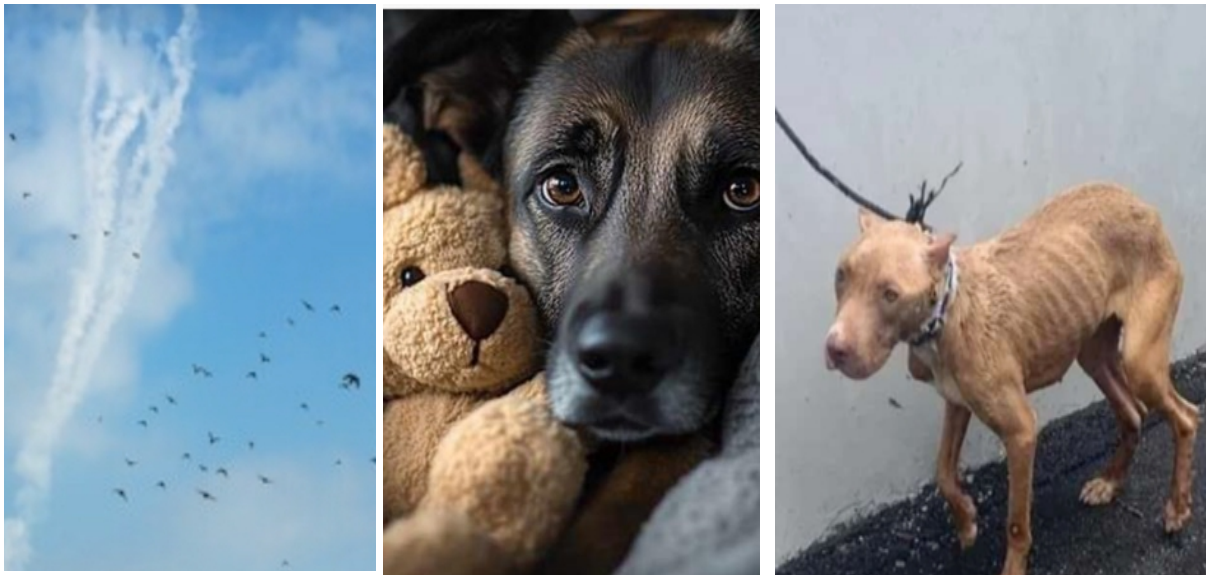


Lifegate in September 2024

Autumn moods

With the coming of Autumn the first rains have fallen in our country and washed away the dust on roofs and streets. The temperatures have now become pleasantly bearable and many crows, loudly cawing, are now returning to find their roosting trees in the cities. Over the next few days, 250 million migratory birds (half of the birds that twice yearly fly over Israel) will pass through the Syrian-African Rift Valley and fly over our country on their way from Europe towards Africa to their wintering grounds. But it is not clear whether they can still safely find their resting places, for example in the Hulet Valley in northern Israel, and not be hit by the many missiles in the air.

There are many dogs in the towns, villages and kibbutzim in northern Israel, who are either hiding from the rocket hits, could no longer be found by their owners or were left behind. They wander through the abandoned towns and villages in search of food and are collected here and there by animal rights activists who venture into these areas. In Gaza, too, wild street dogs gather in packs and roam through ghostly landscapes of ruins. The many forest and wildfires caused by the war have destroyed a large part of the vegetation of northern Israel with its forests, meadows and rivers and with it the wildlife. Not only we humans suffer and groan under the terrible effects of this war, the animals and the whole of creation also suffer, Romans 8:19-26.



Migratory birds in the firing line - animals also experience fear - forgotten in the north and rescued



People help the many homeless dogs



Getting to know and interacting with animals is part of Lifegate's support program

Situation

The war is now a year old and has expanded. Drones and missiles from Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Syria and, almost hourly, from Lebanon reach all places in Israel. Israel's Air Force bombs not just Hezbollah positions in Lebanon but also the seaports in Yemen, where the Iranian weapons supply arrives, Iranian militias in Syria and Iraq and probably soon Iran. Iran has already attacked Israel for the second time with 180 Intercontinental missiles and is working on a nuclear program.

For a year now, the Lebanese Hezbollah (the extended arm of Iran) has been firing on northern Israel, most of which has been evacuated. No Israelis want to return to their villages and towns unless the danger of a Hezbollah raid along the lines of the raid in the south on October 7, 2023 on Israel's northern border is averted. We hope and pray that a path of negotiation can still be found that will prevent the war engulfing the whole of the Middle East!

