idad Center, in our large Auditorium, where students presented songs and dances especially designed for this happy occasion.

In the meantime, as of October, Idad Center started receiving trainees in special education from the **Saint Joseph University in Beirut**, some of them for a one-month term, others for 3 months.

Our psychologist, Jumana Khuri, gave her first training session to her colleagues at Idad as part of the “**Training of the Trainees**” organized by the **Sante-Sud** three-year program on early intervention for children with autism. In the same context, four of our Idad staff (Jumana Khuri, Zeina Noun, Leila Kabbout and Rita Al Ibri) attended the last training session of Sante-Sud from October 29 till November 3, and received their certificates of participation for the full 3-year program.

As of October 2007, a new **Art Curriculum** was incorporated into our educational program, in agreement with our new affiliation to the **Very Special Arts (VSA)** organization, and a special dance and acting program, led by Sana Fakhri, was launched aiming at concretizing FDA’s dream to form the “**Idad Dance Group**”.

November 2007

Our Occupational Therapist, Nesrine Abou Jaoudeh, flew to Amman, Jordan, to participate in the first one-week session of an intensive training program on **Sensory Integration**.

At Idad center, we received more trainees in special education from the Saint-Joseph University in Beirut.

On November 22, we celebrated Lebanon’s **Independence Day** where our students presented a variety of performances using different forms of artistic expression on the theme of freedom, patriotism and independence.

December 2007

December is always a month of festivity and jubilation at Idad Center. As our huge Christmas tree stood in the middle of our entrance hall, the sweet and merry sounds of the Christmas carols invaded Idad center all day and ...all month long! Our students were delighted to feel the Christmas spirit in the warmth of their school, especially as the traditional Santa Claus visit was getting closer...

On December 7, we celebrated the **Lebanese Halloween** ("Saint Barb") in our large cafeteria, with dances and songs, over a bowl of hot wheat cooked with sugar and rose-water.

On December 15, **Mr. and Mrs. Abdallah Al- Jammal** threw an unforgettable **Christmas party** for our students at the Marriott Hotel (Jnah area, Beirut) where they celebrated the birthday of their son, Ali. The party included a magic-show with fascinating tricks that impressed each and every one, and of course, a surprise-visit by Santa Claus who distributed fancy presents to all the students, all of which carefully selected by the gracious Mrs. Jammal.

For the second year on the row, a new group of nursing students from **Global University Nursing** department came on December 13 for an acquaintance visit to Idad center, to be followed by a series of training sessions in our specialized therapy section throughout the Fall term.

On the same day, part of our staff was off to Antelias to participate in the traditional **Marché de Noël**, a big popular Christmas Bazaar which lasted till the 22nd of December. Another group of our staff was off to the Dunes Mall on Verdun Street (Beirut) to participate in the **Al-Sadr Foundation Artisanal Bazaar** for 3 days. Both bazaars were an excellent opportunity for FDA to exhibit our students' products and mobilize public awareness as to the skills and creativity of people with special needs.

On December 18, we held our annual **Christmas celebration** at Idad Auditorium amidst the joyful faces and loud laughters of our students as they were dancing and receiving their Christmas presents from our "local" Santa!

January 2008

The New Year 2008 was inaugurated at Idad center with a one-day workshop on **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**, given by volunteer ABA expert **Nadine Maher** on January 5. The workshop was attended by representatives of more than 25 institutions and organizations dealing with children with autism, as well as by a few independent guests.

On January 18, Director Rita Merhej was invited to present a lecture at the nursing department in **Balamand University** about the mission and role of FDA, as well as the functions of the Rehabilitation Nurse in institutions for mental health.

On January 23, psychologist Jumana Khuri visited the **Carmel Saint-Joseph** School in Mechref to present an overview of FDA services to a group of students in the secondary classes and to answer their questions about disability. This was followed on January 30

by a visit of the Carmel school students to our center to attend our classes and mingle with our students in their recreational activities.

February 2008

Over two consecutive week-ends (1-2 and 8-9 February), Idad staff actively participated in the **“Right To Play”** workshops, aiming at enhancing gross and fine motor as well as communication skills through play in children and adolescents with special needs. These workshops were also very helpful in fostering our staff’s creativity in organizing indoors and outdoors game activities for our students.

On February 5, 6 and 7, special educator Rita Al-Ibri participated in the first training session of a workshop on **Drama Therapy for Autistic Children**.

On February 22, Director Rita Merhej, in collaboration with the **Association for Volunteer Services in Lebanon (AVS)**, gave a lecture on FDA’s rehabilitation programs for children with psychological disorders to a group of representatives of different non-governmental organizations, at the UNESCO palace in Beirut

In the meantime, at Idad Center, preparations for our big **VSA (Very Special Arts)** event, an inter-organizational art-talent show scheduled to take place in December 2008, started: contacts were made with a large group of local organizations dealing with students with intellectual disabilities and the first organizational meeting was held on February 28.

March 2008

On March 3, the long-awaited audition ceremony for our **“Idad Superstar”** event took place: each student had the opportunity to stand on stage, at Idad Auditorium, and give his/her performance based on his/her favorite singer. This activity is a prelude to our end-of-the-year ceremony.

On March 4, FDA participated in the one-day Handcrafts Exhibit at the Coral Beach Hotel, organized by the **Women’s Committee of Beirut**.

On March 7, a group of teen-agers from **Beirut Baptist School** visited Idad Center and had the fun of their life with our students, playing songs on the guitar and singing and dancing together. On the same day, we also celebrated **Teacher’s day** where each student insisted on showing his love and appreciation to his/her teacher in a very creative way on stage...

