



Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation
مؤسسة الأراضي المقدسة المسيحية المسكونية

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT 2015

BIRZEIT SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER (BSCC)



"Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance"

Titus 2: 2

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General Introduction

The Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF) advocates on behalf of the indigenous Christian community of the Holy Land. Many of HCEF's programs are geared toward empowering the next generation. Now, HCEF has expanded the scope of its outreach to an equally vital population in the Holy Land - the elderly. Our Christian elders have remained in the Holy Land courageously and faithfully to bear witness to their faith and to resist oppression. Unfortunately, in today's conditions of violence and unrest, they are some of the most vulnerable citizens in the region.

The senior citizens of Birzeit have contributed immensely to the Palestinian and Christian community. As a tribute to their courage and resilience throughout their turbulent history, HCEF founded the Birzeit Senior Citizen Center (BSCC) in 2005. BSCC provides Birzeit's senior citizens with a safe and welcoming environment that actively works to serve their changing needs. By providing access to recreational activities, healthcare, hot meals, transportation services and companionship, BSCC ensures that Birzeit's elders are honored, respected and cared for.

In 2015, BSCC made excellent progress in fulfilling its mission. We steadily increased the number of beneficiaries in addition to increasing the number and quality of services. BSCC elders participated in activities in large numbers and reported being very satisfied with programming.

Moreover, BSCC strengthened its collaborations with local community organizations, significantly expanding the scope of its work and increasing its professionalism and effectiveness. Over 2015, we collaborated with Birzeit University, Ibn Sina Nursing School, Caritas Jerusalem, World Vision, Al-Rozana Society, Birzeit Women's Charitable Society, and many other individuals and organizations. BSCC elders also had the opportunity to participate in various national, religious, and public events, highlighting the ongoing role they play in public life.

Last but not least, our elders are our ancestors—they are the land cultivators and community builders who fought for and stayed in our beloved land. Through the BSCC, we thank them every day for their sacrifice and we hope as the “the future generation,” to carry on their legacy. Without our ancestors, who are as strong and powerful as olive trees, our heritage, culture and identity would be lost forever.





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Yearly 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 a month, totaling to 151 in 2015. 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, and to know they are honored and not forgotten.



