

WFWP Arkansas, USA works with the Syrian Emergency Task Force

Bruce Biggin
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The WFWP Chapter of Arkansas held its September meeting on the 9th of September at the Laman Library in North Little Rock. Our guest speaker was Natalie Larrison, who is the Outreach Director for the Wisdom House Project and the Syrian Emergency Task Force (SETF). The Wisdom House is the humanitarian arm of the SETF and has run a school for kindergarten students for the past three years, paying teachers there and providing supplies and resources. It has also run a women's center teaching skills that enable women in the city of Idlib, Syria to provide for their families.

Natalie described the beginning of the democratic movement in Syria, its impact, and the response of the Assad government, resulting in the displacement of millions of people, mostly women and children, as they were pushed into the northwestern corner of Syria (the country is roughly the size of the state of Washington). According to the [UNHCR](#), Syria currently has the biggest population of internally displaced people in the world at 6.2 million, which includes 2.5 million children. In an effort to gain control of the entire country, Natalie explained, the government has enlisted the support of foreign entities such as Iran and Russia, the latter of which routinely bombs villages.



Recently, an increasing number of bomb raids have taken place in Idlib, one of the last cities not under government control. Tragically, Natalie shared, one child that the Wisdom House had cared for was killed and another was injured in one of these attacks. Many of the women have fled further north towards the Turkish border. However, all the borders are closed, preventing people from escaping to neighboring countries.

Under such dire circumstances, where more than half of Idlib's children are expected not to be able to attend school this year (read news story [here](#)), the Wisdom House has not given up on providing aid to the children. They continue to pay the teachers there and hope to begin school again. Also, they continue to help the women there in whatever way they can.

A few months ago, Natalie had spoken at the southwest regional launch of the [GWPN](#) and shared about what led her to take on this mission to alleviate the human suffering in Syria, leaving behind a secure job of teaching school. She has such a heart of compassion for the children and people of Syria affected by the inhumanity going on there.

In appreciation of her inspiring work, WFWP Arkansas presented her with a "HerStory" award. She was so grateful and honored. She loves WFWP and welcomes it as one of her key sources of encouragement.

At the end of the program, we wrote "Letters of Hope" to the children of Idlib and also took a collection to support her work with Wisdom House. I am proud we could help support such a worthy cause.

Overall we had a successful monthly meeting, with 11 guests, several of whom are our regulars, including two young adults. WFWP member Friederun Abrahams from Memphis drove for two hours to be with us in Little Rock and we feel encouraged to keep this momentum going for our future gatherings.



Editor's Note: Mr. Bruce Biggin is a pastor in Arkansas. As a strong supporter of women and women's providence, he is networking on behalf of WFWP.