



Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation
مؤسسة الأراضي المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

PROGRESS REPORT DECEMBER 2015

BIRZEIT SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER (BSCC)



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

Leviticus 19:32

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Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc.
مؤسسة الأراضي المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

Contents

➤ Monthly Overview	2
➤ Services	3
➤ Programs & Activities	4
➤ Conclusion	20



Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc. مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

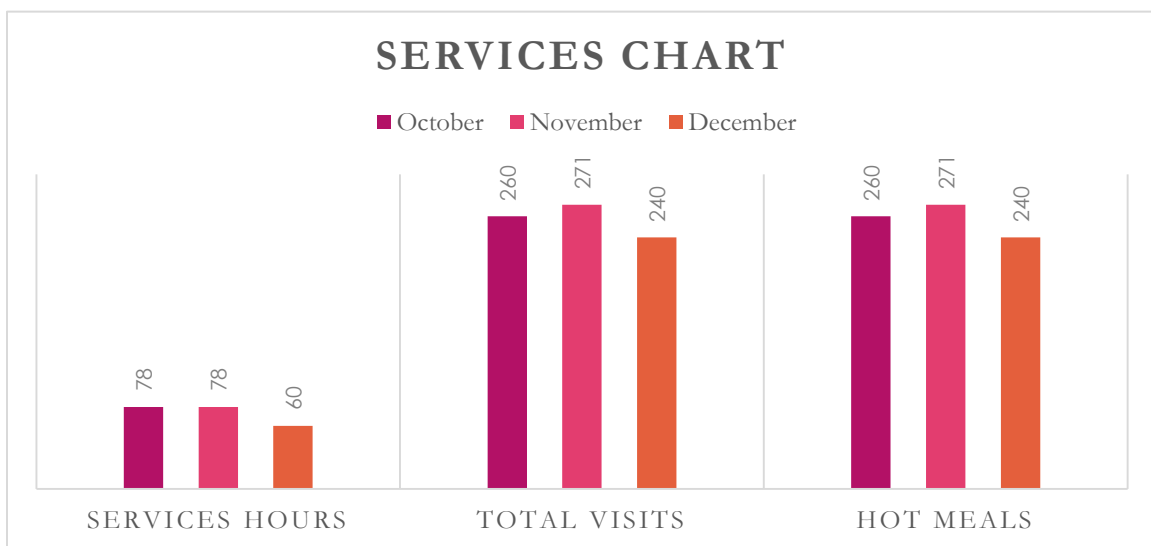
Monthly Overview

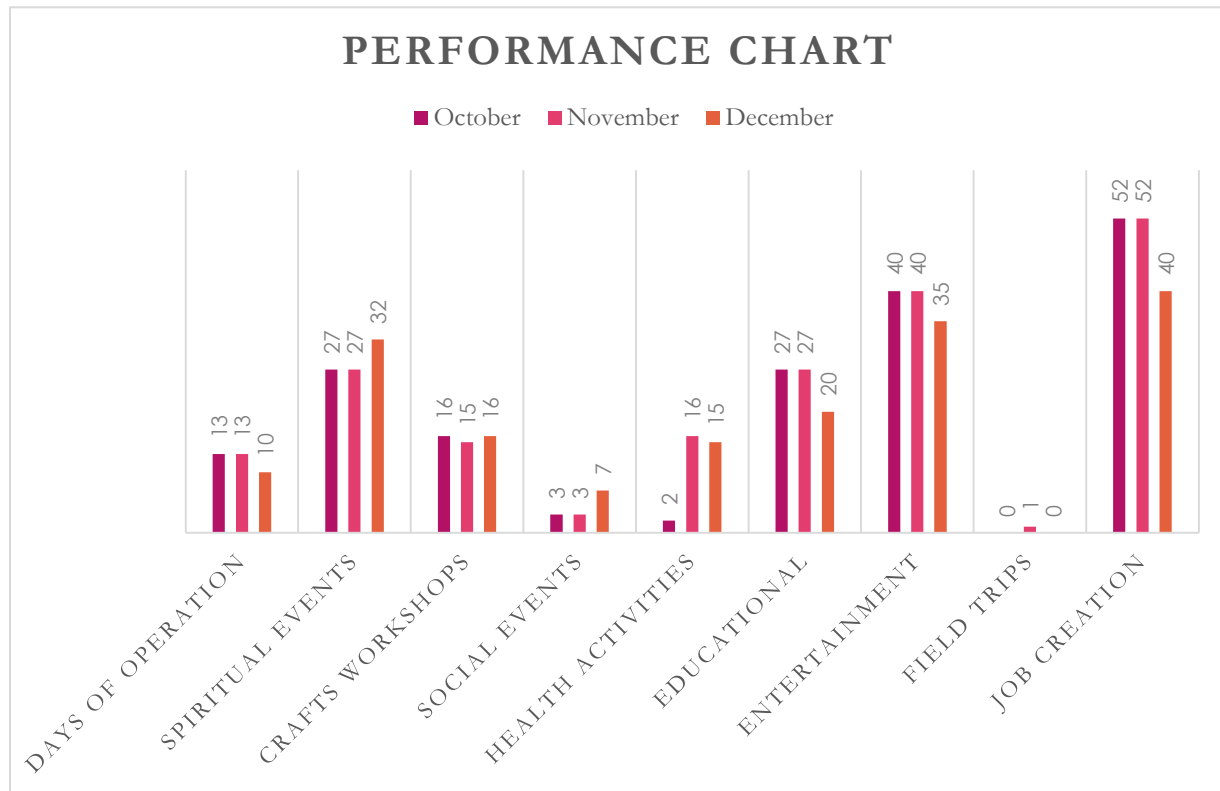
Birzeit Senior Citizen Center is open 3 days a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday), from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, offering services to the elderly (BSCC members) 10 days on December. The center organizes social, educational, and spiritual activities, offers health and transportation services, and provides 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 December 2015 as compared to previous months:

BSCC Statistics for December

Days of Operation	10	Social Events	7
Hours of Operation	60	Visits from Medical Professionals & Health Activities	15
Total BSCC Member Visits	240	Educational Activities	20
Hot Meals Served	240	Entertainment & Sports Activities	35
Spiritual Events and Activities	32	Field Trips	0
Craft Workshops (Cooking + Knitting)	16	Number of Employee Work Days Generated	40





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. The Center also provides transportation for any urgent needs that arise.

2. Nutritious Meals

- ❖ With the support of the World Food Program (WFD) and other local organizations, the BSCC provided hot meals for every day that the Center was open, totaling to 240 **hot meals** for the month of **December**.
- ❖ 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 240 meals.



Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc.
مؤسسة الأراضي المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

3. Daily Activities

BSCC members took part in daily games such as bingo, card games, dominoes, and trivia 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.

Programs & Activities

1. Spiritual Events

BSCC provided 4 main spiritual activities:

- ❖ **Daily bible study** in which elders read and discuss the bible, extracting lessons for their daily lives.
- ❖ **Daily Rosary**
- ❖ **On Wednesday, December 16th, 2015** Fr. Louis Hazboun offered Holy Communion to BSCC members and led a group prayer session. During his visit, BSCC elders prayed together for peace in the Holy Land and took Holy Communion.
- ❖ **On Wednesday, December 23rd, 2015** Fr. Louis Hazboun also offered Holy Communion to BSCC members and led a group prayer session. During his visit, BSCC elders prayed together for the Christmas season to bring peace, love and dignity to humanity.

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





Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc. مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

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. Of a recent visit, BSCC elder, Mr. Suheil Shaheen, said: *"when we visit our friends and family we keep our social relations alive, and when they visit us at the center we strengthen those relations as they acknowledge our presence. We are still important and remembered"*. In addition to visits from the community, elders also pay visits to their homebound friends, to whom they minister. After a recent visit, Mrs. Jamileh Aranki noted, *"When we visit our brothers and sisters at their home, we feel that the unity and love of Christ is present, it is the spirit of Christianity...our neighbors are our friends, fellow colleagues, and our community."* 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.



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. As an example of the creative ideas and masterpieces generated by the elders' feelings and commitment, is the **"BSCC Olive Tree,"** a painting that the elders have created depicting BSCC members throughout time. The olive tree is an important symbol of Palestinian culture and heritage.

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جبله
علوش

اسس هذا الزكر حبيب ابراهيم الحبيب والمحب والمحبين بالاشواك مع الانبياء من القدس واليهام بالادب
والحبيب بالدين القدس الكريمة العربيتا زهر في واصلهم
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تقدمه محمد طوبى
2015





Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc.
مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

4. Health

On Saturday, December 19th, a group of nursing students from Ibn Sina Health Sciences school visited the center to conduct health screenings for BSCC members. During the visit, nursing students checked blood pressure, tested for diabetes, and checked the elders' weight, height and vital signs.





Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc.
مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

5. December 2015 Main Events & Activities

BSCC Organizes a Community Breakfast for its Elders

On Wednesday, December 9th, 2015, BSCC organized a **Christmas community breakfast for local Elders.**

Set to the tunes of Christmas songs, the elders enjoyed their breakfast in a warm, loving, and spiritual atmosphere.

Reflecting on the breakfast, Mrs. Georgette Nattour commented: “We enjoyed the breakfast a lot. We felt the warmth of the season. Gathering at one table, sharing bread and food reminded us of the biblical story of Jesus at the Last Supper. It is the warmth of love and sacrifice that is represented in the nativity of Christ. As He said, ‘do this in remembrance of me’.”