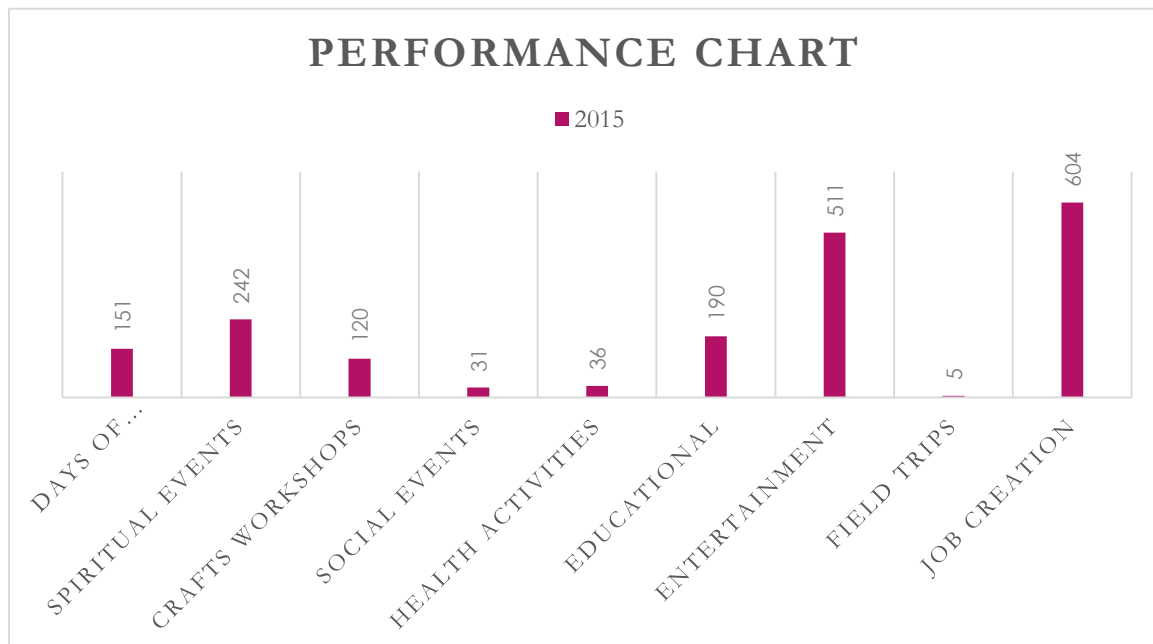
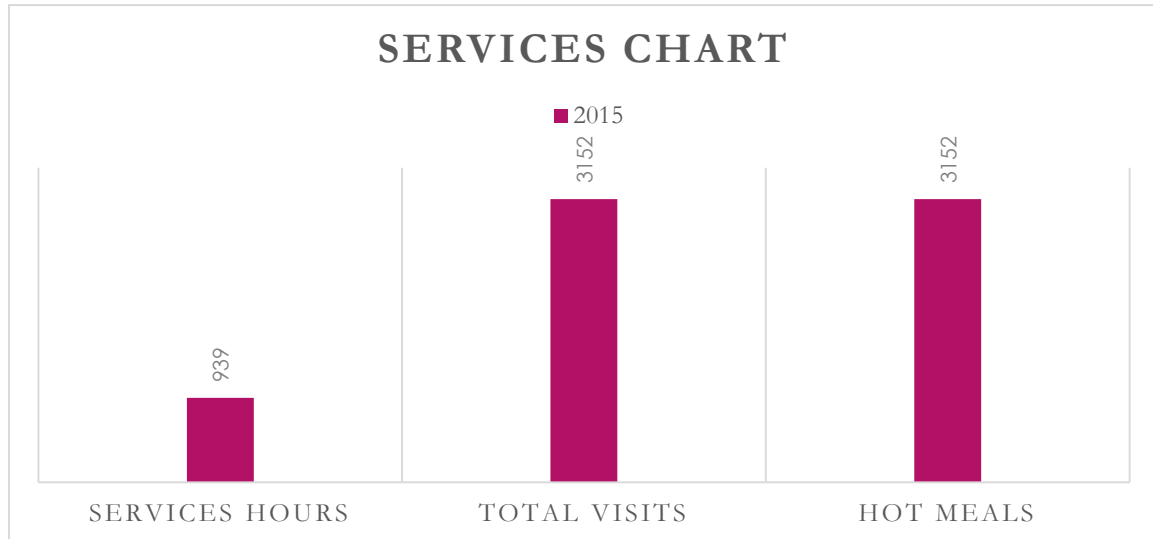
The following statistics offer a glimpse of some of the center's activities in 2015:

BSCC Statistics in 2015

Days of Operation	151	Social Events	31
Hours of Operation	939	Visits from Medical Professionals & Health Activities	36
Total BSCC Member Visits	3,152	Educational Activities	190
Hot Meals Served	3,152	Entertainment & Sports Activities	511
Spiritual Events and Activities	242	Field Trips	5
Craft Workshops (Cooking + Knitting)	120	Number of Employee Work Days Generated	604



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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. The Center also provides transportation for any urgent needs that arise. **Through 2015, we offered around 800 transportation services for the elders' needs.**



2. Nutritious Meals

- ❖ 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 **3152 hot meals** during **2015**.
- ❖ 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 **3152** meals.



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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.





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Programs & Activities

1. Spiritual Events

BSCC provided 242 spiritual activities including:

1. **Daily Bible Study:** Elders read and discuss the bible, extracting lessons for their daily lives. They discuss their personal experiences, and how they managed to overcome crisis with the love of Jesus Christ.
2. **Daily Rosary Prayer:** Elders pray the rosary together in Christian fellowship.
3. **Holy Communion:** The local parish priest visits BSCC to offer Holy Communion to BSCC members and to lead group prayer sessions. He also keeps the elders updated with the parish events including weddings, baptisms, and various celebrations.

Spiritual activities and events offered by BSCC provide a special kind of care and relief for our elders, deeply impacting their daily lives. Regarding the importance of these activities, one of BSCC's members, Mr. Suheil Naser, reflected: "Spiritual events at BSCC are so important to us since we can't always travel to church to take holy communion and to confess. Many people in our community cannot walk long distances. It is a great opportunity offered to us."





