



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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## FEATURE STORY

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN'S SUMMER CAMP

A number of Lebanese and foreign volunteers and social activists are organizing a **summer camp** for **refugee children** in the Akkar (North Lebanon) region on **July 14-18, 2014**.

The summer camp is entirely funded by small private donors and sponsored by bookstores and supermarkets. All the activities will be conducted by volunteer artists, athletes and doctors, and will include a wide range of workshops and activities around music, drawing, sports, pottery, juggling, theater, etc. We will also hold medical check-ups with doctors, as well as a clothes drive to assist the less fortunate families.

There are a total of around **510 children** between the ages of 3 and 18 (Syrian and Lebanese) in Camp Abou Ali and Camp Ismail, as well as in the Sheikh Abd Al-Illah orphanage in Qobbet Al-Shoumra.

The volunteers and activists who organized this program all share a common purpose; to bring a smile on the faces of "forgotten" children. The expressions of these little boys and girls are strikingly sad and grave for their age. The majority have lived over a year without the chance to take part in any activities and outings, or even benefit from decent schooling. Apart from the difficult living conditions inside the camps, they have no toys or art supplies to help them escape their bleak reality.

By bringing these children a wide range of cultural and educational activities, we also hope to spark their curiosity and expose them to new ideas that might inspire them to continue their studies or pursue new and fulfilling interests. Children are like sponges; they are marked by even the smallest gesture like a smile or a word of encouragement - this can make all the difference for them to enjoy a future with dignity. Some might even be motivated to give back to the community - life is a cycle, what goes around comes around.

**We are currently recruiting workshop animators, volunteers and donors to help bring love and joy to these children while having a good time .**

*Read more on Page 2 to find out how you can help*



Photos by Adelaide Duchet



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**SUGGESTED PROGRAM**

- July 14-15-16: Workshops and medical checkups
- July 17: Puppet show and workshops
- July 18: Clothes drive and wrap-up

If you would like to help by giving a workshop, assisting with the organization or donating money, clothes, toys, art supplies and/or food please contact us at the earliest.

**Salim Khalil: 03-898234**

**Accommodation for volunteers:**

Orphanage of the Qobbet Al-Shoumra Mosque

You will need a sleeping bag

+ \$5/day for meals (in case we do not manage to collect sufficient donations)

**Please share this information with anyone who might be interested/willing to help in this effort (doctors, donors, workshop animators).**

Shared by Salim Khalil and Adelaide Duchet



Photo by Adelaide Duchet

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## MORE VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES WITH CHILDREN IN AKKAR

Hi Friends! I've been so glad to see the forward momentum around permaculture in Lebanon. I can't wait to get back to Lebanon to feel this vibrant energy firsthand. I am currently in the process of organizing a week-long **summer camp** for a group of Syrian and Lebanese youth currently living in the village of **Michmich, Akkar** in collaboration with the **Relief and Reconciliation for Syria NGO** (<http://www.reliefandreconciliation.org/>) by end August.

The camp will be held at the **Al-Ayoun Environmental Center** in Michmich (<https://www.facebook.com/AyounCenter>). I would love if some of you permaculturists were part of the camp for at least a day or two to lead some sort of permaculture mini-project with the support of a group of local and international volunteers.

If you are interested please email me on [gshaheen23@gmail.com](mailto:gshaheen23@gmail.com). I would love to discuss some potential projects and know if (and how much) funding is required (in addition to your travel and food expenses) for your materials and time spent on this project.

Thank you!

Shared by Greg Shaheen



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**"SAWA VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM"  
VOLUNTEERING WORKSHOP**



**AUGUST 3-20, 2014**

[Deadline for application: July 15, 2014](#)

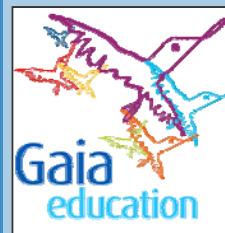
*Bar Elias, Bekaa*

Take part in children's activities by SAWA for Development & Aid, and receive training.

To register:

<http://www.sdaid.org/volunteer-main/internship-program>

**"CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS"  
FREE WEBINAR**



**JULY 5, 2014**

**6:00 p.m. (11:00 a.m. EDT)**

*Online, worldwide*

Free seminar or reducing carbon footprints and raising money for community projects.