Mr. Fawaz Shaheen agreed and added: “It was really great to experience the real joy of Christmas among all of us. In addition to enjoying the breakfast, I also enjoyed our gathering, praying to the Lord for peace in a united voice. Praying for peace for our country and for our own inner peace. We gathered, laughed and chatted as one caring and loving big family. This is the truly Christmas spirit.”



BSCC Members and Staff Decorate the Christmas Tree

On Saturday, December 12th, 2015, BSCC Elders and staff decorated the Center’s Christmas tree in preparation for the approaching holiday.

During this annual tradition, HCEF staff and community members take time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas, reigniting the spark of love and joy in the hearts of all those who take part.

During the festivities, Mrs. Nadia Shaheen commented: “We enjoy celebrating Christmas in the center and among our friends and relatives in our own way. One of the most delightful moments is when we all gather to help decorate the tree. We dance and sing Christmas songs and praise God: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on Earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).



Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc. مؤسسة الأراضي المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

Mr. George Abu-Daieh further commented: “This is the season of happiness, love, caring, and helping. Jesus Christ came to us for the salvation of humankind, carrying the divine message of peace and love. Each time we gather, we all pray faithfully that we may live in peace and dignity, especially in Palestine. We try to feel the warmth of the holiday by praying and celebrating despite our dark circumstances, believing in God. Jesus is life, so let us seek life with true good will. “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (John 1:4). This is what the Christmas tree of our center symbolizes.”





Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc. مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

BSCC Holds Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony With The Birzeit Community

On Wednesday, December 16th, 2015, in the presence of Fr. Louis Hazboun, Birzeit Parish Priest, BSCC members and staff lit the Christmas tree in a small ceremony held at the center, with strong attendance from Birzeit university students, civil societies and the local community.

At the beginning of the ceremony Fr. Hazboun blessed the celebration with Holy Mass and offered Holy Communion delivering a simple message of the meaning of Christmas. He also explained the symbols of the Christmas tree and the decorations, “We all came today to celebrate and welcome Jesus Christ. Not only us in this room, but also those who passed away. All the faithful are a unity; the living and the dead”.

Mr. Nicola Kawas, BSCC Supervisor, raised a prayer for the Palestinian martyrs and for all those who have fallen victim to terrorism around the world. He thanked the audience for sharing in the happy moments with the elders “... who are our greatest treasure...” and invited all to visit the center on a regular basis hoping that this Christmas season would spark the creation of a New Year’s resolution to visit the elders at BSCC and show them how much we love and care about them. At the end of his speech, Mr. Kawas invited us to not only light the Christmas tree physically but to light it in our hearts as well.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

Mrs. Jamileh Aranki, HCEF Representative in Birzeit, also shared a brief message on behalf of the elders of Birzeit, describing the overwhelming happiness and excitement that the elders felt when they saw people come together to share love during this blessed season. She also added, “BSCC, which was established in 2005, plays a major role in maintaining a humanitarian and moral values for the Birzeit senior citizens and raises their happiness and satisfaction.

The center provides a healthy environment to express their feelings, and creativity. Through our programs and activities we also provide health and mental care”. She also expressed most sincere Christmas wishes to all and a Happy New year, full of love and good health.

Mrs. Ma’zouza Shahin, commented on the celebrations, adding that, for her, it was the best Christmas celebration she has experienced so far, and she truly felt the warmth of Christmas having her own family join her family at BSCC in love and joy.



Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc.
مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية





Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc. مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

On Saturday, December 19th, 2015, BSCC in cooperation with World Vision, BSCC held a small Christmas ceremony to distribute Christmas gifts to BSCC members.



BSCC Christmas Dinner

On Wednesday, December 23rd, 2015, HCEF held a Christmas Dinner for BSCC members and staff in the presence of Fr. Louis Hazboun, the parish priest, who came to bless the gathering. After praying and eating, BSCC's Supervisor honored Mrs. Jamileh Aranki, HCEF Representative in Birzeit, for her generous contributions during the past 10 years for the BSCC and the Birzeit local community, and presented her with a thank you letter from the president of HCEF along with an honorary gift. He also thanked the BSCC employees for their hard, loving and caring work through 2015. Christmas gifts were then distributed to BSCC members by Santa Claus who came especially for this occasion in partnership with Caritas Jerusalem and the local youth. Afterward, all exchanged Christmas greetings and wishes for a blessed warm Christmas and a Happy New Year.





Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc.
مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية





Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc.
مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

Conclusion

In December 2015, the *Birzeit Senior Citizen Center* had the privilege of serving **24 senior citizens in Birzeit**, providing them with access to important services including transportation, meals, spiritual & health activities, 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 a total of **10 working days**, providing more than **60 hours of service** and **240 meals**. 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.