

LEONARD EDUCATION ORGANIZATION (LE.O)

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What's inside
this issue:

Special Edition:

Gaza has changed
us forever!!! One
Year Later.



THE IMPACT OF LE.O MEDICAL:

- **THE WHAT...**
- **PERSONAL CONNECTIONS**
- **THE WORK**
- **THE RESULTS**

By: Members of LE.O Medical
Initiative Team & Recipients

Dr. Hadeil M. Abdelfattah

Hadil A. & Ihab A. & Mohammed N &
Farah S.

THE WHAT...

At LE.O we are accustomed to the struggles of the students we support, but nothing could have prepared us for the need that would arise out of the devastation of Gaza!

You may already know LE.O students are spread around the world and in 19 different countries. The work doesn't end at any specific border or in any specific language, and definitely not when a student graduates. LE.O's executive director, Deya' Leonard Dresner was coaching Hadil, a LE.O medical student in Egypt, through her next steps to find out Hadil's entire 56th class of Gaza medical students were going to need support. The work began to fundraise for 46 students to only find out another class had recently graduated 10 days after the events in October changed everyone's life forever, adding an additional 63 students. Out of need LE.O Medical was created led by LE.O's Co-Director of Student Services & Fundraising, Dr. Hadeil M. Abdelfattah.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

Written by Hadil A.

As a LE.O student, I have always observed how the Leonard Education Organization supports and assists students in shaping their futures and contributing to their communities. From my first day with LE.O, I felt a deep responsibility to give back to this community in return for the support I received.

At the onset of the war in Gaza, I was in my final year of medical school, preparing to return to Gaza to begin my internship. However, the escalating situation rendered it impossible for me to leave Egypt and commence my mandatory internship at Al-Mansoura University Hospitals.

As always, LE.O stood as a second family, inquiring about my next steps and offering guidance. This time, however, their support extended beyond me; they reached out to my classmates as well, checking on their plans and assisting them in starting their internships in Egypt, as many of us were unable to contact our families in Gaza.

Thus, the significant project began here.

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Together we can overcome this challenge.
(Ahmed. A.)

”

THE WORK

Written by Ihab A.

You might wonder what would it take to make a project like LE.O Medical work. No one knew and we definitely didn't know when we held our first zoom fundraiser in November of 2023! What we did know was that we were determined to make it work because we just did not of the option to fail, and from our first zoom we had 9 students sponsored. This was our motivation to keep going and through many zoom informational sessions, individual meetings and calls, and grant writing over \$500,000 was initially raised. The work could not stop there as the scope of the project grew as the needs of our medical students grew. A huge thanks to our board members Diane & Hadeil & our Executive Director, Deya' for networking to raise the necessary funds needed for this noble cause.



PERSONAL STORIES

Written by Medical Intern M.N. 57th Class

I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and humility for the support and assistance that you have extended to me during one of the most challenging times of my life.

In the face of adversity, it's often the kindness of others that shines brightest. Your willingness to lend a helping hand, whether in the form of a penny or a hundred dollars, has meant more to me than words can express. Your generosity has been a beacon of light in my darkest hours, and for that, I am truly grateful.

The recent events in Gaza have brought about immense change and hardship for me and my family. As the oldest son, I have always felt a deep sense of responsibility to provide for my loved ones. Yet, when the bombings began, I found myself grappling with feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. It was a time of immense struggle, both emotionally and financially.

I made the difficult decision to set aside my own aspirations and focus on supporting my family in any way I could. Dropping my German language classes and pursuing courses in medical transcript translation was not an easy choice, but it was one that I made out of necessity. My family's well-being became my top priority, and I was determined to find a way to provide for our needs.

The journey has been arduous, marked by moments of doubt and despair. There were times when I felt as though all hope was lost, that the dreams and aspirations I had worked so hard to achieve were slipping away. But through it all, I held onto my faith and my belief that better days were ahead.

When I learned about L.E.O., I was uncertain of what to expect. Like many others, I had filled out numerous applications in the past, only to be met with silence. Yet, to my immense relief, your organization reached out to offer assistance when we needed it most. Your follow-up and dedication to helping students like me have been a source of immense comfort and hope during our darkest hour. Even greater news came during a zoom call when we were informed that Zakat foundation was going to sponsor our 2 years of internship. We were elated and relieved that something good was coming out of the horror that we faced.

As I reflect on the journey that has brought me to this point, I am reminded of the strength and resilience of the human spirit. Despite the challenges we have faced living in a big prison imposed on us in Gaza, we have not lost hope. My family's faith in Allah has been a guiding light in our darkest moments, sustaining us through even the most difficult times. My grandfather's determination to return to his land and rebuild his home and re-establish his precious garden confirms my desire to return to my home in Gaza. The place where I learned how to swim. The place where we would lose power for hours and hours every day. The place where you endured trauma and because of that trauma you have learned that you deserve to live! I loved my country and will continue to love my country and will strive to always give back.

