

The Garden of the Mothers

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Mini-Grant Final Report

Project Overview

There were over 200 attendees at the inauguration of the Garden of the Mothers at the Community Center of Daliat HaCarmel, including local and regional governmental authorities, religious leaders, and families of the fallen in the Forest Fire last year, women interfaith leaders, and Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Jewish women from Jerusalem and the north of Israel. There were refreshments provided by the Community Center. The program included welcoming remarks from representatives of all the above groups and blessings by religious leaders. The opening ribbon was cut by two local authorities, and the stone engraved with the park's name was unveiled by the women leaders. Two final trees were planted, one by the local authorities and the second by the women leaders. The program concluded with a Silent Walk around the perimeter of the Garden of the Mothers to honor each of the forty-four trees that had been planted.

The project was funded with support from CRT, the United Religions Initiative (URI) and private donations.

Partnerships Developed and Expanded

The partnerships between the women from different interfaith groups were strengthened during the entire planning process, which took over a year. People from a new interfaith environmental organization attended the event and were interested in setting up future joint-projects. The partnership with the Cultural Center of Daliat haCarmel was initiated with this project and will be the basis for continual interfaith programs in their building and in the Garden of the Women on their grounds.

As demonstrated by the media coverage in Hebrew and Arabic, the project had a widespread impact and received a positive reaction in the local region. The English coverage on the Vatican news website gave it international coverage. As a result of all of this coverage new people became involved and interested in what the interfaith women are accomplishing. The local Druze community of Daliat HaCarmel was strongly affected by being able to create this garden in their village as a result of our initiative. It enabled them to honor those who perished in the Forest Fire in a significant way, and to demonstrate their commitment to women's interfaith work. All of the media coverage was very important to them because it signified that the country and the world were aware of what this small village now housed - the Garden of the Mothers. The Garden will now be a site for interfaith pilgrimage as well as a location for future interfaith events.

Obstacles Overcome

The main obstacle we faced was coordinating the project from Jerusalem which involved many trips to Daliat HaCarmel and considerable traveling time and expense. We transformed this obstacle into an opportunity for women's interfaith meetings by bringing Jewish women from Jerusalem to meet with Muslim and Druze women in Daliat. They shared a meal together and sometimes stayed overnight in the women's homes. Another major obstacle was the two postponements of the date by the Community Center in Daliat, which involved a lot of difficulty in getting people available and committed to the changing dates. In the end it affected the participation -- several clergy and other participants who intended to be there at the original dates were unable to attend. However we were able to get others to replace them, so it all worked out - but required a lot of extra time and effort.