Fall is planting time

After the long, dry summer, we were delighted to see the first raindrops, signaling the change of season. The time of year when, in peaceful times, apples, pears and stone fruit are harvested in the north, when grapes, avocados and now soon olives are picked. The few remaining farmers in northern Israel and the Druze villages often venture into their fields and plantations at the risk of their lives in order to harvest at least part of the crop. It is the rockets from Lebanon in the north and the fear of radical Jewish settlers in the Palestinian territories that are causing people to forgo a large part of this year's harvest. For a year now, we have noticed the constant increase in the price of fruit and vegetables every time we buy something for the family (e.g. kilos of tomatoes cost up to 8 euros).

Even though Martin Luther may never have said: "If the world ends tomorrow, I'll plant an apple tree today", we at Lifegate plant the aforementioned tree, along with vegetables and spices in our early learning center, even in these "end of the world" times. We do so in order that our children learn with us that God has wonderfully created plants, animals and us humans and that there can be growth and fruit. Our team began with the children in the early learning groups doing handicrafts, painting flower pots, learning the names of fruit and preparing meals with fruit and vegetables. Afterwards they all went out to plant herbs and trees. Now we want to water and care for the seeds and plants and observe how the fruits slowly ripen.



Learning what nature gives us



We are already looking forward to the strawberries!



Leen is making great progress

The 13-year-old girl with Down syndrome has been in our support program since 2014. Leen was often withdrawn, easily irritated and refused to take part in activities. The patient, constant attention and encouragement from our team and other children changed the girl, who now communicates in a friendly manner with other children in her support group, actively participates and has made friends. While Leen often had problems remembering what she had learned in the past, she is now able to read and write part of the Arabic alphabet and to use and apply numbers. She enjoys helping the teachers and therapists to organize the morning greeting session in the support group. We can see how she is becoming more and more independent and making her own decisions. We are pleased that the work and our life with Leen has left its mark and that Leen has embarked on the path to an independent life.



Leen, a young lady grows up

Sometimes you get something in return

When we started to build the Lifegate Center in 2006, we were keen to involve small Christian tradesmen from our town of Beit Jala and kept asking them to submit bids for work that had been put out to tender. This is how we came across a friendly, experienced electrician, Saleh Kharufe, who, after the tender, was awarded the contract to wire the Lifegate building. At that time, we had no idea that a small "2-man operation" would one day supply the entire building (4500 square meters) with the necessary electricity.

Over a period of 6 years they installed all the switch boxes, lamps, light switches and sockets, laid all the cables and connected the house to a power generator from the electricity company that we needed ourselves. All the work was carried out with certification and sustainability and was subsequently approved by an electrical engineer. Even after completion of the construction phase, Salah was always available for repair work on the power supply system of our center and also helped us to optimize the power supply in the Lifegate Garden guest house.

Saleh is now in his late 70s and had to live for three years with severe pain in his ankles, which in the end meant that he could not walk more than 10 meters and had to abandon his car. Many doctors prescribed him different painkillers and made various diagnoses, but no treatment was successful. The breakthrough came when a doctor diagnosed pressure on the nerves in his ankle and recommended physiotherapy. Saleh asked the Lifegate Therapy department for help and an experienced therapist began working with him. Initially, the treatments were very painful. After the fifth therapy session came the happy turnaround. The swelling in the joint subsided, the numbness in his toes was reduced by 80%, Saleh can walk again, drive a car and, above all, sleep without pain.

The therapy branch for older people that takes place in the afternoon hours at Lifegate has been well received and Saleh is now advertising for us. We are pleased that we were able to help a loyal friend and responsible craftsman and even in his advanced age he carries out many repairs in our building and is always available for help and advice. Thank you!



Saleh Kharufeh wires the control cabinet in the new protection and storage room and receives therapy

Love goes through the stomach

The Lifegate bakery is well utilized due to the growing local customer base and the foreign friends who have remained in the country and order regularly. We also continue to bake 50-100 loaves of bread a day for people in need, who receive this food free of charge. We are delighted that we can now expand this learning and production branch at Lifegate with a confectionery branch. Anwar is a pastry chef who produces culinary delicacies with a lot of love and experience, which we offer in our café and which are now very popular.



Anwar conjures up culinary delights

Parent work in September

Mothers and fathers were invited to join us for various activities. 40 women had an interesting and cheerful morning with the very popular "Bingo" numbers game, where you could win small prizes. Experiences were exchanged and friendships forged over a delicious lunch lovingly prepared by the Lifegate kitchen. We care for the well-being of these often very busy ladies and want to make sure that, through such activities, they receive the space and attention necessary to have some time and leisure for themselves.



