

ŞEHİTKAMİL CULTURE AND CONGRESS CENTER CHANGING GAZİANTEP'S IMAGE

The Şehitkamil Culture and Congress Center (SKM), the opening of which was attended by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has an architectural style and technical features that allow it to host any type of function or event imaginable. Since its opening, this center has hosted local and national sociocultural events from across the spectrum, changing, in the process, the image of Gaziantep and adding a kind of vibrancy to the city.

Growing trade and international relations have increased the role played by congress events in tourism. It was for this reason that the Şehitkamil Municipality, which had had difficulties meeting the city's growing needs in this regard, completed the culture and congress center in 2011. Though its architectural style was inspired by and reflects the city's unique history, the building meets the city's more modern requirements.

The center is certainly a candidate for the most exceptional congress and cultural center, not only in Gaziantep but in the entire country. The SKM is the region's largest such center and is a multipurpose building with a salon that can seat 1,070 people. Mayor Rıdvan Fadiloğlu says: "The main salon also features a 300-square-meter stage area. There are also three multipurpose salons that can seat 300 people each, as well as three smaller salons each with a capacity for 70 people; a meeting room that can seat 35 people; a main entry foyer that measures 800 square meters; two side foyers each measuring 300 square meters; a 1,250-square-meter trade fair and exhibition hall; back corridors; and administrative offices. There are also translation services that can perform simultaneous translations into four different languages at once and a car park for 500 vehicles."

Since its opening, the congress and cultural center has hosted the National Dermatological Congress as well as several important international meetings.

The SKM, with its large halls and modern conveniences, has truly become one of the most important and impressive buildings in the region. With thousands of people attending meetings, exhibitions and congresses there, its contributions to the local and regional economy are considerable. The SKM is also a noteworthy place for social and cultural events, with activities held there every weekend. It has also played a key role in the social activities of local citizens in line with the municipality's goal of

Some of the bigger events to have taken place at SKM so far include:

- National Dermatological Congress
- Solutions to Social Problems from the Path of the Prophet symposium
- Turkey's Women's Quran Competition finals
- Southeastern Medical Congress held by the International Health Federation Medical Congress
- Adil Özberk Commemoration Ceremony
- Sacred Birth Week Program
- "Little Things" with Üstün Dokmen
- Loving the Ahl al-Bayt conference, by Ömer Döngeloğlu
- Special conversations with Dr. Nihat Hatipoğlu about the sacred month of Muharram
- Voyage Program with Mustafa Karatas Hoca
- Murat Boz concert
- UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) meeting
- "Tom, Dick, and Harry" - Ece Uslu - two-part comedy theater
- Folklorama (Turkish magic), a two-curtain musical
- Anatolian Rhapsody
- Zorba ballet show

providing locals with a higher standard of living.

Gaziantep, the location of the 25th Abant Platform, a forum that analyzes developments in Turkey and around the world, hosted high-ranking officials from all over the world -- from Tunisia and Israel to the US and Morocco -- at the SKM. The SKM also hosted the Solutions to Social Problems from the Path of the Prophet symposium, with intellectuals and experts on Islam descending on Gaziantep from all over the world for this special meeting.

As such, Mayor Fadiloğlu notes that Gaziantep is now a city of congresses in addition to being recognized for its level of industry. "Our efforts to maintain high levels of both cultural events as well as tourism congresses are ongoing. As we cannot fill every day of the year with congresses, there can also be panel sessions, conferences and talks on various topics held here on other days," Fadiloğlu said. Noting that Gaziantep had a considerable need for such a center for a long time, he stated that the center was completed in just 13 months and has thus far received only the highest of compliments from guests coming from all over the world for various events.



Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (C) attended the opening ceremony for the Şehitkamil Culture and Congress Center in March.

Community centers serve as centers for education



In the city of Şehitkamil, community centers are becoming meeting places for a variety of community courses ranging from arts and crafts to literacy that cater to people of all ages.

Over a period of three years, 74 modern community centers have been constructed, where free courses are provided for all ages. The variety of activities provided at these facilities are not only bringing people together as a community, but also changing horizons by providing hope for many. For instance, some of the educational and training programs offered by the Şehitkamil Municipality, such as literacy and computing courses, are providing a ready solution to the recognized problem of low education levels in Gaziantep.