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2. Community

As a part of BSCC's effort to encourage Birzeit's elderly to engage in their community, BSCC arranged **31 social activities** including visits from local organizations, societies, and community members to meet with elders and discuss issues in the community. BSCC elders additionally participated in various social events, activities, workshops, and celebrations in collaboration with many local institutions in Birzeit. These activities enhance community relationships and give BSCC elders a sense of belonging, vitality and importance. Moreover, 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.



Regarding BSCC's community events, Mr. Fahed Salameh reflected: "Usually we don't see people very often, since they all have their own lives, families, work and other things to do. Even at celebrations it is hard to find time for old people like us. We feel like the social connections between us and the younger generation started to deteriorate. The BSCC has excelled at reestablishing these connections so we feel important again. By creating social events, BSCC is creating time and opportunity for the local community, especially the younger generations to meet us. It makes us feel that we are still alive and of a great importance."



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3. Crafts

BSCC is a safe comfortable place where elders of Birzeit can pursue and enhance their creativity. Through this program, members are encouraged to engage in activities such as painting, knitting, preparing traditional Palestinian dishes, etc. These activities provide elders with an outlet by which they can express their emotions, thoughts, and release negative energy. Often, their projects depict important memories, reflect spiritual ideas, and help them cope with the passing of friends.

Regarding BSCC's craft activities, Mrs. Nadia Shaheen recently expressed: "Life is not about living long, it is about living well. And we at the center have the opportunity to spend our time well. We have a full program with many activities that interest us. We do things that we like, that we benefit from, and that, most importantly, provide companionship—it reminds us that we are NOT alone. There is time to learn, to have fun, and most importantly, to express ourselves."

Because the arts and crafts program at BSCC is centered on traditions local to the region, elders enjoy working on art pieces that reflect their identity and traditions. Of the program, Mrs. Mazouzeh Shaheen, commented: "I knit clothes for my grandchildren, I find the motivation and time at the center to do that. When my friends at the center complement my work, it gives me a great motivation to continue." Mrs. Fadwa Abu Aloyoon additionally commented: "We so much like to cook traditional food together. We feel blessed by BSCC for all the opportunities and services that the center provides. Often, people don't pay attention to the elderly, but BSCC cares about us!"





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4. Health

As a part of BSCC's collaboration with Birzeit University, Ibn Sina nursing school and other health institutions, **we arranged 36 health activities in 2015**. These activities included health visits to periodically check on the well-being of BSCC members and a health workshop program which was developed to educate BSCC Elders about how to stay healthy. Through these workshops, BSCC elders learn about the importance of regular exercise, how to maintain a nutritional diet, how to prevent or manage health conditions such as diabetes, and many, many more.

Regarding BSCC's health activities, Ms. Georgette Abudayeh recently commented: "Health is the most important issue. At our age, it is essential to keep up to date regarding our health and medical status. BSCC provides us with routine health screenings which helps to prevent medical issues. As elders who have no health insurance, and who don't have money to contribute, it is a relief to receive this care."

Ms. Georgette Nattour added: "BSCC's Health workshops are of a great benefit. We learn a lot about how to keep ourselves healthy, especially by knowing the kind of food we should eat, what kinds of exercise is best for our age, and the enormous amount of useful information on issues such as diabetes, breast cancer, high blood pressure, etc."





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5. Other Activities

In addition to the above activities, BSCC also organizes field trips, as well as entertainment and educational activities. In 2015, these included Christmas activities, birthday celebrations, dances, light sports, and local traditional and religious celebrations. Moreover, we also organize social meetings, where member's friends and family are invited to participate in activities with their beloved elders.





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Conclusion

In 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 such as community building events. From the first until the end of the year, the BSCC operated for a total of **151 working days**, providing more than **939 hours of service** and **3,152 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.

Throughout 2015, we enjoyed the great privilege and responsibility of caring for many of Birzeit's elders. However, our work is not done. In the coming year, we hope to reach more elders in the community, and to strengthen our relations with local organizations for the benefit of our BSCC community. Our various activities and events in 2015 had a noticeable impact on our the health and well-being of our elders, helping them to feel less isolated and alone. As Mrs. Jamileh Aranki said: "It is not about how long you live, it is about how you live." Through BSCC, we are able to express our gratitude for the lives of those who have contributed so greatly to carrying forward the message of Jesus, "The Living Stones."

**You too can be a champion of this cause! By donating,
you are giving the elders the gift of knowing that they
are not alone nor forgotten.**

<http://bit.ly/1KB3DHb>





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