

AUB trains and recruits people with disabilities

Wednesday, June 9, 2010

AUB departments were honored during the closing ceremony of a project aimed at giving people with disabilities better representation in social and economic life.

The Youth Association for the Blind (YAB), Mercy Corps and the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU) initiated the USAID-funded “Towards Inclusive Development in Lebanon” project, which sought to give disabled individuals access to regular employment.



The project’s final session took place on May 26, 2010 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, with introductory speeches by YAB President Amer Makarem, Mercy Corps Country Director Steven Haley, and Kimberly De Laney, USAID’s acting mission director. Mounir Mabsout, director of the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), represented AUB in his introductory speech.

Fadia Homaidan, director of the Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC) at AUB, was approached by Mercy Corps and YAB in May 2009 and asked whether AUB would train two interns. Both the electrical and computer engineering and the biology departments agreed to train Hilmat Al Mawla, who has a physical disability, and Sanaa Shayya, who is visually impaired. Two months into the project, Fatme Masalkhi and Nagat Nazzal, who are both visually impaired, were received by the CCECS and the Office of Development.

Other interns were also received at the AUB Medical Center.

“We had to overcome many obstacles and limitations when we embarked on this project, but the results were absolutely rewarding,” said Mabsout.

“[This project] showed us that while [people with disabilities] face many challenges to break into the workforce, organizations benefit when they open their doors and help them in,” said De Laney.

Representing Haigazian University, Salpi Jalian, coordinator of Human Resources, said that given the opportunity, “communities can be educated to realize that [people with disabilities] have the skill to be major contributors in the circle in which they live.”

Mabsout said that the project could “lead to actual opportunities for work.”

The interns received training in basic skills, such as computer literacy and English language proficiency, and showed significant progress by the end of the sessions.

Both Masalkhi and Nazzal have been offered casual jobs at AUB for a period of four months.

The ceremony closed with the distribution of certificates to the trainees as well as awards to the hosting institutions.

AUB was presented with four awards in appreciation of its willingness to host four trainees in four departments. AUBMC was also honored with an award.

A sixth award was presented to Homeidan, for her unstinted support of the project.