



Spring 2014—Welcoming balloons and warm greetings are a standard part of the medical care provided to seven month old Fida and other West Bank children. Fida and her siblings receive regular checkups and immunizations, as well as any necessary medical treatment at the Bethany clinic, near where they live.

Since 2000, severe travel restrictions and the building of the Separation Wall have prevented West Bank families from reaching the Spafford Children's Center in East Jerusalem. In keeping with the Center's historical tradition of providing access to medical and social services to the neediest families, a new clinic was established in Izzariyeh (biblical Bethany, home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha). Sadly, Fida's story is not unique. Her mother works as a house cleaner and her father's physical disabilities prevent him from finding steady work. The family lives in cramped, poorly vented quarters and struggles with limited financial resources. Maintaining good health for the family is a constant challenge. However, because of the affordable and often free medical care provided by the Spafford Children's Center Bethany Clinic, young Fida and her siblings are able to live healthy lives, despite their bleak surroundings.



The Spafford Children's Center Involves the Family in Treatment

Two years ago, Anton, age 4, spoke only a few words but seemed to understand all that went on around him. He would not play with other children and generally avoided any type of contact with others. Aton's mother was understandably alarmed by his slow development.



At the suggestion of a friend whose child had benefitted from speech therapy at the Spafford Children's Center, Aton's mother brought him to the Center where he received a comprehensive assessment. Although it was evident that there was much going on in Aton's young mind, he was unable to express himself verbally. Our staff diagnosed him with delayed language and emotional development.

The treatment plan included speech and play therapy sessions which focused on strengthening vocabulary, language, emotional, and cognitive abilities. To stimulate physical activity, Aton's mother was encouraged to take him to swimming lessons and enroll him in the Spafford Children's Center's summer camp. Aton's improvement was evident. He participated in the educational and fun activities at the camp, joining in play with the other children, youth leaders, and camp staff.

At the advice of the Spafford Children's Center staff, Aton's mother enrolled him in more play therapy and an Arabic language class. Today, Aton treats the Spafford Children's Center as his second home running through the corridors and outside spaces, usually with a sticker on his shirt as a reward for work well done in his classes. The staff gives much of the credit for his progress to his mother who worked diligently with them to give Aton the support he needed.



A Multidisciplinary Approach

When Malak, who lives with her younger brother, parents, and grandparents in the Old City of Jerusalem, entered first grade, it was quickly apparent that she had multiple problems. She seemed unable to learn to read or write, and was fearful and introverted in class.

After being referred to the Spafford Children's Center, Malak was evaluated and found to have limited language skills, poor mathematical abilities, and a borderline IQ. In the assessment, she was very slow to answer questions and easily frightened. Malak's mother told the staff that when Malak was three, her father fell off a four story building, breaking his back and paralyzing his legs. His long hospital stay and permanent disability has had a profound impact on Malak.



At the Spafford Children's Center, Malak has now taken several play therapy courses, three Arabic courses, and one mathematics class. Initially she had a hard time in the classroom setting. She cried frequently and was slow to understand the course material. With persistent encouragement and support from the teaching staff, she has gradually improved both academically and emotionally. Malak's mother had to overcome objections from her husband and the grandparents to Malak's treatment. She took courses in counseling, child development and education, offered by the Spafford

Children's Center, which gave her tools to support Malak's treatment at home. Eventually, the other family members, seeing Malak's obvious progress, began to encourage her participation in supportive activities.

If you would like more information about AFSCCF or the Spafford Children's Center, check out our Facebook page or write to us at SpaffordUSA@gmail.com. You can use PayPal to make a tax-deductible donation at: www.spaffordcenter.org or send a check to:

American Friends of the Spafford Children's Center Fund

c/o The Very Rev. David duPlantier
2037 South Carrollton Avenue
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With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David duPlantier".

The Very Rev. David duPlantier, Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy Whiting Blome".

Wendy Whiting Blome, PhD, Secretary/Treasurer