Mayor Rıdvan Fadiloğlu highlights the importance of education and notes the growing number of success stories of young people who have recently taken courses at these centers. He says: "The

driving concept behind our community centers is not that they only be places where citizens learn handicrafts, but that they be actual 'nests' of learning. This is because our first priority in every arena is simply education. Women, for example, can come with their children to learn and take lessons here. And the happy outcome is that we have managed to decrease the gap between people in terms of educational levels, with people of all ages taking advantage of free courses in reading and writing as well as higher level courses."

Women who attend these free courses, in addition to realizing some of their previously undiscovered talents, have the opportunity to have some of their creative work exhibited in the centers. Some of the artistic courses not only allow women to regain self-confidence about their abilities but can sometimes contribute to their family budgets thanks to newfound talents such as painting and making ceramics.



Şehitkamil Mayor Rıdvan Fadiloğlu talks with locals during his visit to a municipal community center.

Bread collection containers help prevent waste

Another model project carried out by the Şehitkamil Municipality concerns special stale bread collection containers. These containers, which have been distributed by the municipality to local apartment buildings, not only help to reduce general waste but also provide a form of sustenance for animals. With 3,000 special bread containers having been distributed throughout the Şehitkamil city limits in 11 different neighborhoods, bread has successfully been separated

from general refuse. This bread collection project has been in practice for 15 months now, with a monthly average of 25 tons of stale bread collected. Thus far, a total of 350 tons of bread have been collected and given to zoo and street animals. Any remaining bread is turned over to cattle farms specializing in milk production. Şehitkamil Mayor Rıdvan Fadiloğlu notes that the goal for 2013 is to see 3,000 more bread collection containers distributed to new neighborhoods around the city.



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The bread collection project has been in place for 15 months, taking in a monthly average of 25 tons of stale bread.

Mayor Fadiloğlu received 2 awards for projects

At the Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) 4th International Regional Administration Directorate Competition, with the theme "Livable Cities and Aesthetics," the Şehitkamil Municipality was recognized for its efforts -- with two of its efforts in particular picking up awards. The "Solid Waste Separation Facility MÖP" project and the "Turkey's Largest Biological Lake" project were both singled out for particular recognition, and Mayor Rıdvan Fadiloğlu was presented with the awards from the hands of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself.

Noting that the MÖP project not only took steps to protect and sustain the environment but also made important contributions to the country's economy, Mayor Fadiloğlu added that this project also raised local employment levels. He talked some about the awareness campaigns being carried out by the municipality to support understanding among citizens regarding the importance of using recycling bins and what waste means for the environment. The mayor also talked about the significance of Turkey's largest biological lake, mentioning its ability to provide people with a kind of natural environment that not everyone has had the chance to enjoy before. Mayor Fadiloğlu says: "Since coming to power, my team and I have worked hard to try and provide our citizens with a more quality level of life. Our MÖP and biological lake projects have attracted much interest from our citizens. Inshallah, we will continue to work on these fronts."



Rıdvan Fadiloğlu

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As part of the MÖP Recycling Project, 120 tons of waste are sorted every day by the Şehitkamil Municipality, which constructed a waste-sorting facility on 5,000 square meters of land.



ÇÖP-MÖP PROJECT BRINGS ENERGY TO ECONOMY THROUGH WASTE

Yet another first by the Şehitkamil Municipality is the MÖP Recycling Project, which sees the sorting of packaging waste from organic waste and promotes recycling. Mayor Rıdvan Fadiloğlu notes that the facility created for this project not only helps the environment but also created jobs in the area. He explains, "This project not only helps prevent damage to the environment but also helps lead to the conservation of energy and other resources."

Within the framework of the MÖP Recycling Project, the Şehitkamil Municipality has built a solid waste collection and separation facility on 5,000 square meters of land that uses waste sorting techniques to recycle goods back into the local economy. The facility is a first among municipalities in Turkey, with a full 120 tons of waste sorted each day. The facility has taken on the important mission of not only environmental protection but sustainable preservation and recycling

standards as well. It is also noteworthy that all the machines used in the facility were made in Turkey. The facility is run by a private company that employs a staff of 27 and uses seven vehicles. The cost to build these facilities was TL 1.7 billion.

Waste placed in MÖP boxes located throughout the city center is brought by truck to the facility, where workers -- who happen to be mostly women -- then sort the waste. They divide the material into categories such as organic matter, plas-

tic, glass, paper, synthetic polymers and cardboard. After this initial sorting process, the waste is then put through special compression machines, stacked and sent off to recycling facilities. Şehitkamil Mayor Rıdvan Fadiloğlu notes that people are becoming more and more aware of the consequences of environmental damage, not only to other living things but to the world in general. Raising awareness on this front is another reason why this project is so important.