To register:

<http://www.permaculture.co.uk/news/2406145214/free-webinar-climate-change-solutions>

**"TRIPOLI'S OLD CITY TOUR"  
CULTURAL/HISTORICAL VISIT**



**JULY 15, 2014**

[Starting at 11:00 a.m.](#)

*Tripoli (different areas)*

Visit of the old city, souks, khans, mosques. Lunch: Tripoli specialties. Tickets: starting \$20

Infoline: 70-126764

[https://www.facebook.com/events/307851482709429/?ref=newsfeed&story\\_type=regular](https://www.facebook.com/events/307851482709429/?ref=newsfeed&story_type=regular)

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# LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

## BRIDGES TO PERMACULTURE IN GREECE

After completing my **Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC)** this spring in Saidoun, Lebanon, I had the opportunity to travel to **Athens, Greece** for a short one-week trip and represent both **SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon** and **Gardens Without Borders/ Jardins Sans Frontières** (Canada) and meet with the Greek permaculture and transition movement's core team.

**Alex Ikonomidis**, who is leading the beautiful documentary project "A seed for change" ([www.aseedforchange.com](http://www.aseedforchange.com)) in both Lebanon and Greece, introduced me to **Jenny Evgenia Gkiougi** who has led a large number of permaculture initiatives across Athens and Greece in the last couple of years - the latest being a series of permaculture workshops under the umbrella project "The Permaculture Caravan".

Jenny then put me in contact with other members of the movement (Permaculture Greece- Μόνιμη Πολιτισμός Ελλάδα); **Jenny Kalasouda, Xrysanthi Lytra** and **Maria Goudi**. Jenny Kalasouda has been active in natural peri-urban agriculture for over a decade now, holding free practical workshops at her home as part of her mission to spread permaculture education mainly among the retired elderly. Xrysanthi and Maria have been leading the transition movement in Athens for just over a year now, collaborating directly with Peter MacFadye from the Transition pioneering team out of Totnes, England.

Permaculture in Greece really started taking off around 2008, and further accelerated in 2011 in the wake of the economic and social crises that impacted the country. Throughout our discussions, it was evident that several parallels existed between the socio-economic and environmental contexts and challenges of Greece and Lebanon, besides the common hot and humid Mediterranean climate that both countries enjoy, of course. It became evident that there were numerous opportunities for collaboration with the Greek permaculture network. On one hand, SOILS could build on the Greek permaculture experience, and our Greek friends could also benefit from the urban permaculture experience of Gardens Without Borders.

In all cases, a seed has been planted, and it now needs to be nurtured from both sides to see it grow, flower and bear fruits as social change agents in both countries strive to evolve their cultures from one of individualism, competition and consumerism towards one of local communities taking care of nature and people, and equally sharing the abundant social, economic and environmental wealth that can be co-created in a sustainable and creative manner.

When people part in Senegal they say "We are together!" So today permaculturists in Greece, Lebanon and Canada are now truly together for our common cultural (r)evolution.

Thank you Jenny, Xrysanthi and Maria for your time, generosity, and most of all, inspiration!

Shared by Joey El-Khoury



## GREEN RESOURCES

### LEBANON GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL



Procedures, methods, solutions and certificates for eco-friendly buildings

<http://www.lebanon-gbc.org/Component/Main/Index.asp>

### BSOUS SILK MUSEUM



Eco-museum celebrating the history of silk production in Lebanon

<http://www.thesilmuseum.com/>

### NATURAL HOMES - WEBSITE



Articles and workshops on natural building, natural living and the environment

<http://naturalhomes.org/about.htm>

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# LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

## LEARNING ABOUT SUSTAINABLE ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES IN GERMANY

I was one of the individuals who were inspired by the permaculture introductory workshop and gathering held in **Saidoun** in **July 2013**. Since then I have been very eager to find out more and have gone on to look for more knowledge.

Finally after months of filtering out courses I decided to head to Eco-village of **Sieben Linden** in Germany that was hosting "Eco-Village Design Education" by **Gaia Education** and endorsed by the **United Nations Decade for Sustainable Education (UNDESD)**. The course also included a full Permaculture Design Certificate( PDC) by the **Permakultur Akademie** (Germany).

