

Lifegate in summer July/August 2023

The summer vacation in the kindergarten, school and the training workshop started at the beginning of July. Lifegate service departments were open during the summer months.

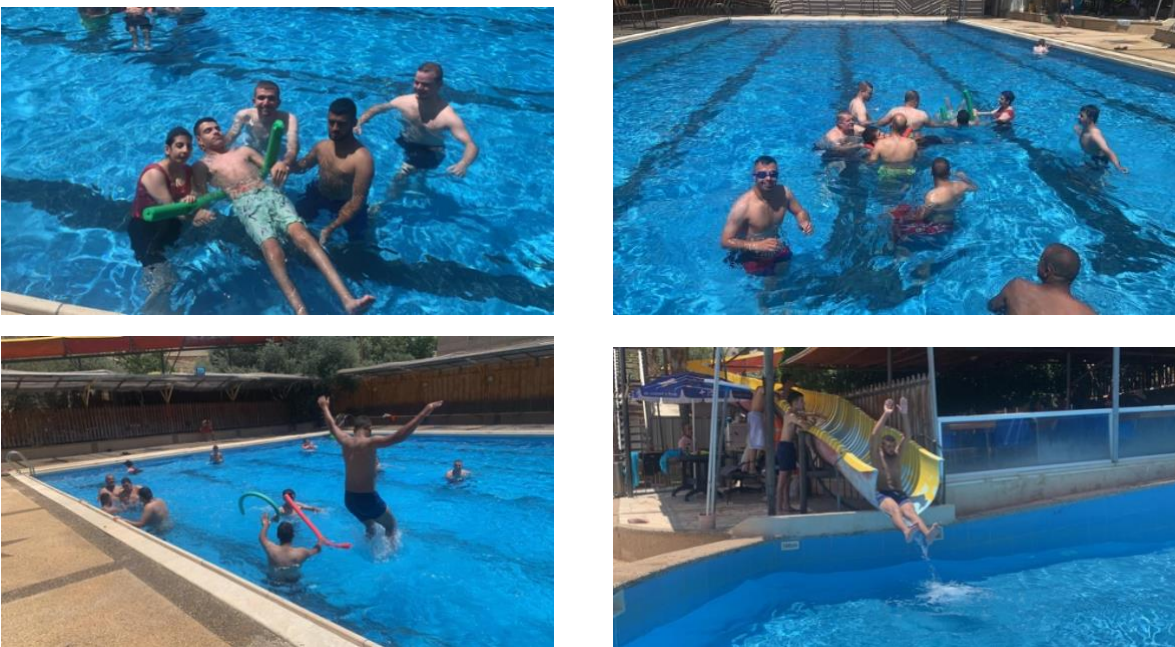
In kindergarten, the group of 6 year old children celebrated their farewell in July and started in our special school in August.



The last special school class also ceremoniously bid farewell to school life (dressed up, as is customary in our country) and the young people now began their training in the Lifegate workshops. A colorful program created by educators, therapists and children delighted the invited parents and all participants. The families are grateful that the support work started at the Lifegate Center will be continued and in the assurance that their children and young people are in good hands.



The young adults together with the training staff ended the first half year with a trip to a local swimming pool. It was an exuberant occasion and they really enjoyed a day in the water.



Our wheelchair basketball team received a permit to meet our Israeli basketball friends (a permit from the Israeli authorities is required for Palestinians to go to Israel) and headed to Tel Aviv. The obligatory visit to the Mediterranean beach was also included and our team spent a happy, varied and fulfilling day "abroad"?



Wheelchair basketball with Israeli friends in Tel Aviv

Building stories:

At Lifegate, we are very pleased that our applications for permission to expand our usable space fell on open ears and hearts, and we now plan to commit to three areas this fall. Requests from families for more support places and the capacity limits of some areas made these steps necessary. So, as part of a project, we are building underground storage rooms in the backyard of the Lifegate building to help us optimize our materials and supplies storage. On the roof of these rooms, which are also planned as shelters (against chemical and biological weapons), a wheelchair basketball court and a place for other sports activities will be built.

