



## MIRACLE CORNERS OF THE WORLD SPONSORS 6TH YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT: AN ISRAELI/ PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE FORUM



*Participants in the forum enjoyed some sightseeing in Jerusalem between discussion sessions.*

**M**iracle Corners of the World (MCW), a not-for-profit community development organization, founded by Gallatin graduate student Edward Bergman, sponsored its Sixth Youth Leadership Retreat: An Israeli/Palestinian Dialogue Forum, from December 28th - 30th in Jerusalem. The retreat brought together twenty Palestinian and Israeli participants, representing a diverse background of experiences, political beliefs and dreams. The forum was held at the Ramat Rachel Hotel, Center for Tourism, Congresses & Sports and was organized by Israeli and Palestinian Alumni from the MCW 5th International Youth Leadership Retreat, held in July 2003 and sponsored by New York University and Lyndon State College in Vermont. These retreats serve as a forum in which youth from the Middle East, Africa and the Americas share ideas on the topic of leading change through dialogue, sharing, understanding and service.

The 6th Retreat Dialogue Forum was an opportunity for returning participants to utilize the skills and networks formed at earlier gatherings to develop a constructive follow-up program at the local level. MCW Alumni Ohad Reifen and Salah Mohsen, were the key Project Coordinators of the event, with support from other alumni.

The three-day Forum included presentations by a diverse group of prominent experts and educational tours, including a multi-faith tour of Jerusalem and an educational visit to the new Security Fence. Speakers and workshop leaders included Isa Jaber and Daniel Rossing (Interfaith Commission), Salim Tamari (Professor, Bir Ziet University), Dan Meridor (Former Israeli Minister of Finance and Law), Israel Harel (Former head of the settlement movement and columnist, Haaretz newspaper), Danny Seideman (Lawyer and activist specializing in Jerusalem affairs), David

Grossman (Israeli writer and supporter of the Geneva accords), Suad Ameri (Palestinian Author), Rami Elchanan (Forum of Bereaved Parents), Dr. Rihad Essawi (General Director, Palestinian National Authority Ministry of Social Affairs), Ron Pundak (Director, Peres Center for Peace), Michael Varshevski (Institute for Alternative Information) and Ruth Butler (Professor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

Group reflective discussions were held throughout the Forum facilitated by Dr. John Woodall, a psychiatrist and a leader in the field of mediation and facilitation from Harvard University. Retreat participants had the opportunity to ask questions, share experiences, thoughts, and reflections with the speakers and each another. According to Eddie Bergman, MCW Co-founder & Executive Director (SCPS, Class of 2003, and current Gallatin graduate student) "The forum provided an opportunity for twenty young leaders to engage in a dialogue of listening and sharing with local influential political, academic and grassroots leaders and amongst each other. The program did not necessarily change any single participant's political or ideological beliefs, but simply provided an opportunity for them to hear each other's perspectives. I am proud that the group has affirmed their commitment to dialogue and agreed to provide a safe environment in which to continue talking."

Reflecting further on the importance of the Retreat, Ohad Reifen, Project Coordinator, noted, "The conversation moved from a language of 'I' focusing on the differences between groups, to the concept of 'we' showing the common grounds we have as human beings."

For additional information on MCW please visit [www.miraclecorners.org](http://www.miraclecorners.org) or e-mail [ejb228@nyu.edu](mailto:ejb228@nyu.edu)