

News from our team

Our speech therapist Yara Atwan received a scholarship for further education abroad and thus unfortunately left our facility. Also our bus driver Amjad Hananija and our cook Eyad Farhoud ended their work with the beginning of the summer vacations. From now on Issa Hazeen is our new driver and Natalin Maraqua now takes care of the culinary side and the training in the learning kitchen of LIFEGATE. Marian Musleh is settling in as our new special education teacher, and Enas Issa is currently learning in the whole wheat bakery with Carsten Baumert, our German volunteer baker. As many as five new occupational therapists are working in the school's special needs teams and in the workshop area. The increased number of special needs children made this increase in staff necessary. In summer we said goodbye to our German volunteers Merle Kellner and Sarah Banzhaf, who supported us actively for one year. We are happy about the start of Johannes Flender and Malte Schmidtkunz, who joined us as volunteers of the German Association of the Holy Land for one year. During the last four weeks of summer, Sumaya Metz, a psychology student, supported our work in the nursery school, special school and in the training workshops. Her sister Naomi Metz, who is studying at the YMCA University of Applied Sciences, Kassel, started her three-month internship in the social work and early intervention department of LIFEGATE at the beginning of September. We wish all those leaving and those coming God's richest blessings.

Reflections

by Burghard Schunkert

Jesus says, " Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Matthew 11, verse 29

God trusts every human being with something, HE is never finished with us! Because HE loves us, He created us in His image. Because HE wants to communicate with us as a counterpart, He gave us his word. Because HE knows about our darkest depths and our helplessness, HE sent HIS Son into this world. Jesus overcomes the separation from HIM and its desperate consequences.

He gives us a new life with Jesus. This is sometimes a one-time act of realization and then often a process, a letting go of old behaviors, sometimes a liberation from addictions and our own egoism, a falling down and always being able to get up again and a growing into new ways of relating to each other and new forms of behavior: Learning to love, trust and hope. To be reshaped into the pattern of the life and living that

Jesus represented in the world and that continues to be given to us by our Father in heaven. Paul once said: "Take off the garment of the old man and put on the new man". So we are asked to help, an offer not an imperative! But the "new clothes" are ready. Jesus wants to, and can, put it into us people, give us a new heart and a renewed mind. He can also provide us with people who will accompany us in this process. But it begins with each of us alone, with our individual decision, and that is only a prayer away. "Jesus come into my life and change me as you intended for me." And then? Deep peace, joy, community and the knowledge of never being alone again! The fruits will quickly become visible!

Yours Burghard Schunkert

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As representation and because of financing of the institution "LIFEGATE REHABILITATION", the association "Tor zum Leben - LIFEGATE Rehabilitation" was founded in the year 1993 in Germany with its board in Würzburg.
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"Tor zum Leben - LIFEGATE Rehabilitation" is a member of the Diakonische Werk of the Protestant churches of Germany and Caritas-Verband for the catholic diocese Würzburg. The dedication of LIFEGATE is based on and supported by personal and long-standing relationships with the Young Men's Christian Association, YMCA, national association in Germany, CVJM.



Emad, from the group of severely disabled children, receives an individually adapted wheelchair at LIFEGATE

Photo: LIFEGATE

Dear friends!

The New Year celebrations in mid-September mark the beginning of the Jewish year 5784. But for many people in Israel and in the Palestinian territories the beginning of a new year is not just an occasion for celebration as they look anxiously to the future. The current Israeli government is pursuing its policy with radical determination, especially favoring the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Jewish Orthodox institutions, whose funding has been multiplied, and who also receive privileges. This is done at the expense of the rest of Israel's population, as well as by harassing the Palestinian population, both of whom are already struggling to cope with constant price increases. In addition, the government has begun to reorganize the judicial system to weaken the independence of the courts. On the one hand, this is intended to limit the Supreme Court's ability to take action against government decisions that would restrict civil liberties or human rights. On the other hand, it aims to allow the government to influence court cases against politicians from its parties. Week after week, hundreds of thousands of Israelis protest against these changes to the judicial system. The deterioration of the economic situation and the policies of the Israeli government are increasing frustration and anger among the Palestinian population. More terrorist attacks are taking place. The controversial Minister of Israel's National Security, I. Ben-Gvir, had promised to successfully fight terror and crime. Unfortunately, since the

beginning of 2023, more than 180 Palestinians and nearly three dozen Israelis have been killed by military operations or terrorist attacks. In addition, there are violent provocations by members of the Hezbollah militia and Palestinian militiamen on the borders with Lebanon and Gaza that could easily take a turn for the worse. In this climate of violence, tribal feuds and fighting by criminal gangs within Israel's Arab population escalated, killing more than 160 Israeli citizens this year.

In the Palestinian territories, another attempt is being made to establish a pension system modeled on that of other countries. Employees and employers are to pay monthly into a pension fund, from which an old-age pension is to be paid out. The Palestinian Authority's (PA) attempt two years ago was rejected by the population, which had no confidence that these funds would really benefit people in their old age. Now we learn that a new PA regulation will be implemented in a few months. We hope for all the people and especially for our team that these funds will really be managed responsibly and used for the promised purpose.

The togetherness of the people at LIFEGATE seems like an oasis of peace to many. However, outside of LIFEGATE we all experience the depressing situation in the country. In the inside section we report briefly on how we are trying to contribute to peace.

New steps at LIFEGATE after the summer holidays

Photos: LIFEGATE

It is a joy to see that the children, adolescents and the LIFEGATE team have all returned safe and sound from the summer vacations and the support work in all areas can now resume. In July, before the beginning of the vacations, we celebrated the farewell of a kindergarten group whose children moved to the first grade of the special school. The oldest group of our special school children was also given a proper farewell with parents and teachers. The young people started their vocational training in the LIFEGATE workshops in the second half of August.