**Sieben Linden** started off as an idea by a few environmentalists in the early 90s who wanted to live in a self-governed intentional community and joined their efforts to start working towards that shared goal. To me it was clear they had achieved almost everything they dreamed of. Their ecological footprint is 3 times less than the average German person and they only rely on the national electrical grid for 35% of their electricity needs, as they produce most of their supply on site using photovoltaic systems. They use natural/recycled building materials and are well known for their straw bale building skills. They have a local economy and also grow their own food and create jobs locally.

32 people from 18 different countries participated in this mind opening experience. It involved living the actual community experience as well as learning the meaning of it. Our friend Wolfgang who is currently staying in Lebanon was also there with me representing the permaculture community in Lebanon.

During this 1-month course we learned about the permaculture principles and had the chance to choose from a wide range of hands-on practical sessions like re-cycling art, natural painting, straw-bale building and reed-bed constructions, along with various organic and forest gardening techniques, as well as several other activities offered by the participants themselves.

The course content focused on 4 Keys (Social, Ecologic, Economic and World View) that took us around the world with real examples of communities using these methods and approaches on various levels depending on their situation. We had interesting sessions on empowered fund-raising, local and open-source economies and citizens' cooperatives. We also conducted a visit to a biogas plant and a nuclear resilience town.

**Sieben Linden** is not about creating another "Eco-Lodge". Instead, it focuses on promoting ecological habitats and reconnecting with the true meaning of the word ecology that comes from the Greek term *oikos* meaning "home" or "place to live".

With increased awareness/education and sharing of knowledge, we as Lebanese should start to come to our senses and reconnect with our *oikos* by understanding the importance of our ecological habitats. We take our resource-rich lifestyles for granted and we have become very selfish in many aspects. Many of us will have to make major changes or change will be forced upon us and on coming generations.

The main worry is not the present levels of resource use and ecological impact; it is the level we could rise to given our obsession with constantly increasing volumes of production. The supreme goal of countries is to raise their income, and for people to improve their "living standards" with ever-rising GDP levels without any notion of restraint.

Considerations linked to sustainability show that the global problems cannot be solved in a consumer-capitalist society. Many good green people do not understand this crucial point which states that, among other things, sustainability is not possible unless we have a zero growth economy; the current growth economy cannot be reformed - it needs to be replaced.

I believe real change should come from the bottom up and not the other way around. Building new permaculture gardens and even whole ecovillages is not nearly as important as building a collectively-shared vision.

If you wish to find out more about **Sieben Linden** or **Gaia Education**, do not hesitate to contact me on [seferian.alec@gmail.com](mailto:seferian.alec@gmail.com)

Shared by Alec Seferian



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## LET'S FOCUS

### HOMESCHOOLING IS LIFESCHOOLING

Ekatherina and her husband Maher run the Sumsum Farm in the village of Beino-Kboula (Akkar) where they live close to nature with their children who are homeschooled. They also founded the Pearls of Pomegranate Center in the village to introduce more children to learning through artistic expression. Their own children explore the arts both indoors and outdoors. They make it a point every day to complete a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) project with their father, such as making soap, oil lamps, natural shampoos, etc. Two of them are also dabbling in carpentry! And cooking is an activity the whole family enjoys doing together, as well as preparing foods for the winter pantry (mouneh) such as pomegranate molasses, pickles and preserves.

To read more, visit Sumsum Farm's blog:  
<http://sumsumfarm.blogspot.com/>  
or go to the Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/SumsumFarm/info>

It seems to me that people sometimes take schools and the whole corporate-economy system for granted when in fact they truly started to co-exist only around a century and a half ago. Instead of asking "Why do we homeschool?" I'd like to ask: "Why do we send our kids to school?"

