

Lifegate im May 2023

It was not an everyday experience that at the end of May rain clouds came up and we heard once again about floods in the desert, where the water from the mountains flowed down in torrents to the Dead Sea. Nature was given a respite once again before the long dry summer probably finally begins. A full productive month at Lifegate, with the exception of May 1. No other interruptions for holidays or festivals. Whit Monday is not celebrated as a holiday here at Lifegate. We look back with gratitude and rejoice in the blessings we experienced! Thank you for all the prayers, for your support in the financial area and for the many beautiful meetings!

A Trip Away

Three team members (and myself) made their way to Germany. The head of the early intervention work Natalin Zeineh, the head of the special school Rasha Abu Aita and the special school teacher Rana Sahouri were invited to an internship in a special school in Neuss in Germany.



Rasha (from left), Natalin and Rana

Our former volunteer Mrs. Janna Grewer-Willwoll, who is in charge of this school, ensured their friendly welcome and interesting meetings with children and support staff, made her apartment available as a place to stay overnight and made herself available as a "tour guide" in Cologne and at the Dutch border during her free time. As a member of the Cologne-Bethlehem Partnership Association, Janna also helped with an association grant for this trip. Many thanks.



Janna and Rana



Zaidan from Tor zum Leben (left) with the ladies

Afterwards we met in Gießen and drove together to Halle an der Saale, where the 30th anniversary of the German association Lifegate Rehabilitation Tor zum Leben e.V. was celebrated on the weekend. A volunteer meeting on Friday evening opened three fulfilling and blessed days. Younger and older people who had worked at Lifegate in Beit Jala and Bethlehem years ago or even just a few days ago met in the early evening and were given a short tour of the city, which ended in a Syrian restaurant with popular Arabic food and drinks.

General meeting of Tor zum Leben



The general meeting of the German association was held on Saturday morning in the parish hall of the Paulus church in Halle and on an open evening, to which many friends from all over Germany came together and which started with an excellent oriental catering buffet, we brought people up to date on the work. The guests were officially welcomed by Anette Schmidt, who had come from southern Germany with her husband Wolfgang. Anette (curative educator) and Wolfgang Schmidt (former provost of the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem) had supported our work on site for many years and have remained good friends of the Lifegate work. In a greeting from a representative of the city of Halle the Lifegate work was appreciated. Danny Siegel, who had made a film together with a friend at Lifegate, presented the film and two songs written and musically performed by him as a premiere to this evening. Danny will use the film and music to offer a Lifegate presentation campaign in church congregations. A very successful and well-rounded program was enjoyed by the participants and there was also space and the opportunity to talk with each other afterwards.



Anette Schmidt welcomes.



Danny Siegel presents film and music.

Lifegate Team Beit Jala gives an up-to-date report from the work.



On Sunday morning the jubilee weekend ended with a festive service, which was organized by many Lifegate staff members and at which Pastor Wolfgang Schmidt held the sermon. As part of the service we gave thanks to long-time active supporters of our work and especially Detlev Haupt, retired pastor from Halle, who was actively involved in the Lifegate work for many years with his circle of friends. Torsten Neumann, director of the Paulustherapie Halle, has also been an active supporter of the Lifegate work for several years and, with his business partner, family and team, organized the weekend in Halle together with our full-time association employee Mrs. Maria Zaidan and took over responsibility for the catering. A big thank you for the excellent preparation and organization!

Last but not least, in this service we thanked our Lord who provided for us all these years in Germany and also in Beit Jala with wonderful people and made sure that there were always enough resources to "open gates of life"! To HIM we entrust our future!



Current German Executive Board



Former and current Executive Board members



Active members at the anniversary celebration in Halle

Cooperation with local universities

For many years we have enjoyed a regular and beneficial cooperation with the University in Bethlehem. In the therapy area interns come to us and also students of nursing regularly come to Lifegate. In May the students taught our children in a fun way methods of personal hygiene, proper hand washing and taught the children to take care of themselves and their clothes. The children really enjoyed it.



The American University in the north of the Palestinian Territory has also been sending us occupational therapy students for internships for two years now and recently also the first students in the field of orthopedic technology. Since we have a German supervisor here, Jonas Weinholz, we hope to find future employees in our workshop through these programs.

School and kindergarten together on the road

We would also like to win over kindergartens and schools to enable children with disabilities to have a meaningful and suitable place in mainstream schools in the future. The hurdles are still very high and the tight staffing ratio of the schools makes special attention for these children, or the employment of a second teacher in these classes, impossible.

Thus, for years we have launched the program "Inclusion backwards". Children with disabilities do not enter the normal education system, so we invite the children from regular schools to join us. These meetings begin with the preparation of the program, on which educators from regular schools and Lifegate are already working together. The children and their educators like to come to us and we are very often invited back to the school. Thus, many children have long since lost their fear of contact and have become friends, and the staff also enjoy being together. Now we still have to win especially the parents of the regular school children, who are the main reason that children with disabilities are not admitted. They are afraid that their children might no longer develop as quickly because the children with disabilities supposedly slow down the learning process at school. This can certainly be the case sometimes, but learning social behavior and consideration could certainly make the coexistence of future generations more positive.



Children quickly become friends with each other during play.

Our young adults

Another Lifegate "greenhouse" built from waste materials (plastic bottles and wooden pallets) was dismantled by us, loaded and transported to a family who will now work with this house. Also delivered were raised beds in which spices, vegetables, lettuce, tomatoes, but also flowers can grow. On the one hand this helps to make the families self-sufficient and on the other hand products can be sold and thus contribute to the family income. We make these greenhouses available to families who have only a very small or even no regular income.





Greenhouse loaded on a small truck by our team.

The Bible School in Bethlehem came with some students to present situations from the life of a Christian in a small play to our young people. It was a reference and a testimony to biblical stories and texts, from which practical behaviors in daily life were made visible in a humorous way. An invitation to get involved with the Bible and let the written word become practical. ...Will be continued!



Watch and take in

Get to know Jesus

There are films that depict the life and work of Jesus, dubbed into the Arabic language. We are happy to show these films to our young people to introduce them to the person who is the daily source of strength and hope for many of us, who is our friend and the person we can turn to 24 hours a day. The one who lovingly accepts every person and wants to lead them to a fulfilled life.



We watch a movie about the life of Jesus Christ.

"Scrub and Swim": The small Lifegate pool on our property has been thoroughly cleaned for use in the remaining weeks before summer vacation. In about 1m of water young people can cool down, but also learn the basics in swimming lessons.



Pool – cleaning action



Carousel ride delights even the elderly.

June has arrived and we look back with gratitude on all the activities in May.

We were happy about dear visitors and guests in Lifegate Garden and the people who stopped by our center. They all leave a good „mark" and many come again.

We thank Lois and Marie for their great volunteer work in the Lifegate Bakery and all others who supported us practically. Thank you to all donors and for all your prayers and care.

With good wishes for a blessed June we greet warmly

Yours/Your Burghard Schunkert and the Lifegate Team