We are also encouraged to see growth in the work with severely disabled children: Two new children, one of them is Emad (see cover picture) were admitted and more are to follow. The kindergarten and special school also took in 25 new children for support. Carsten Baumert is another professional baker who passes on his expertise to local young people at LIFEGATE. It has been a delight to see his enthusiasm and dedication. The LIFEGATE bakery has now been able to establish a small but growing clientele with local cafes and stores. After his three-month voluntary service, Carsten will leave us in the second half of September. Enthusiastic German bakers, men or women, are also very welcome to join us in the future!

We are very pleased that our application for permission to expand our utilizable space fell on open ears and hearts and this fall we want to get started in three areas. Requests from many families of children with disabilities for more support places and the capacity limits of some areas made these steps necessary. So we are building underground storage rooms in the backyard of the LIFEGATE building to help us optimize the storage of our materials and supplies.



Farewell party for children of a kindergarten group who are now the school starters of our special school.

The rooms can be used as shelters and a sports court for the wheelchair basketball team will be built on their roofs. On the newly acquired neighboring property work begins on an enclosure, the design of the entrance area and the construction of playground equipment. We will be implementing many of the suggestions from a German designer who is a friend of ours and we will be creating, step by step and with the help of volunteers, a park for training of the sensory faculties of our children.

In addition, the LIFEGATE building is to be extended by a further floor. The increased space will help to meet the needs of our special school and the growing work with severely disabled children. There will also be a department for autistic people and their parents and we will also be able to provide space for the greatly increased work of the aids team and the orthopedics department. We are also planning a devotional room and a small "retreat oasis" for personal conversations.

Joni and Friends & LIFEGATE Rehabilitation

As a young man I read Joni Eareckson's initially tragic life story in her autobiography. The young U.S. American had jumped headfirst into a swimming lake, literally breaking her neck. She was rescued and has only been able to move her lips since the accident. After a long rehab period with all the psychological ups and downs, Joni entrusted her life to Jesus and from then on many wonderful things happened in her life. Many years ago she founded the organization Joni and Friends, based in Los Angeles, which today sends wheelchairs to almost every country in the world - and also the teams to customize these aids for people with disabilities.

We have been cooperating with this organization for some time through our former US volunteer Richard Stephan. LIFEGATE teams participated in Joni and Friends actions in Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and most recently in our own country in the spring of 2023 to adapt wheelchairs to people and help them become mobile. Now we have been officially asked to be the representative for Joni and Friends in the Middle East and North Africa region, and we are eager to take on the task. We are currently building an expanded resource team at LIFEGATE and plan to do another outreach in Jordan in the next few weeks. Joni Eareckson opened my heart for people with disabilities when I was younger through her admirable life story. I was able to tell her that in person during a visit to Los Angeles with my son Mika a few years ago and express my deep thanks. Since then, we have also become good personal friends.

Obituary of Asma Izboun

We mourn the loss of Asma, a kind and strong woman who made an impression on all of our lives with her courage, kindness and determination to make the best of her situation and life - right up to Asma's last days on this earth.

The fall from the flat roof of her parents' house while hanging laundry injured the teenager so severely that she suffered paraplegia. On top of this the plaster cast on Asma's back was removed far too late, causing inflammation to form and subsequently requiring her to have a leg and part of her hip amputated. When Asma came to LIFEGATE in her early twenties, her back was an open, deep wound. We were able to help her through a lengthy process; many volunteers and other LIFEGATE staff helped improve Asma's quality of life.

However, Asma's kidneys failed two years ago and from then on she had to go on dialysis twice a week. She lost her hearing, but was able to continue communicating by reading her lips. In recent times, Asma's heart became too weak to regulate the circulation of blood and water in her body. Recurrently, she was punctured until she had no strength left.



The fifty-five-year-old had never lamented her fate until the very end, still smiling and hoping for the best while in pain and short of breath. When we visited her in the hospital in July, I felt that it might be our last chance to say goodbye. We were able to pray with her and bless her. Asma had been able to accept the transition into eternity at the end. Just before her death, two of our staff members were able to visit her briefly. We wish Asma a bright and painless future with our Lord over life and death. She left a deep mark in all of our lives, and for that we are forever grateful.

Your help counts ...!

<p>Thanks to your help we were able to ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...finance the work with severely and multiply disabled children (€20,000.- monthly); ...support the therapeutic and medical work of LIFEGATE (€20,000.- monthly); ...finance the LIFEGATE parenting programs and excursions of our children (€4,000.-); ...start the work on the neighboring property (€5,000.-). 	<p>With your help, we'd like to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...finance the early intervention centre with forty children with disabilities (€15,000.- monthly); ...maintain and service the LIFEGATE transport vehicles for children and young people (€3,000.- monthly); ...provide medical treatment, orthopedic care and assistive devices for children and young people (€5,000.- monthly); ...finance the repayment of the loan for the neighboring property (€34,650.- for the installment this fall).
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These concerns make up a certain part of our monthly costs, which are in total about 80,000.- €. They are the most urgent of our concerns and we'd be especially grateful for your support.

Thank you very much for your support!

Building bridges in a tense situation

Despite the less than hopeful situation in the country, we, like many other Palestinian and Israeli people, are not disheartened. We want to continue building "bridges" between the two groups. So we are planning our annual meeting camp for Israeli and Palestinian young people with disabilities in October; we play wheelchair basketball with our Israeli friends and we take advantage of the good medical care in Israel for our children and young people. But it is with a sad and heavy heart that we have to describe the distressing situation in the country realistically - so that you can know what to pray for specifically. We pray that understanding and hope will spread, that violence will be contained and that people will learn to live together in peace. Perhaps this is the task of Christians all over the world?