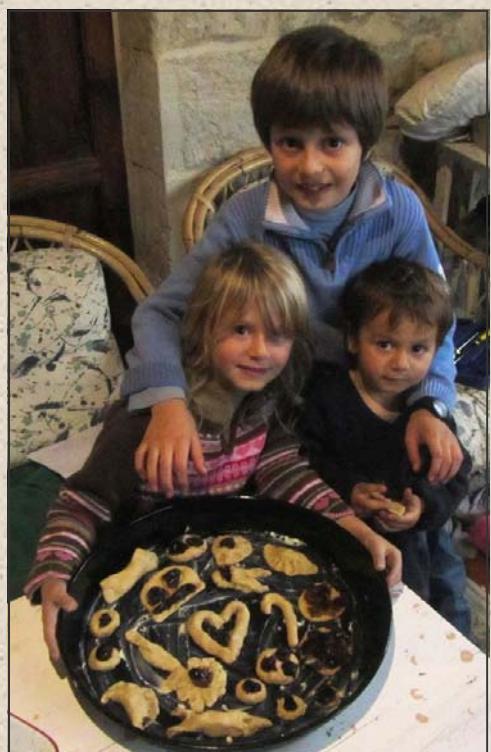
Today, many people judge it irrational when we start explaining that our kids wake up slowly, eat their breakfast (which we have a lot of time to make as healthy as possible) without choking on their food, choose what they're interested in studying, spend most of their time outside learning how to plant and acquire other skills, socialize with people of different age groups and backgrounds, look after their animals, etc. By contrast, they find it perfectly rational to wake their kids up near darkness, drag them (grabbing a sandwich on the way) to the school bus, put them in a box totally void of any kind of natural life in it, together with 30 "competitors" of the same age being stuffed for 8 hours with facts, 90% of which are totally useless for them at that moment.



School is actually only part of the whole corporate economical system (the best name I could find for it) that is busy brainwashing our society in order to make as much profit as possible for its corporations. It is in fact the foundation without which the whole system would totally collapse. It is the main brainwashing tool the system uses in order to sustain itself. "Education" and "socialization" are only the least spooky words that it uses to convince parents of its benefits - the most dangerous and monstrous one being "diploma". Without the "all-important" diploma a person would be unlikely to function properly in that corporate economical system. But if we turn this equation around, what it really says is that with this diploma exactly you won't be able to function anywhere else but inside that system. In other words schools leave you helpless when it comes to living on your own, they make sure you come out clueless in order for you to depend on that system your entire life!



My son came to me the other day and told me about a conversation he had with some well-meaning adult who asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He said "I don't know, maybe a painter." Then the adult corrected him "Ah, you mean an architect!" My son felt amused and went on to say "Maybe I'll be a farmer and take care of sick animals." Again the adult corrected him: "Ah! That would be a veterinarian!" Technical terms to describe professions are not welcomed. To be respected enough you have to have a profession with a degree attached to it (that same scary diploma). And to gain the ultimate respect you've got to develop a successful career. The term "successful" is also tricky, as it is equated to the amount of money you earn, which in turn is directly linked to the amount of money you spend as a consumer to sustain the corporate economic system. In other words: "The more you earn, the more you spend, and the more the system flourishes." If by chance someone gets tired of being sold this plastic image and decides to function on his own, he clearly lacks all the technical skills to do so. Why is that? What has he been doing the last 14 years of his life, behind the desks of schools and universities?



If we look at the weekly schedule of any Lebanese student, the typical subjects that directly pop up in front of our eyes would be: Math, Sciences, Languages, Geography, History and so on. Now how is that all supposed to translate into practical skills? Technical (that highly non-respected term by the system) classes are totally absent from the curriculum! Paradoxically, those are the skills you have to start learning from the very early age in order to master them. Math and English on the other hand can be learned later on without any difficulty and to the level that you need. I am sure very few of us actually used hyperbola equations in real life!

So, that is basically why we homeschool. It maximizes our children's chances to learn from life itself, while constituting an integral part of the environment around them. It makes them grow aware of everyday life problems as well as solutions. It allows them to experience learning in pace with their unique intellectual development and get sufficient experience in a wide spectrum of technical skills. And most importantly, it teaches them how to evaluate their success in terms of the authenticity of their work rather than in terms of grades or money.