The Şehitkamil Municipality named this important recycling project "MÖP" because it would stick in people's minds. The municipality was inspired by the play on sounds of çöp-möp (like "trash-mash") and has set about placing recycling bins throughout the city. There are also posters announcing the project on many streets and a campaign that has created much higher levels of awareness among citizens of the benefits of environmental protection and recycling.



Swimmers participate in the 1st Alleben Water Sports Festival held in Gaziantep in April.

Water sports festival

As part of a series of events marking the May 19, Atatürk Youth and Sports Day, celebrations, the Şehitkamil Municipality and the Gaziantep Youth Services and Sports Directorate held the 1st Alleben Swimming Pool Water Sports Festival. Hundreds of swimmers coming from places like Adana, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya and Mersin participated.

The head of the Turkey Swimming Federation, Dr. Ahmet Mazhar Bozdoğan, attended the Alleben water sports festival and noted that the Şehitkamil Municipality had made an incredible contribution to both swimming and Turkish sports in general through building the large Alleben Swimming Pool. He said that the hope was to see further such pools built in other cities and towns throughout Turkey. Bozdoğan said: "The truth is, this organization

is precisely the kind of event that I and my colleagues at the federation want to see happening in Turkey. We want to extend our gratitude to Şehitkamil's mayor, Rıdvan Fadıoğlu, and his wonderful team for all their work on this front."

'We will always be by our athletes' sides'

At the May 19 swimming festivities, Fadıoğlu said: "On this day, we are experiencing the great pleasure of being able to see swimmers from all over the region, between the ages of 9-14, compete. Perhaps one day, swimmers who might be Turkish world champions might emerge from these Alleben pools. We are prepared to do anything necessary we can to support this. We will always be at the sides of our athletes during future competitions as well."



GAZİANTEP BOASTS TURKEY'S LARGEST, MOST SERENE AERATED LAGOON



The aerated lagoon in Şehitkamil is Turkey's most serene and largest at 5,200 square meters.

The 20,000-square-meter facility has 16 loggias with spaces for 32 people to sit. The lagoon at the facility is 5,200 square meters in size. There is also a wooden footbridge that spans the lagoon. Surrounding the lake are picnic areas, foot paths and a viewing terrace

A great sense of serenity can be felt among the trees of this forest. Stepping slowly among the trees, one can feel the softness of wild grasses beneath one's feet. The whisper of the branches in the breeze and the calls of birds all around are a natural symphony. In midweek, no one else is really around, save a few workers, and this only increases the sense of serenity.

As one takes note of how wonderful it really is to get away from the city and traffic, one happens upon a little lake that looks like a little corner of paradise in the middle of a forest. This lake is actually Turkey's largest aerated lagoon. The various kinds of flowers planted around this lagoon provide not only a rainbow of color for the eyes but also a truly aromatic infusion of oxygen for the lungs.

Approaching the water, one can take note of signs giving the actual names of these plants. So many details have been considered here.

Sitting at a wooden viewing terrace at the lagoon is Şehitkamil Mayor Rıdvan Fadıoğlu, the man whose efforts led to the creation of this scene. Fadıoğlu's eyes shine as he talks about the project, carried out in the Dülük Baba park area of Şehitkamil.

He describes some of the other projects in the area, set to open in 10 days. One of these is a children's area. This wonderful project is a space set aside amid the pines that has a truly sporty atmosphere thanks to the winding walking path. Fadıoğlu notes that because the park is so expansive, the municipality plans to add a bike path as well.

He adds that certain species of insects have been released into the forest to keep populations of potentially harmful insect species in check in a natural way. Additionally, a full 600 tons of wood collected when the trees there were trimmed last year have been distributed to the poor in neighboring towns and villages to use as fuel. The most interesting project described by the mayor is one of free electricity for this enormous area. He notes that for the first time in Turkey, a public area is producing its own energy: In a project carried out in cooperation with the İpekyolu Development Agency, solar panels have been placed throughout the park that generate 150 kilowatts of energy to power the park's facilities.

There are so many aspects to this park to be discovered. In the early morning, visitors go there to exercise. Some very serious groups of morning sports enthusiasts go out, breathing the forest air into their lungs. The energy that comes from starting a morning with this sort of oxygen is almost indescribable.

Lagoon in 20,000-square-meter park

The 5,200-square-meter lagoon is located within a 20,000-square-meter park. There is a wooden footbridge that spans the lagoon. Surrounding the lagoon are picnic areas, walking paths; activity areas, such as a climbing wall and a scout camp; and a viewing terrace. The area surrounding the lake boasts 32 different types of trees, 44 types of shrubs and 179 types of perennials.

