



Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation
مؤسسة الأراضي المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

PROGRESS REPORT FEBRUARY 2016

BIRZEIT SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER (BSCC)



"You shall rise up before the gray headed and honor the aged "

Leviticus 19:32

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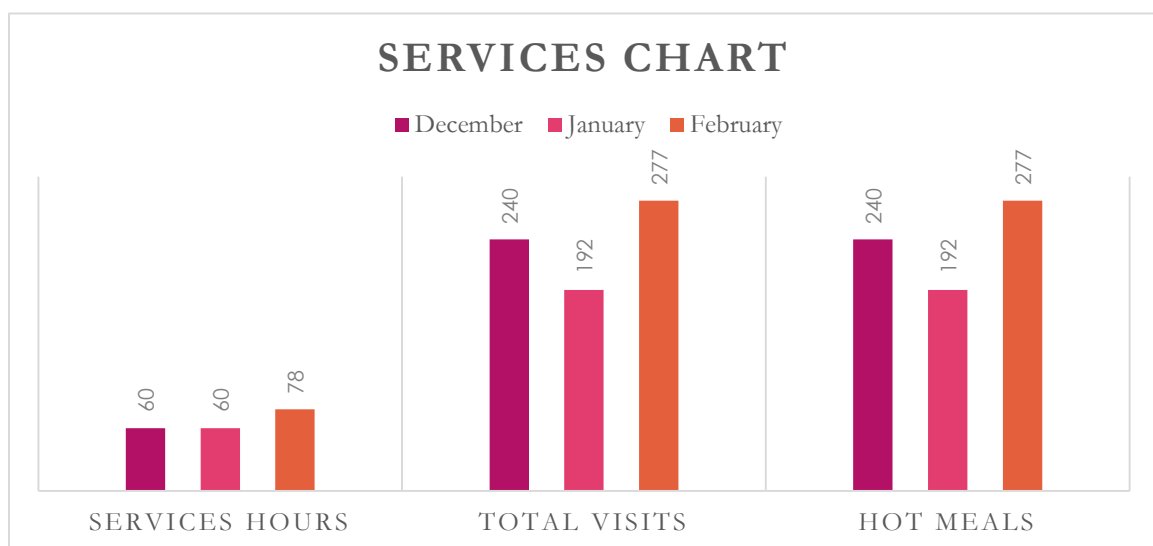
Monthly Overview

Birzeit Senior Citizen Center is open 3 days a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday), from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, offering services to the elderly (BSCC members) 13 days on February. The center organizes social, educational, and spiritual activities, offers health and transportation services, and provides entertainment to local senior citizens. These activities and services **fulfill** the HCEF vision and the mission of the center by providing a safe place for the elderly to come together in community, to know they are honored and not forgotten.

The following statistics offer a glimpse of some of the center's activities in February 2016 as compared to previous months:

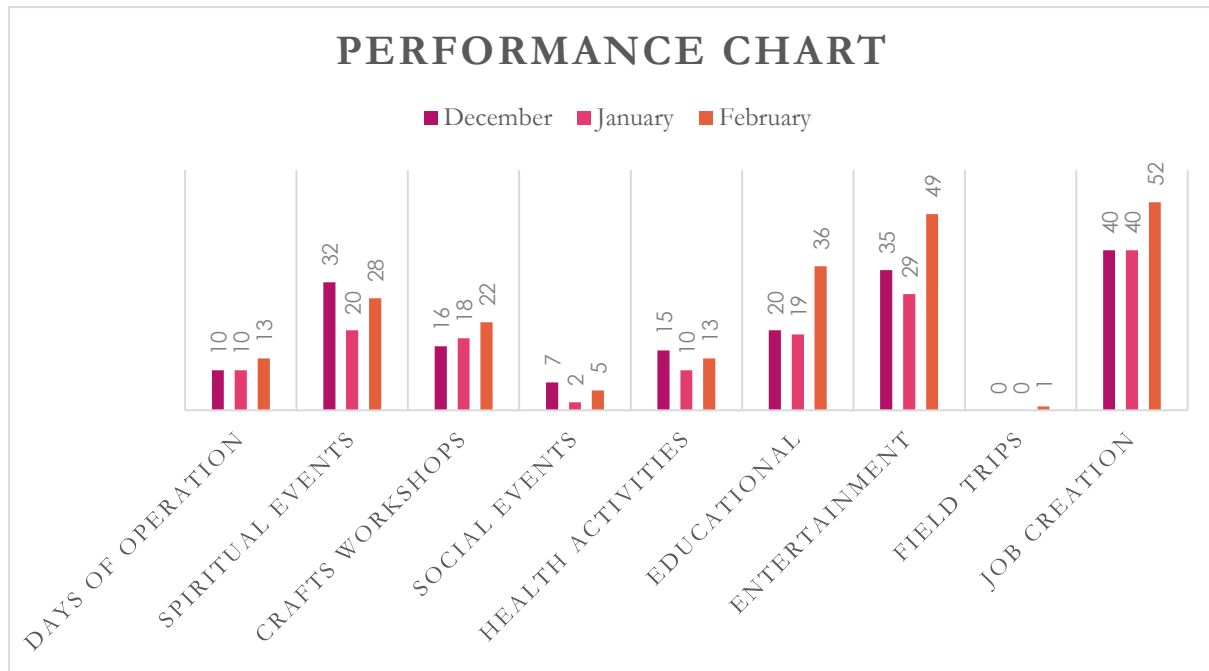
BSCC Statistics for February

Days of Operation	13	Social Events	5
Hours of Operation	78	Visits from Medical Professionals & Health Activities	13
Total BSCC Member Visits	277	Educational Activities	36
Hot Meals Served	277	Entertainment & Sports Activities	49
Spiritual Events and Activities	28	Field Trips	1
Craft Workshops (Cooking + Knitting)	22	Number of Employee Work Days Generated	52





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Services

1. Transportation Services

The Center provides free transportation services for BSCC members to and from the facility and to and from church on Sundays when coordinated. The Center also provides transportation for any urgent needs that arise. Due to the lack of good local public transportations, its high expenses, the lack of income for the elders, and their health & physical incapability. We –as BSCC- try to offer the service of transportation for the elders in order to facilitate fulfilling their basic needs, and help them come out of their closed environment (their homes) and participate actively in our center’s event’s and activity.





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2. Nutritious Meals

Most of the elders in Birzeit cannot afford the high expenses of food, in addition to their physical and health situation, it is difficult for them even to cook, and most of them live alone which makes it even more difficult. Therefore,

- ❖ With the support of the World Food Program (WFD), the Palestinian Ministry of social Affairs, and other local organizations, the BSCC provided hot meals for every day that the Center was open, totaling to **277 hot meals** for the month of **February**.
- ❖ **Snacks** such as tea, coffee, milk, biscuits and fruit were also provided to BSCC members each morning that the Center operated, totaling to more than **277** meals.

At BSCC we design a suitable food program monthly, in which we take into consideration their health status (diabetes, high blood pressure, etc....) and providing the elders with the main needed nutritious elements such as protein, carbohydrates, fibers, etc.... to maintain good health system and balanced diet habits.

3. Daily Activities

BSCC members took part in daily games such as bingo, card games, dominoes, and trivial competitions, all of which provide healthy mental stimulation. They also continued working on personal projects, such as knitting and embroidery, and took part in spiritual activities, such as praying and devotionals. We managed to add a new activity this month "Letters & Names". We introduced this particular multipurpose game to help the elders maintain good mental health and entertainment. It is based on choosing some letters for the elders, and they have to remember names that starts with this letter (name of a person, object, animal, etc.) and write them down.





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Programs & Activities

1. Spiritual Events

BSCC provided 3 main spiritual activities:

- ❖ **Daily bible study** in which elders read and discuss the bible, extracting lessons for their daily lives.
- ❖ **Daily Rosary** in which all the elders devote the day's rosary pray for a cause or a person like peace, starvation, diseases or for a friend or family or any person that needs prayer.
- ❖ **On Monday, February 8th, 2016** Fr. Louis Hazboun offered Holy Communion to BSCC members and led a group prayer session.

During his visits, Fr. Louis relates parish news and invites BSCC elders to participate in upcoming parish and community events.





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2. Community

As a part of BSCC's effort to encourage Birzeit's elderly to engage in their community, BSCC arranges monthly visits from local organizations, societies and local community members to meet with elders and discuss issues in the community. These exchanges enhance community relationships and give BSCC elders a sense of belonging and importance.

In addition to visits from the community, elders also pay visits to their homebound friends, to whom they minister. Community building among BSCC elders and beyond creates a sense of purpose that is mutually beneficial to the elders and to the larger Birzeit community.

