



Open Minds Holds its Annual Dinner under the Theme “#ana3adi”

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Ghida Rabbat: Let’s help them be special according to their skills and invest their talents in society. Dr. Rose-Mary Boustany: 0.1% benefit from assistance, and treatments covered abroad are not covered here.

The OpenMinds Fund held its annual dinner at Beirut Waterfront’s O1ne in the presence of Vice-Prime Minister Ghassan Hasbani, Minister of Social Affairs May Chidiac, Minister of Culture Mohammed Daoud, former Minister of Interior Nohad Machnouk, Pierre Abou Assi, international fashion designer Elie Saab and prominent singer Nancy Ajram. The dinner, held under the theme “#ana3adi”, was part of an intensive campaign that aims to fight against the culture of isolating people with special needs, and to promote their inclusion in schools, universities, and all fields of work.

OpenMinds President Ghida Rabbat asserted that “many people with special needs are distinguished by different skills. They should be held as special according to their skills and the added value they can offer to society, and not on any other consideration.”

Rabbat explained that OpenMinds’ objective is to encourage such individuals to discover their talents and invest them in society, adding: “So far, we have supported 22 inclusive schools for people with special needs in Lebanon and we are about to bring the study of the Debbiye project to completion. Once this happens, it will be the first interactive complex for transforming special needs into productive youth energy.” The OpenMinds president also called for additional cooperation among private initiatives, donor institutions, and the public sector to fight against a growing phenomenon that burdens Lebanon’s families and national economy.

For her part, Dr. Rose-Mary Boustany, who heads the Special Kids Clinic at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), highlighted that the Clinic “helps hundreds of children with special needs to shoulder the various stages and costs of sustainable, lifelong healthcare in particularly trying times for them and their families. Unfortunately, this drive only encompasses 0.1% of these children. We hope that the government, insurance companies, and private sector companies take the appropriate measure in this respect, as autism and special needs require long-term measures. Hereditary genetic diseases are covered elsewhere across the world, but not in Lebanon. These include Duchenne muscular dystrophy, spinal muscular atrophy, CLN2 disease, and Hunter syndrome.”

OpenMinds Vice-President Suha Beyhum thanked the institutional sponsors during the dinner, which included the screening of two films. The first encouraged the inclusion of people with special needs at school, while the second highlighted the making of the first movie with the participation of people with special needs. The director, lighting director, sound director, set director, graphic designer, and other technicians and actors displayed their talents in cinematography. The evening also included music and dance shows by international troops and an auction on artwork masterpieces signed and donated by world-renowned Lebanese artists Nabil Nahas, Ayman Baalbaki, and Marwan Sahmarani.

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