National swimmers train at Alleben swimming pool



The Alleben 1 swimming pool is located in Şehitkamil district of Gaziantep province.

The Alleben swimming pool, a project backed by the Şehitkamil Municipality, is now a leading name in the training of future national swimmers in the region. The Şehitkamil Municipality first opened up the half Olympic-sized Alleben 1 pool and later the Alleben 2 pool. Built on an area of 6,122 square meters, the Alleben 1 pool boasts double stands, an air conditioning and heating system, eight lanes and a 150-square-meter gym. There are also dressing and shower rooms, all built according to modern standards. Those with disabilities have also not been forgotten, with a special rehabilitation pool as well as a reading and training salon on-site. The pool also has viewing stands that can seat 200 people as well as

a cafeteria decorated in a swimming theme.

Alleben 2 opens to citizens

The Alleben 2 swimming pool opened in the Karacaoglan neighborhood of Şehitkamil district, with Mayor Fadiloğlu proudly stating, "We want to train national swimmers in a city with no coastline of its own." Thousands of people have signed up for the rigorous program of lessons on offer. "Another special aspect of this particular project is that change rooms for children are separate from those for adults. Due to such carefully thought-out details, we received a special letter of thanks from our minister for youth and sports, Suat Kılıç. Our goal is to raise healthy generations," the mayor said.



Şehitkamil Mayor Ridvan Fadiloğlu (L) poses with Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız.

A municipality that produces energy with solar energy panels

▶ The Şehitkamil Municipality is producing its own energy thanks to solar energy panels. The slogan "Natural Life, Natural Energy" represents this very special project on the part of the municipality, which has worked to reduce energy costs to a minimum with the help of the solar panels. With support from the İpekyolu Development Agency, the municipality installed 170 solar panels throughout the higher elevations of Dülük Nature Park, over an area of 300 square meters. In this way, the municipality aims to take maximum advantage of the sun's power. With the electricity generated from these panels, the energy needs of Turkey's largest aerated lagoon are being met. The next goal on the municipality's agenda is to see solar panels installed atop buildings in the city to help meet electricity needs.

Minister Yıldız calls on other municipalities to take notice

Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yıldız examined these solar panels while on a visit to Gaziantep and congratulated Mayor Ridvan Fadiloğlu on his work, noting that it is a project that should be taken as an example by other municipalities. Thus far, approximately 33 megawatts (MW) of energy have been generated from these solar panels. Mayor Fadiloğlu says: "Though it may not be a very large-scale project, we had to start somewhere with a prototype. We have seen what we can do in an area of around 300 square meters. Going forward, we want to work with building rooftops. Our real aim has always been to use this project to show what we can do. And, in this, we have certainly been successful."



The Şehitkamil Municipality has constructed a modern pentathlon field and scout camp to support the healthy development of children and young people who can engage in various sporting activities there.

A CAMP WHERE CHILDREN LEARN TEAM SPIRIT



Şehitkamil Mayor Fadiloğlu says that the modern pentathlon field and scout camp constructed by his municipality are aimed at the 5-14 age group in particular

▶ The Şehitkamil Municipality has developed another project to support the healthy development of children and young people. It involved the creation of a field suitable for pentathlons and a scout camp in the Dülük forest area. Children and youths will have the opportunity not just to have fun here but to also learn to work well in a team.

Mayor Ridvan Fadiloğlu notes that in addition to learning to work together, one of the primary goals of this project is to see young people get more involved in sports. The modern pentathlon field and scout camp in particular are aimed at the 5-14 age group, says Mayor Fadiloğlu.



The Şehitkamil Municipality has installed feeding and drinking points around city parks for stray animals.

No more hungry or thirsty street animals

▶ The Şehitkamil Municipality has placed feeding and drinking points around city parks in an effort to ensure that no more street animals are left hungry or thirsty. This special service has elicited widespread approval from local citizens. Mayor Ridvan Fadiloğlu says, "By implementing this concept in all our parks, we have created spots where birds can fly down and easily obtain water and where dogs can come and easily find food and water."



Old, historic structures throughout the Şehitkamil Municipality are being lovingly repaired and restored.

A greener, more livable environment

▶ The Şehitkamil Municipality embraces history. Old and historical structures throughout the Şehitkamil Municipality are being lovingly restored and repaired by the local administration, with the general aim being to pass on the rich fabric of the city in a good condition to future generations.