Playing together (winning), talking and eating together, the mothers can take a deep breath

The fathers learned about Lifegate's work at their meeting point. Our therapists presented their areas of support and talked to the fathers about their children in our daily programs. One father spoke very appreciatively about the positive changes he had noticed in his child and encouraged the other fathers to do their bit at home too.



Our aim: to encourage fathers to work at home and support their wives

Storage and underground shelter

Based on the experience of the difficult situation of the people during the Iraq war (1991), we built a shelter in the Lifegate Center (construction began in 2006), which is now being expanded to include another underground shelter that will also serve as a storage room. This will provide all 200 to 350 people who are in the center every day with protection from rocket attacks. We are pleased that the work is progressing well and that it will soon be completed. We practiced in the various departments to make sure they reach these rooms in the shortest possible time and hope and pray that there will be no "emergency".

The floor slabs were laid in the underground shelter in September.



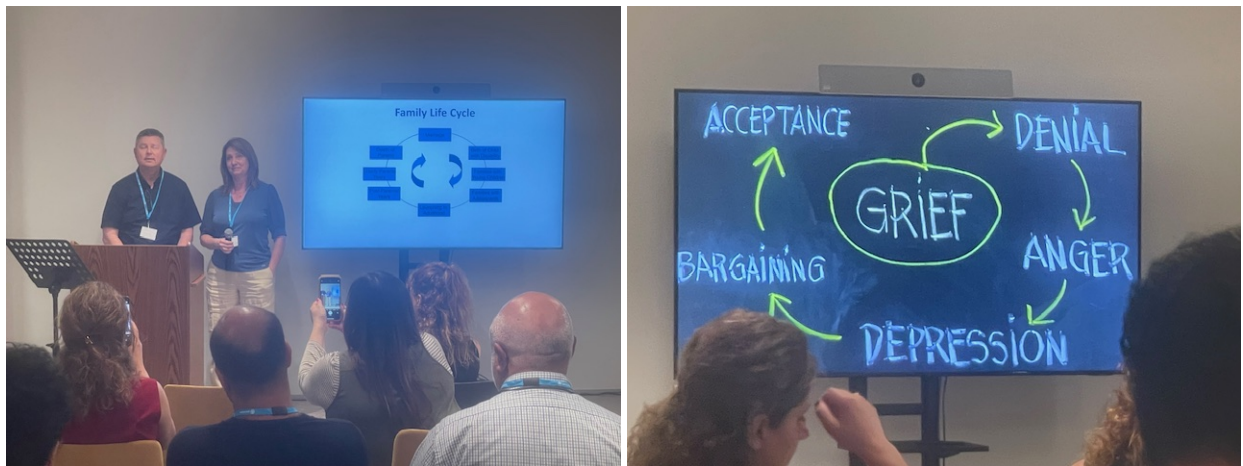
Fun and games at wheelchair basketball training

Our wheelchair basketball team has grown. Eyal and Adham are now taking part in weekly training sessions in the sports hall of the Talithakumi School in Beit Jala and are learning how to pick up (catch) the ball with Peter and Amir. Both young men have been wheelchair users for many years and are now having their first encounter with this sport. The whole Lifegate team is delighted with the new sports wheelchairs and has lots of fun training and playing together.



Collaboration with Joni and Friends

Strengthened and encouraged by our experiences at a family retreat in Armenia (families with children with disabilities), we are planning a family weekend for Christian families with a child with a disability in November at the Lifegate Garden Guest House together with staff from a Bethlehem church congregation. Since the trip to Armenia, I have also been in weekly Zoom contact with the Armenian colleague who leads a ministry with disabled children in Yerivan with his wife and am preparing a regional meeting for staff from Egypt, Armenia, Israel and the Palestinian territories in June 2025 with a pastor in Jordan. Every Thursday evening I am in a Zoom meeting with Rachelle Melia, the lady responsible for our region at Joni and Friends in Los Angeles, to share and plan various activities. We are grateful for the support of Joni and Friends in our practical work and in prayer.



Family camp for families with children and adults with disabilities in Armenia Social get-together, lectures and work sessions

***We can plant seeds every day. Even the seed of peace. Provide care, nourishment and development.
God gives the gift of growth and prosperity. Please help us!***



Greetings Burghard Schunkert