



BibleLands

.....Overseas Partner Fact Sheet.....

Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre

How it all started

The Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre was begun by the Moravian Church, a small Protestant church with about 800,000 members. In 1867, the Church began serving lepers in Jerusalem. As leprosy became less prevalent, in 1980 Star Mountain changed its focus and began to work with people with special needs, especially children with learning difficulties. Over the years, a special education school, a boarding facility, and an agricultural vocational training department were established, and now form the main basis for the centre's work.

The main objective of Star Mountain is to integrate children and young people with special needs into the community. Every human being, regardless of race, religion, or ability, has the right to education, dignity, and community.



Key facts

Founded: 1980

Location: Ramallah, West Bank

First Grant from BibleLands:
1981



Current Activities

Star Mountain's staff of over 30 serve 70 pupils from one month to 26 years old, split across five different programmes. An integrative kindergarten provides for children from one month to 6 years old. From 6 to 16, the Centre runs an autism programme and a school for local children with mild to severe learning difficulties. As well as academic subjects, students study a wide variety of life skills, including cognitive and motor skills, language and communication, and social skills.

Families are involved in their child's education and rehabilitation process from the beginning. The parents come regularly to the centre for meetings, lectures and parties, and the teachers carry out home visits, to discuss developments with the family. Families are offered counselling and advice, and when the child's education at Star Mountain is complete, the staff and parents explore possibilities for the child's future together.

The Vocational Training Department started in 1997 and offers young adults with special needs the chance to gain basic work skills. Young people aged between 16 and 26 can train in subjects from gardening and agriculture to animal husbandry and handicraft skills.

Once their training has come to an end, students are helped to find a suitable job. For many of them, permanent job opportunities have to be created, for example in sheltered workshops.

The programme aims at the rehabilitation, education, and social integration of each person. There are very few such vocational training centres in the West Bank, and without Star Mountain's services, these young people would otherwise have no future job prospects.

The Community Work Department began in 1995. It works in the local community; a population of over 20,000 people and including the Al-Jalazon refugee camp. The centre assists 200 individuals and their families in particular, aiming to serve them not as isolated individuals, but within their everyday environment and community.

Through its programmes, the centre is working to change the attitudes of society, so that disabled people can become integral and fully respected members of their community. Educational institutes, social groups, and local employers are encouraged to integrate people with a disability into their programmes, and the centre organises summer camps and activities that jointly serve children both with and without special needs.

Through regular home visits, local people with special needs and their families are assisted and provided with services and advice in special education, physiotherapy and family consultation. The centre provides referrals for medical treatment, specialised therapies, and medical aids and also organises programmes for prevention and early detection.

A member of Star Mountain's staff carries out some physiotherapy during a home visit



Right: Lara is one of the centre's vocational training students. She lives with her 9 brothers and sisters and their unemployed parents in a very small home.

In October 2007, aged 22, she was chosen to be one of just 16 people representing Palestine at the Special Olympics in China. She joined 7,000 other athletes from 167 countries taking part in the Games. When she won the gold medal in the 100 meter competition, it seemed like a fairytale come true! Her family, and the whole centre, were incredibly proud of her achievement.



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The Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre's commitment to people with special needs, their families, and their communities, contributes to the building of a fairer society that offers opportunities for everybody, whatever their capabilities. Its desire to see increased self-awareness, self-confidence and self-value of disabled young people is inspiring, and its approach, emphasising integration into the wider community, the empowerment and education of families and the creation of lobbying and advocacy networks, is an intelligent and appropriate solution to a carefully identified problem.

Despite the recent and ongoing upheavals in the area, Star Mountain maintains a high level of care and is known and appreciated in the communities in which it works.

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