

May 2022: English, Yoga, Crochet, Arabic, Math, IT, anyone?

Hi Everyone! After a long time a real trip with quality time spent with the shakers and movers of Collateral Repair Project (CRP, www.collateralrepairproject.org) a refuge for refugees in Amman, Jordan where CRP aims at creating community. So here is what I found...

In Jordan, in the center of Amman, there is a wonderful area in an old – one of the oldest – traditional buildings. It is one of CRP's centers. The people are of all ages, of all colors, of all sorts of nationalities: babies (with their parents) girls and boys, men and women. Those taking refuge here have travelled a long, long road from the Sudan, from Somalia, from Syria, from Iraq, from Egypt fleeing war and starvation. Scarred by all the pain and suffering that they have endured and seen; they are now trying to live again and if they are lucky, they find their way to CRP.



Reyam, Lobria, Bashaer, and Asha working hard to create healthy community.

“CRP was started in 2006 by two American women who saw a need for **direct connection between citizens of coalition countries and innocent Iraqis** who suffered from the consequences of war.” The project has blossomed out to many more peoples now...

Little by little many have found their way to this refuge. Here, Downtown Center, as well as in the other center, Hashemi Shamali, about 40 salaried staff and at least as many volunteers (who receive well-earned food vouchers for their work) try many different methods to support, foster well-being, train and prepare these refugees – many of whom will be re-settled in other countries.

Support: food vouchers, counselling

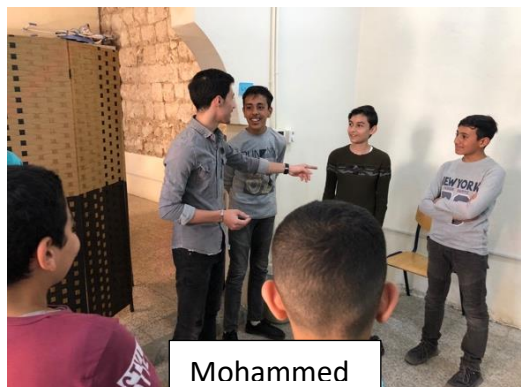
Foster well-being: Yoga, discussion, art, exercise, nutrition classes, against Gender Based Violence training, family therapy,

Train: Math, Arabic, IT, crochet, nutrition Prepare: English, computer, livelihood (barber shop, beauty etc.)



Zaid

Take English for example. Zaid is re-inventing English language learning all on his own. He decided to make it fun, multi-faceted and relevant. His approach is three-pronged. First there is basic learning classes. Then there is e-learning where students are paired with a foreign teacher online. Then there is Conversation Club where the students



Mohammed

chat with a volunteer or other. Another English teacher, young (and new) Mohammed had a colors competition when I was there. The students had to look at the colors on a projected slide (which was then turned off) and write whatever the teacher said on the board. Miriam, a German student-volunteer, tackled hobbies and positive and negative sentences with her bashful group of women.

The IT class has to be seen to be believed! The day I was there, at least 25 boys and girls crammed around the 6 computers and followed the instructions of tiny Layali the teacher with a resounding voice. Quite honestly, the atmosphere was electric!

In general, the atmosphere of the center was warm, busy, centred and very dynamic! Everyone is rushing around all the time. Noora seemed unable to sit down the entire day as she registered and guided new students, collected and placed old ones!!!



Basically, classes start at about 11.30 and run until 17.00 with adult classes in the morning and tutoring +++ in the afternoon. In Jordan, most refugees are not allowed to work officially. So CRP takes advantage of these amazingly talented people and they help the centers as volunteers, enriching and collaborating with the different activities as many of them are highly qualified and talented.

An important part of the project is the day-care. Children over 4 months are looked after while the parents study. The center was very active, with a loving and patient carer. I felt that some of the kids were new as they had that kind of dazzled look of a first time in a room equipped with toys and games, offering a multitude of opportunities to them.

Another day hanging out at CRP at the Downtown Center. The crochet class.



The women came, the teacher taught and they all smiled with glee as I looked at what each one was making. The sparkle in their eyes showed how proud they were

Lunch came (simple and wholesome, for staff and volunteers, cooked by volunteers in the Hashemi Center) and then I went off to the Hashemi Center. The beehive buildings with endless rooms and activities showed the successful result of years of working hard at getting refugees to confront their crises and realize that learning something new was a great advantage to their lives.

What a contrast to the Downtown Center! Actually, we are partially funding the Downtown Center – a donated space! – so that it can take off. Opened in 2018, it has groaned its way through COVID and now, fully open it is on the runway. However, to get into the air may take a while. But this is not for trying. And conversations with Fowzia and others were full of enthusiastic ideas for the future.

CRP future plans, are very ambitious. The leaders would like to see the Downtown center open 7 days a week (now it is five) and the setting up of evening classes (in about 2 weeks the morning classes will be moved to later in the day) which are in great demand. Social evenings highlighting each of the different communities including food and music are also a future possibility. A major aim is to Increase volunteers so that they can receive food vouchers that they have worked for. Livelihood programs are in great demand and include practical skills (house maintenance etc.) and creating useable things from recycled plastic, for example. The centers are often bursting with so many programs that juggling the spaces becomes quite difficult. However, it is hoped that areas for relaxation and hanging out – which foster community building – can be created.

CRP has given out regular food vouchers for many years. These days, an interesting development at CRP is the realization that, even though automatic food vouchers are really necessary for some people, they are mainly a door to relationship and coming to the center and so seeing the possibilities open to them, and that the majority of people are better off with not being able to become reliant on hand outs. Many organizations have found that it is much more efficacious in the long run to address the trauma these people have suffered, making them more adaptable to their future life. This is especially true for CRP as their main aim is community building and integration. So CRP is ever increasing the volunteer aids in order for them to receive a food voucher which they have earned, use their skills which leads to greater confidence and well-being.

It is possible to go on and on about the programs of CRP. So best is to check out their website and see for yourself. As CRP is in Jordan and everyone should visit this beautiful culturally rich country, be sure to make time to visit the centers when you come. On the website you can enjoy the stories of some of the refugees who have found refuge in the CRP centers.