I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to you and your organization for everything you have done for me and my family. Your kindness and generosity have made a world of difference, and we will be forever grateful for your support and I will personally do my best to pay it forward.



“

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PERSONAL STORIES

Written by Medical Intern F. S. 57th Class

October 7th was the day everything changed. Before that day, I was just a normal student trying to fight my way through medical school, I've always had my parents right by my side; sharing everything, leaning on them for guidance and support seemed to be imperishable but after October 7th, the roles were reversed. My parents now look to me for advice and confirmation. It's as if I became the anchor they needed in the storm of uncertainty that swept through our lives. I find myself at a point where I'm fully responsible for my decisions. The fear of loss has diminished because I've already faced so much, I see things in a different light now; no matter how hard a decision might be, I stand tall like a good man in a storm, make it and move forward. I forcibly realized that there's nothing more to lose—only things to gain. This newfound resilience came with the deep acceptance that others needed me too. I couldn't stand by while those around me struggled, so I stepped up. I still remember my enthusiasm when I was preparing for graduation, I was supposed to graduate from Med-school in November, my parents couldn't hold their excitement since I finally accomplished my dream and somehow also fulfilled theirs; we were preparing for their arrival to Egypt so that they would attend what we used to call "The Day". But October 7th brought a different taste of melancholy that we never expected, smashing our hopes to the ground. Despite our agony, my mom sent me a letter while they were trapped in Gaza; in her letter, my mom reminded me to be brave, patient and to try my best to move forward but also help others along the way. Her words echoed in my mind as I navigated through the changes that followed. My parents finally arrived in April, but they were different. They had lived through so much, and the trauma clung to them like a shadow that never fades. My twin brother, an engineer, tried to help in his own way, while my dad, who worked a simple job, and my mom, who was a housewife, struggled to find their footing in this new reality. There wasn't much they could do for me because they were all grappling with their own battles.

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It was a difficult time, and I realized that I had to be the one to push forward. Before October, I used to check on my friends from Gaza every now and then, But after that doom day, something shifted in me; it's like it brought us closer together as we drank the poison from the same vine. I felt a responsibility to support them, and now I'm in charge of the Gaza students in my class. It's a role that I've taken on with pride, knowing that my experience and guidance can make a difference in their lives. LE.O and the supporters of LE.O were a lifeline for me. They provided the support I needed to look ahead and begin planning for my next steps, including studying for the OET. This pathway gives me hope that I can one day return to Gaza and serve my people. I've seen the devastation, the torture, and the suffering of women in Gaza, and it has strengthened my volition to specialize as an OBGYN. My people need this, and I'm determined to set high goals and reach them. Being the only girl in my family and the only physician; I feel a tremendous amount of responsibility. My parents have always supported me, but now I've found another family in the LE.O community. Their support has been invaluable, and I hope to repay their efforts in the future. As I reflect on what's next, I know that I must continue this long road of healing and moving on, guided by the lessons of October 7th and the unwavering support of those who believe in me. My journey is just beginning, It won't be easy and it shouldn't be but it only makes me more determined than ever to achieve my goals and give back to those who have given me so much.

A SPECIAL THANKS!!!

Thank you to Zakat Foundation, The Muslim Community Center of Chicago, and to our endless donors from all around the world! You made things happen that we could never have done alone. Your willingness to give and share LE.O's medical initiative made it successful and you continue to do so by reaching back out and asking, "What else do you need? and, What else can we do?" And thank you to our individual donors that crowd funded for a student and to our donors that took on large numbers of students in providing for their daily living expenses!

The funds are always key but they are not the only determining factors in a program's success. We will keep working to support Palestinian students all around the world. Thanks to the help of all of our LE.O volunteers, donors, and to our students we appreciate every single one of you!

MEMORABLE MOMENTS BY LE.O BOARD MEMBERS

"Studying medicine is not easy. This task is much harder when you have parents still in gaza. I am thankful to have met Sulaiman" - Tarek

"I shall never forget one poignant moment when a young man, during my visit in late February, hugged me goodbye, he held on so tight. It felt as if he was desperately holding onto his teta, his hug will stay with me forever." - Deya'

"In April 2024 I was able to visit Egypt and to travel to Mansoura to visit with LE.O supported medical interns. It lifted my spirits in a dark time. They thanked me for coming and I thanked them for sharing and giving me a renewed hope for the future." - Fred

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM LE.O MEDICAL INTERNS

*"Your flower needs
to bloom"*

*"You can choose
your future by
working hard."*

*"I believe in you.
Keep going. I'm
proud of you!"*

*"Keep following your
dreams!"*

*"Don't wait until the
storm passes, but
learn how to dance
in the rain"*

*"Don't look to
anyone else. What
you do is for you
and that is what
makes you, you!"*

