

Summer Camp Report: A Breeze of Act to raise our smiles.

In collaboration with Al-Sadeel Society, we organized a summer camp that provided holistic care, education, and emotional support to children and teenagers aged 6 to 17 living with Type 1 diabetes, many of whom come from underprivileged communities. The camp also served as a platform for volunteers to gain valuable skills and knowledge under professional supervision. In total, around 100 children across three age groups and 20 volunteers participated and benefited from this initiative.

The camp was hosted at Al-Sadeel Society in Bethlehem and was designed with the achieved-aim of reducing anxiety, promoting emotional resilience, and encouraging healthy lifestyle habits. Through therapeutic activities, peer support, and creative expression. A key focus was also placed on integrating children with diabetes alongside healthy (non-diabetic) peers, encouraging mutual understanding and acceptance of living with diabetes.

An atmosphere of respect and open discussion was cultivated throughout the program, giving participants the confidence to express their opinions and share their concerns. Each day's program followed a structured schedule, which included:

- Icebreakers and energizers (games like “Traffic Light,” balloon races, or spider web network building).
- Emotional expression and reflection (gratitude walks, “I am thankful for...”, feelings circles, and story-based discussions such as A Night in the Dark).
- Cultural and national education (Palestinian dabkah and songs, storytelling, and traditional crafts).
- Creative workshops (personality maps, Johari Window, wish lists, map-making, art, and crafts).
- Health education (interactive diabetes awareness activities, first-aid basics, and healthy lifestyle discussions).
- Teamwork and problem-solving challenges (bridge and tower building with pasta, robotics, shadow theater, and cooperative games).



What we achieved

A summer camp that welcomed around 100 children and teenagers, supported by 20 volunteers. Participants engaged in physical activities, cultural learning, and creative workshops that encouraged self-expression. Almost all of the participants shared and talked openly about their feelings and concerns. Therefore, our psychotherapist was able to guide them towards the best practices to gain healthier emotional responses. The participants were able to follow the instructions for each activity. Many of them were eager to take initiative. Many proudly took their artworks home. The participants learned how to bond and work together in teams.

What we are proud of

First of all, we are proud that we were part of this project. We are proud of the smiles we saw on the children's faces. We are proud of the kids who found their way to that smile, given the challenges they live with daily. We are also proud of the community of volunteers who came together to help and prove that as long as we help each other nothing is unachievable.

Enduring successes

This camp lifts all of the participants and the volunteers with lasting memories. I got out of it what we put in it. We hope that we were able to boost the kids' self-confidence and their skills in expressing their feelings. Volunteers developed leadership, organizational, and communication skills. On a broader level, the camp strengthened community bonds and encouraged a culture of empathy and support for children with diabetes. We saw the real impact that can be made when the community comes together.

Impact on us as a team

It is not a hidden truth that this project was a big challenge for all of us. Weeks of preparations and planning were needed to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the participants. Personally, I learned more about organizing and planning through my roles in: choosing the activities, creating sub teams for each task, supervising progress, and evaluating outcomes. And most importantly, seeing our written plans turning into reality was both humbling and inspiring.

Where the money was spent

The camp's estimated value was around \$6,000. Costs included:

- Rent
- Medicine and first aid supplies
- Daily lunch for participants
- Daily blood sugar testing and devices
- Art and craft materials
- Entrance fees to the swimming pool
- Transportation costs

The Go Make a Difference fund supported food and art materials specifically. The local community contributed generously with discounts and donations, including a month's insulin supply for each child.

Lessons learned

We learned the importance of careful planning, flexibility, and strong communication within the team. We also realized how essential it is to adapt activities to different age groups and to balance fun with therapeutic techniques.

What we would do differently

If we ran the camp again, we would:

- Extend the program's duration to allow deeper engagement.
- Include more structured follow-up with families after the camp.
- Provide additional training for volunteers before the camp begins.
- Increase the variety of health-related activities to further support lifestyle management.