On the newly acquired neighboring property, work is also beginning on a fence, design of the entrance area to the main road, the construction of playground equipment and landscaping. We will be implementing many of the suggestions from a German designer who is a friend of ours and, step by step and with the help of volunteers, we will be creating a park for the training of the sensory faculties of our children.

Last but not least, the Lifegate building is to be extended by a further floor. The floor will provide space for our special school, the growing work with severely handicapped children, a department for autistic people and their parents and the greatly increased work with aids and in the orthopedic specialist area. We are also planning a devotional room and small "retreat oasis" for personal conversations. At the same time, some rooms will be used for the women's gymnastics groups in the afternoon hours. That will also help us to generate income for the new floor. The gymnastics work has been established at Lifegate since June, takes place in the late afternoon and is well attended.

Farewell:

Our German volunteers Sarah and Merle finished their work at Lifegate in July and returned to Germany. They were a valuable support in working with severely handicapped children, in guiding groups of visitors and in organizing and running the product sales in the Lifegate souvenir store. Many children were taken to hydrotherapy and came back freshly showered to kindergarten and school. Our heartfelt thanks for a dedicated year and God's blessings for the future!

But we also had to **say farewell to** dear people who left us forever from this life on earth.

We mourn the loss of Asma, a strong and resolute woman who always impressed all of us with her courage, kindness and determination to make the best of her situation and life, until her last days on this earth.

The fall from the flat roof of her parents' house while hanging laundry injured the young girl so severely that she suffered paraplegia. On top of that the plaster cast on her back was removed much too late and Asma subsequently had to have one leg and part of her hip amputated and her back was a deep and completely open wound when she came to Lifegate. She lived with us in one of our women's residential groups at that time.

With the help of many German staff and their ideas of natural ointments (honey, milking fat, etc.) the back healed over a long period of time. Asma was placed in the prone position on a rollaway bed during this time and with her strange contraption she was the local talk in Beit Jala while shopping. She learned to work in the prone position on an electric knitting machine and also Palestinian cross stitch embroidery.

With her back healing, she began sitting training in a wheelchair and soon was able to sit for several hours. Asma then lived with her mother in her parents' home in Beit Jala, acquired an electric tricycle and used it to get to work at Lifegate every day. She had become completely independent during her years at Lifegate. In addition to losing a leg, Asma lost a kidney and hearing in one ear over the years. For two years, she had to go on dialysis twice a week. "Burghard, with me only one organ works everywhere" she often told me with a smile. When I visited her in the hospital with our social worker before the summer vacations and understood her situation, I knew that this time it was very serious. Asma's heart could no longer work properly, her lungs were running full of water and she needed constant punctures. I suspected that I might not see Asma again. "Mr. Burghard inside me is a swimming pool" she said with her irresistible smile and then talked about all the things she wanted to do when she got out of the hospital again.

We prayed with her, commended her to our Lord and blessed her. I want to believe that with God, Asma has now been given a complete new body with no more pain and is just "heavenly complete." Her place in the embroidery department is empty, Suher from our office and Im Rani her teacher visited her just before she died (I was not in the country). She was not alone in those last hours and she knew at the end that she was leaving the earth, so I was told by our female staff. Asma was a joyful example for many of our young people with disabilities and the Lifegate team. She seldom complained and she never gave up, leaving her deep mark on all of our lives! We miss her! We know that she is in God's good hand.



Asma officially opens the new Lifegate center in 2012





In Rani, Asma's department head, and Suher from the Lifegate office visited Asma shortly before her death

Asma remains with us in our thoughts and hearts



Two other friends of our work died unexpectedly, the construction engineer Murad, with whom we planned and built the Lifegate center in the first years and the employee Jeries, who accompanied our psychomotor work for many years at Lifegate. Our social worker Marianna had to bury her long ill mother.

Our life has a beginning and a time limit on this earth. We want to use the time we have been given to do good, to support people, to stand by them and to share and pass on what we have been given in deed and word.

We are all on the way to the eternal home. Because we are comforted, we may comfort, because we have a hope beyond this life, death never has the last word. Our Lord is alive and risen.

Work is now well underway again at the end of August, we will introduce new children and also team members in the next reports. We are looking forward to a good late summer and fall!

Please stay with us with your support and with your prayers. We thank you very much for this!

Yours, Burghard Schunkert and the Lifegate team