LE.O MEDICAL INITIATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 365 DAYS

Funded the
internship fees of 107
students (\$1200 per
student)

Multiple wellness
check visits by LE.O
board members

24/7 Co-Director
Availability to students

Observership
experiences for
USMLE route
students
\$48,000

Room and Board
costs for 114
students (\$3000 per
year/per student)

Registration
Costs for
students \$3100

Emergency fees for
medical needs \$500

Professional CV and
Social Media
Services

German Pathways for
General Practitioners
6 graduates; total of
\$75,000

Mental Health
Services as needed

English
conversational
classes with
students

Emergency housing
expenses \$2150

Travel Costs from
Gaza to Egypt
\$5000

PERSONAL STORIES - THE RESULT

Written by Dr. Hadeil M. Abdelfattah

You just never know where the path you are walking on will take you. It can lead down mysterious paths that leave you in awe of the people that you meet along the way. As an educator in Chicago for nearly three decades I can whole-heartedly say NO path since the one taken since October has been as arduous and as rewarding as this one! Over 115 students supported in one or more areas, ranging from overdue tuition fees, current internship fees, and living expenses equivalent to room and board. This CALL TO ACTION started out with essentially 7 young ladies at a university in Egypt that quickly turned into a class of 46 students, which then expanded above and beyond to now reaching over 115 students and still growing!

Reflecting on your "WHY" in life you have to consider all the "WHYS" going on in today's world:

- Why is there so much injustice in the world?
- Why do one people need to oppress another?
- Why does the world turn a blind eye?
- Why are some lives valued more than others?

And the Whys go on and on, and they likely will never end, and what we can do is not try to rationalize these whys but to effectively counter them by filling our actions with caring and sincere giving.

I have been so blessed and honored to have met so many spectacular people along this journey, in particular to our L.E.O Medical students. The work involved sleepless nights for months and months at a time requiring collecting and cross referencing information, long conversations, fundraising, networking, and PLANNING & THINKING!!! And I cannot forget about my two trips to Egypt where obstacles that were known and even more so the ones that weren't known reared their heads. Problem solving became an intricate part of the work and everyday there is something new to tackle and plan for. The initial work might be done but it will never be complete as we've just found out tuition for all students will significantly increase which leaves a shortfall for our our existing students of nearly \$38,000, not to mention the skyrocketing daily costs.

*IN HONOR OF L.E.O'S FIRST MEDICAL
STUDENT THAT GAVE HER LIFE
SERVING HER COMMUNITY! RAZAN
WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU.
REST IN PEACE DECEMBER 8, 2023*

If I Must Die

BY REFAAT ALAREER

*IF I MUST DIE,
YOU MUST LIVE
TO TELL MY STORY
TO SELL MY THINGS
TO BUY A PIECE OF CLOTH
AND SOME STRINGS,
(MAKE IT WHITE WITH A LONG TAIL)
SO THAT A CHILD, SOMEWHERE IN GAZA
WHILE LOOKING HEAVEN IN THE EYE
AWAITING HIS DAD WHO LEFT IN A BLAZE—
AND BID NO ONE FAREWELL
NOT EVEN TO HIS FLESH
NOT EVEN TO HIMSELF—
SEES THE KITE, MY KITE YOU MADE, FLYING
UP ABOVE
AND THINKS FOR A MOMENT AN ANGEL IS
THERE
BRINGING BACK LOVE
IF I MUST DIE
LET IT BRING HOPE
LET IT BE A TALE*

OUR PHOTO JOURNEY





NEEDS/ASKS/DREAMS:

- **FUNDING FOR TRAVEL IS NEEDED FOR FUTURE STUDENTS (W/COST OF APPROX. \$1400 - 1800 FOR 12 ADDITIONAL STUDENTS)**
 - **HOSTING FAMILIES FOR VISITING MEDICAL INTERNS/STUDENTS**
 - **ADDITIONAL PHYSICIANS TO OFFER OBSERVERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR LE.O. STUDENTS**
 - **INDIVIDUAL SPONSOR MATCHES FOR 128 GAZAN MEDICAL STUDENTS CONTINUING IN EGYPT (\$3600 PER YEAR FOR ROOM & BOARD)**
 - **57TH CLASS INTERNSHIP FEES GAP OF \$37,600 DUE TO UNANTICIPATED HIKE IN TUITION**
 - **NEW NEEDS ARISE EVERYDAY!!!**
-



NEEDS/ASKS/DREAMS:

**WE NEED \$600,000 TO MAKE THESE DREAMS A
REALITY!**

**WE DID IT ONCE AND WE KNOW WE CAN DO IT
AGAIN!**

GOAL!!!

\$600,000

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donate-to-gaza/](https://leonardeducation.org/donate-to-gaza/)**

DONATE