Shared by Ekatherina Touma-Sagie

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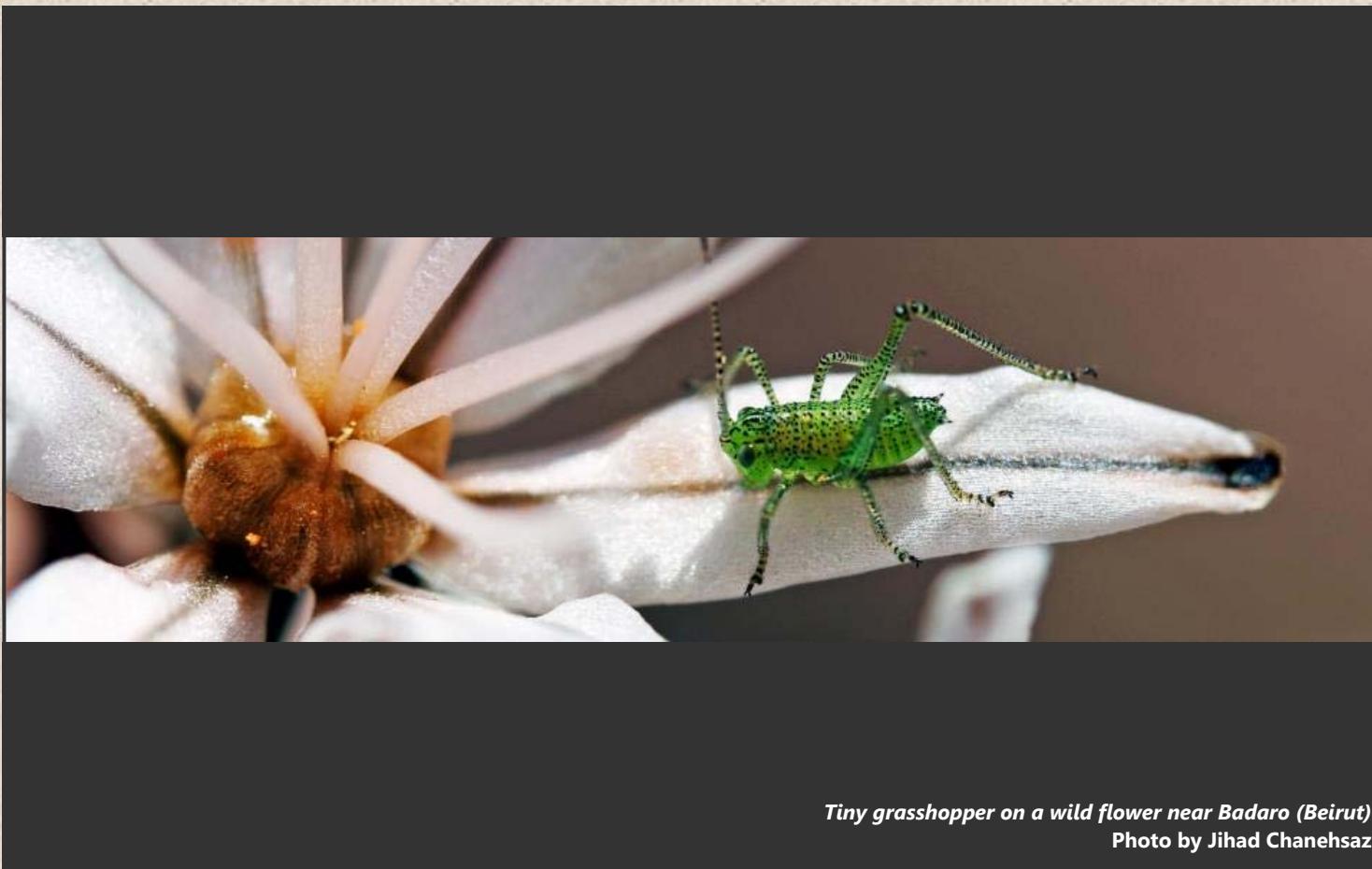
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## PHOTO OF THE MONTH

You sent us your submissions and you voted for your favorites. Here it is, the PHOTO OF THE MONTH:  
To send us your photos, email us on [contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com](mailto:contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com)



*Tiny grasshopper on a wild flower near Badaro (Beirut)*  
Photo by Jihad Chanehsaz

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## GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED

### Do you enjoy reading this newsletter?

Send us your feedback and suggestions, share your news, photos, tips or thoughts, or find out more.

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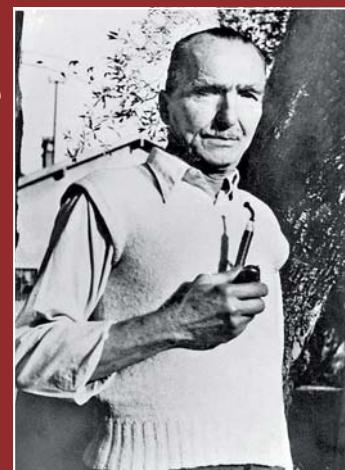
 [www.soils-permaculture-lebanon.com](http://www.soils-permaculture-lebanon.com)

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## A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

**"I said to the almond tree, 'Sister, speak to me of God.' And the almond tree blossomed."**



**-Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957)**

*Report to Greco*

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