A monthly activity that runs towards strengthen the community relationships is the Monthly Birthday, where we make a joint birthday party in the center for all the members who have birthday on the same month, and we bring their children, grandchildren, friends, and whoever would like to join the celebration. A very exciting activity creates and an exceptional motivation for the elders in their life. You should see happiness on their faces.





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3. Crafts

BSCC's craft program provides a safe and comfortable environment for Birzeit elderly to pursue and enhance their creative spirit. Through the craft program, members engage in activities such as knitting, preparing traditional Palestinian dishes, and painting. These artistic outlets allow them to express their thoughts and emotions, providing an important and therapeutic activity. Often, their projects depict important memories, reflect spiritual ideas, and help them cope with the passing of friends.

During February, BSCC participated in 3 traditional dishes cooking activities. Of that, Mrs. Nadia Shaheen commented: “ at the center, we enjoy our time and make use of it doing many things, among which we participate together in cooking activities. We enjoy preparing traditional food, the best thing that we excel. it is part of our identity and traditions and we have to preserve it and pass it through into the next generation”.



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4. Health

BSCC has been cooperating with various health institutions providing the elders periodical health check-ups and medical tests. Birzeit university nursing school and Ibn Sinai nursing schools are the main two institutions that offer health programs monthly for the elderly.

On daily basis we have a special program that offers our elderly educational health and medical essential information need for them to survive and help them maintain good health and balanced food system.



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February 2016 Main Events & Activities

HCEF President Brings Good News For The Future BSCC

HCEF President, Sir Rateb Rabie, KCHS, received a warm welcome by the staff and members of the Birzeit Senior Citizen Center during his visit Wednesday, February 3, 2016, to discuss the future of the Center's expanded role in the Birzeit community. Sir Rabie, who has family roots in the town of Birzeit, was pleased to see the members in good health and enjoying BSCC's diverse programming and activities and the great impact that the center has made in their lives. Sir Rabie and HCEF Regional Director, Eng. Anthony Habash, have envisioned the Center becoming a more integral part of the lives of more members of the community and seeks to expand its program.

Sir Rabie commented, "It's touching to see the difference that HCEF is making in the lives of these important individuals—the Living Stones. I wish that everyone could see the joy and peace that the Center brings, it certainly is a source of pride for HCEF."

Sir Rabie hopes to increase the reach of the Center by opening its doors to youth and women groups, as well as expanding o. "The Center is an ideal place for people of all ages and from all walks of life to come together as a community. I'm very excited about what the future holds for this center." Sir Rabie stated.

Eng. Habash expressed that he "...hopes this expansion will create opportunities for more educational activities, film screenings, and women empowerment workshop. I believe increasing activities for women groups will encourage them to get involved in the surrounding villages and beyond." Eng. Habash also stated his vision of seeing the Center open 7 days a week with a larger effort to have more volunteers join the mission.

Reflecting on Sir Rabie's visit, a member of BSCC, Mrs. Aranki commented, "It was a great blessing to welcome Sir Rabie and Eng. Habash. All the Elders were glad to see them once again among us. We were all excited for the opportunity to thank them for what HCEF has done for us. We so much love Sir Rabie as he is originally from Birzeit. We are so proud of him."

This year, BSCC will celebrate its 11th year of pioneering work, offering essential services to the elderly community in Birzeit and its surrounding villages. BSCC offers an invaluable service to our community and is a central program in advancing HCEF's mission of replacing despair with hope, fear with security and humiliation with dignity."



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BSCC Elders Participated In Holy Mass On World Day Of The Sick (WDS)

Members of Birzeit Senior Citizen Center attended Holy Mass at the Parish Church of the Holy Family in Ramallah to receive the Sacrament of the Sick from His Beatitude, patriarch Fouad Twal, and Bishop Zygmunt Zimowski, head of the Vatican delegation representing his holiness Pope Francis, in observation of World Day of the Sick (WDS) on Sunday, February 7, 2016. His Holiness, Pope Francis, chose the Holy Land to mark the 24th celebration of this event, which is held every three years in a different country around the world where elderly, sick and all those who are in need of forgiveness and blessing are given the Anointing of the Sick Sacrament in addition to the forgiveness prayer and the Holy Communion.

In his speech, HB Patriarch Twal emphasized the acts of mercy, especially for the sick and elderly, preserving their dignity, and offering them love, care and respect.

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore such a one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to



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one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” (James 5:13-16)

During the event, Bishop Zimowski granted HB Patriarch Twal the papal medal for his great pastoral work in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem saying, “In the Holy Land we live today under much hatred, sickness and sins due to radical thought in this day we pray for Jesus to heal their souls and inspire their minds. We also pray to god for those who lead the countries to have wisdom and faith to help their people live better.”