From 18 to 20 March, FDA participated in the **“Exposition des Diplomates”**, organized by the **“Ajyalouna”** association in the Biel complex in Beirut.

In the meantime, our occupational therapist flew to Jordan to complete her second training session in the sensory Integration Workshop in Amman.

From March 29 to April 2, FDA president Dr. Moussa Charafeddine and director Rita Merhej were invited by the **Kuwaiti Association of the Parents of the Disabled** to give a 3-day workshop on autism and cerebral-palsy in two separate sessions for (a) parents and (b) professionals in rehabilitation centers in Kuwait.

April 2008

Special educator Rita Al-Ibri completed her second session of the workshop on Drama Therapy for Autistic children from April 1 to 3. On April 9, we held our second coordination meeting with organizations for intellectually disabled students in preparation of the major art event scheduled to take place in December 2008.

On April 10, FDA vice-president Najwa Maher organized a field-trip for our students to the “**Al-Orfan Museum**” in Baaklin, Bekaata...an unforgettable experience for our students who discovered the wonders of nature and the animal world.

On April 16, Idad Football Team participated in the **Football Tournament** organized by the **Special Olympics** Committee of Lebanon at the Al-Safa Sports field, in an atmosphere of friendly competition with peers from other associations.

On April 21, director Rita Merhej gave a presentation on the art curriculum and art activities at Idad center at the **Shafallah Third forum on Sports and Ability in Doha** (Qatar).

On April 23, a group of nursing students from the **Balamand University** came to Idad Center, and under the guidance of their Supervisor, they administered the first series of screening batteries to a large group of our students, in cooperation with our specialized therapy department.

May 2008

In spite of the deteriorating security conditions in Beirut which characterized the month of May, we were determined to go ahead with our theatrical performance at the **UNESCO Palace** in Beirut on May 29. Our **Idad Dance Group** brilliantly performed a musical play entitled “*The Tales of Sheherazade*” in front of a very large audience of children from several elementary schools in Beirut and the suburbs.

This event was covered by the media, namely **Future television and Al-Manar television** where two of our student “stars”(the “story-teller” and “Cinderella”) were interviewed in one of the morning talk-shows to discuss their experience and its significance in their life.

June 2008

On June 5, the second screening session by the nursing students at Balamand University took place. On June 6, FDA organized its annual **Brunch party** at the **Mechref Country Club**, thanks to the generous contribution of **Mr. Fuad Salha**. As in previous years, the brunch gathered some 200 ladies who came to manifest their support to FDA and

encourage our vocational training program by purchasing the exhibited delicious pastries prepared by our students in the pastry-production section.

On June 11, our young students, along with their teachers, spent the day at **Burger-King** (Raouche, Beirut) to practice their social skills in public places, while at Idad Center; a television crew from the **Tunisian Television** was filming a documentary program on FDA services.

On June 18, our female students were escorted by their staff to the **Bellevue Beach Resort** to enjoy a full day of swimming and sun-bathing.

On June 20, Dr. Daisy Warren from **Haigazian University** (Beirut) came for an introductory visit to Idad Center in order to study the possibility of launching an internship program at Idad for students in the special education unit at the university for the next academic year.

On June 23, our students with multiple handicaps and severe intellectual disability went to **Pizza Hut** (Khaldeh) with their teachers where they enjoyed delicious pizzas carefully prepared for them by the very welcoming Pizza hut staff.

On June 24, our male students were escorted by their teachers and sports coach to the **Happy John Beach** (Khaldeh) to experience the joy of water-fighting and rough-and-tumble play in the pool...so joyful an experience that it was incredibly difficult to bring them to the bus back to school!

The **last day of school** was on June 25 and we celebrated it in our Auditorium where some groups presented an artistic performance upon which they had been training for the last two months, while other students preferred to present, in an independent way, their favorite songs in playback...Quite an unforgettable (loud) event to say farewell to 2008!

On June 26 and 27, we held our **general staff meeting** to evaluate all the accomplishments of the year 2007-2008; this was followed by an intensive training workshop given by our program coordinator Tania Abdul Ahad on educational program design and implementation.

July 2008

The month of July was a very busy month for FDA:

From July 21 to July 29, FDA organized a 10-day **intensive course** at Idad Center on **Early Intervention Services**, inspired by the famous Portage Program for early intervention. The guest-speaker was **Ms Roula Rustom**, a certified trainer of Denver II, EDY (Education of the Developmentally Young) and Portage Early Education Program. The course was attended by representatives of 37 non-governmental associations working in the rehabilitation field, two of them in Aleppo (Syria). This event was sponsored by AMIDEAST of Lebanon and USAID.

On July 30, FDA held its annual **Gala Dinner** at the **Pangea Beach Resort** (coast of Jiyeh) which generously offered its premises as well as the catering for the event. The dinner was attended by more than 300 people who came to enjoy a nice evening and a great dinner by the pool, and of course, to confirm their full support to FDA. Media stars, George Cordahi and Ghada Eid graciously led the auction sale, the profits of which went to further reinforce FDA's rehabilitation services and create new programs in Idad center.

August 2008

FDA held its traditional Annual Ramadan Bazaar at the Holiday Inn Hotel in the DUNES Mall on Verdun Street (Beirut), from August 26 till August 28, included. All profits from the Bazaar sales went to enhance and promote the services of Idad Center, and create new programs for our students.