

## The House of Einsteins and Picassos

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, the Islamic students of grade 9-12, accompanied by Tr. Sameera, Tr. Almas and Tr. Shaji, visited the 'Reaching Out Special Needs Centre'. The girls were equipped with colorings books, paints, beads and other supplies to entertain the children at the centre. They had also prepared individual gift bags for each child comprising of edible treats and hand-made paper crafts.

A few minutes in a bus were all it took to introduce the students to an experience that will forever be etched into their minds. The centre is located in a villa, with a large wooden door which opens into a school-like interior. The Islamic girls had segregated themselves into groups to cater to different age groups. The faculty at the special needs centre were extremely welcoming and efficiently sent the girls to their respective class rooms.

The tiny tots were engaged with coloring activities and building blocks, their adorable faces exultant at the sight of new things coming their way. The older girls were encouraged to let loose their creative sides by painting on canvases and making beaded bracelets. The older boys were engaged in the art of origami. Later, they too liberated their inner artists by showcasing their incredible talents on canvas. Flowers, pirate ships, robots- their imagination soared without any limits. The students were supervised by the Reaching Out staff as well as the Josephites, who entertained them with infinite patience and personal attention. The three teachers spent time with the individuals aged 18-24, and assisted them in their artistic endeavors.

The students at the special needs centre were lovely individuals, each with their own capabilities and expertise. Sherjung, a boy 17, amazed everyone with his humorous knowledge, and Maaz touched the hearts of students and teachers with his delightfully demeanor. At the end of an hour, which far too quickly, the girls reluctantly bid to the wonderful new people they had met. the promise of an eventual return, they their goodbyes and thanked the faculty for glorious opportunity.



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In the light of all the happy smiles and laughter, some unfortunate news was shared; the centre will be closing down soon. Lack of financial aid and stringent legalities has rendered it impossible for these kind souls to continue on with their work. The opening of a new centre in BaniYas may be the only way for these students to continue on with their education in Abu Dhabi.

**-Sara Azeem**