Mrs. Adlah Jacir commented, “We were so blessed by participating in such an event especially that we old people suffer weakness and sickness. We believe that by the power of the Holy Spirit we gain strength and the flame of immovability in the holy land, the land of our culture and ancestors”





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A Community Breakfast for BSCC Members

On Wednesday, February 10th, 2016, BSCC organized a **Christmas community breakfast for its Elders** with the help of BSCC Volunteering team.

The purpose of this breakfast is to sit on one table breaking the routine of regular lunch the BSCC offers daily and to discuss news of Birzeit and hear some of the exceptional life stories of the elders.

Birzeit Senior Citizens Play An Important Role As Advocates Of Palestinian Heritage

A church group from Buffalo, New York, led by Ken Petersen, visited BSCC during their pilgrimage to the Holy Land and were captured by the stories of the lives of each of the members.

Members of the Birzeit Senior Citizen Center have stories of their lives that hold a legacy of preserving the traditions and heritage of Palestinian Christians for hundreds of years along with the message and teachings of the first followers of Jesus Christ. Elders of Palestine prove to be strong advocates of the collective Palestinian identity as they know of times before the Israeli occupation; and that is why BSCC has become such a popular pilgrimage destination.

Jamileh Aranki, HCEF representative in Birzeit, addressed the group on behalf of Birzeit elders, welcoming them and introducing all the programs and activities that the center offers.

The pilgrimage group enjoyed spending time with the elders, participating in their daily activities, including playing bingo singing traditional songs and dancing Dabkeh, in which the church group was taught the steps of the traditional dance. They ended their visit with the members sharing a delicious special Palestinian dish of “Mloukhieh”.

Ken Peterson, the pilgrimage leader, commented on the visit: “we have always welcomed Palestinian groups in our church back home, who told us a lot about Palestine and Palestinians, how fascinating and great they are. But now, that we actually visited Palestine, we got the chance to see with our own eyes and feel for real what they were talking about! The most amazing thing that actually touched us is the kindness of the people. We, as American people, support Palestinians and stand for their right to live in peace. Visiting this great place –BSCC- gave us the chance to touch the real hope and warm love which is kept deep inside those wonderful souls, despite all sadness, challenges, and injustice. We encourage all Americans to come and visit the Holy Land”.

Mrs. Ivon Ameera, a BSCC member stated, “we loved this group who listened patiently to us. They were lovely and energetic. We taught them Dabkeh and we danced together. We enjoyed chatting about several things including how we survived several previous wars, with love, praying and lots of hope!”



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Birzeit Local Youth Council Visits the Center On Valentine's Day

Members of Birzeit Local Youth Council visited BSCC elders on Wednesday, February 17th 2016, to show them love and gratitude in the occasion of Valentine's day.

Birzeit youth presented to the elders a red flower among with a big hug for their grandparents. After mass, BSCC members and Birzeit youth enjoyed their time by spreading the meaning of love and telling their life stories about love, marriage and of course establishing families. Before leaving, the youth took some photos for memory and danced the traditional Birzeiti Dabkeh.





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Conclusion

In February 2016, the *Birzeit Senior Citizen Center* had the privilege of serving **26 senior citizens in Birzeit**, providing them with access to important services including transportation, leisure activities, nutritious meals, spiritual, healthcare and health education, as well as other opportunities including community building, events and job opportunities. From the first until the end of the month, the BSCC operated for **13 working days**, providing more than **78 hours of service** and **277 meals**. BSCC managed to increase the number of its members and it continues to increase the beneficiaries in addition to programs quantitatively and qualitatively. Through various spiritual, educational and recreational programs, the BSCC has provided its senior citizens with necessary resources while also connecting the elderly with the surrounding community, particularly with the younger generation. BSCC is dedicated and managed to providing a place for elderly citizens of Birzeit to come together in a community and to give them a sense of belonging.

Many things made February a special Month. First, increasing the members of the center to 26 members were we all the warmly welcomed the new member among them into BSCC family. Secondly, Sir Rateb Rabie's visit which had a lot of warm feelings, love and great news to the future of the center. Third, The Valentine's day celebration were the youth of Birzeit showed lots of love, caring and plenty of warm feelings towards elderly. That was absolutely one of the most exceptional unforgettable days of their lives.

