

Postcard from New York

By Elida Jbeili

The LAU New York Academic Center sprang to life with cultural events, classes, conferences and a gala during the spring semester of 2018.

Thousands of middle- and high-school students descended upon New York City during the months of March and April to participate in the LAU-led Global Classroom International Model UN conferences. The students, hailing from dozens of countries and hundreds of schools worldwide, participated in activities dedicated to instilling crucial leadership skills in the aspiring diplomats.

The experience enhanced students' knowledge of international diplomacy, improved their public speaking and debate skills, helped them navigate the UN's rules and procedures, and, ultimately, put them on the path to global citizenship. As LAU student leader Ameer Alsamman said, "When we become the leaders that we want, we can then implement the change in the world that we want."

In late April, more than 150 benefactors attended LAU New York's annual Gala Dinner to celebrate and support the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW). The LAU NY Gala has become a significant gathering for friends and supporters of the university; it provides an opportunity to honor special individuals and showcase their achievements. Ed Shiner, director of alumni and special projects at LAU NY, remarked, "The gala is not only a fundraiser but a wonderful time to bring the extended LAU family together to celebrate the university's growth and development and to reinforce its mission."

During the dinner, LAU President Joseph G. Jabbra presented the prestigious Sarah Huntington Smith Award to both Aida Sharabati Shawwaf, a humanitarian focusing on women's education in the Middle East and Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and to Majdi Ramadan, consul general for Lebanon in New York.



Two cultural events took place in May, beginning with a film screening of the award-winning movie *Nour*, which sheds light on the issue of child marriage in Lebanon, at the CUNY Graduate Center. The screening was followed by a discussion with the film's director and LAU alumnus Khalil Dreyfus Zaarour. The discussion was moderated by Beth Baron, director of the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (MEMEAC) at the CUNY Graduate Center.

On May 24, LAU's Center for Lebanese Heritage (CLH), in collaboration with the Lebanese Consulate General in New York, hosted a panel discussion on Kahlil Gibran at LAU's NY Academic Center to celebrate the centennial commemoration of Gibran's first English-language book, *The Madman*.

The event featured Henri Zoghaib, acclaimed Lebanese poet and CLH director; Dr. Philip Salem, president of the Salem Oncology Center; University of Pennsylvania Professor Emeritus Roger Allen; and Helen Samhan of the Arab American Institute and Arab American National Museum.

The speakers agreed that Gibran's legacy is as relevant today as it has ever been, touching the hearts and minds of many generations across political, religious and national boundaries. Ideas such as his withstand the test of time, the speakers noted, resonating in particular during periods of strife and conflict. As Zoghaib

said during the discussion, "The intellectual resistance is much more resilient than the military resistance."

Aligned with this ideology, SINARC NY's spring enrollment grew to an all-time high, with students from diverse backgrounds being offered all levels of Arabic-language courses. As one student reported back, "Learning Arabic at LAU NY is a testament to the commitment of LAU to expand its legacy both in New York and the Middle East. The academic center provides an array of complimentary programming and resources to its students and patrons, all of which serves to keep the spirit of Lebanese culture alive."

