

Canadians in Support of Afghan Women

An Affiliate of CW4WAfghan



Address: 1515 Rebecca Street, Suite 227, Oakville, ON L6L 5G8

Call: 905 825 3622

Email: info@canadianssupportafghanwomen.ca

www.canadianssupportafghanwomen.ca

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Photograph by
Steve McCurry

A DREAM CAME TRUE

We **DARED** to **DREAM** and with **overwhelming support** received a **MIRACLE!!** by Bev LeFrancois

Years ago, CSAW raised money for tents and rugs so the Afghan children could have a school. Hungry to learn, they attended their tent schools, at times in wind, cold or stifling heat. Over time, the tents deteriorated, beyond repair. This past summer, we



started a building fund with some apprehension knowing this would be a huge commitment for our small group. This was the beginning of our Dream. We shared our Dream with **Ashsaque Khan**, a retired engineer from Calgary, volunteer with Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WA) and a powerful dreamer himself. He shared the Dream with **his family** and together they donated half the funds needed to construct a school building. In August, Khan went to Afghanistan, met with the



Principal, our heroine, **Nazaneen Majeed** (see photo above left) and when he returned on January 10, he left behind a twelve room school building!

During the construction of the school, CSAW's **Linda Middaugh** was in constant communication with Khan and received the following e-mail from him on October 14: *"Every day when I am on site at 11a.m. there comes a windstorm and the tents are flopping and the sand blowing in our face, then I say to myself this is the perfect site to build a school. Later on when the sun moves over the horizon, the kids are exposed to the sun and they are cramped sometimes 100 in a tent. Then again I reaffirm our commitment."*



We shared our Dream with friend, **Sally Armstrong** (see photo at left), who immediately reached out to her community and joined in a fundraiser on November 23 where she introduced her second book about Afghanistan, *'Bitter Roots, Tender Shoots'*. **'The Power of One'** Committee from St. John's United Church co-hosted the fundraiser and journalist, **Angela Blackburn** from "The Oakville Beaver", ensured the larger community was aware. In just three months, the DREAM to build a school was realized!

This school will benefit 5000 people, mainly returning refugees, as it will double as their community centre. The parents' DREAM for education for their children, especially their daughters, will go on.



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR AFGHAN STUDENTS

As Described by Principal, Nazaneen Majeed

The school year is from September to June and the hours are from 8:00 A.M to 1:30 P.M. From Kindergarten to Grade 3, the students study Reading, Writing, English, Pushtu, the Holy Quran, Mathematics, Science, Physical Education and Health. From grade 4 onward, History, Geography, Dari and Ethics are added.



Most of the children walk to school since they live in the local village. The children sit on rugs (there are no funds to buy school furniture). There is a small well for the school but it is foreseen that a larger well may be needed to service the washrooms. The new school has no

computer access since there is no electrical or telecommunications infrastructure in the village. Because of a lack of equipment, there are no organized sports, music nor recreational activities. However, soccer is one game that is commonly played by both girls and boys.

There are approximately 1000 children attending the school but it is expected that this number will increase. For this reason, the old tents that are still usable will continue to be used as classrooms but they will be placed close to the newly constructed building providing an opportunity to accommodate future students.

There is no literacy training for the adults in this area. Nazaneen has spent much of her effort trying to establish such a program, but finds it very frustrating considering the current challenges.

I want to become a doctor to help poor people. Afghan people are very away from education. Therefore we have to get high education to rescue our country from darkness. - Khalida, an Afghan girl!

PROJECTS

Money we raise supports our three projects in Afghanistan:

- The Afghan Women's Resource Centre (AWRC): 100% of the proceeds of our sales of their beautifully handcrafted goods are sent back to allow women to support themselves & their families.
- The Library Fund: Used to rebuild destroyed library resources
- Nazaneen Jabarkhil Education & Health for Afghan Women & Children (NEHC): Funds raised help 5000 Afghan children attend school. With the help of our donors we also contributed to the building of a NEHC school in Afghanistan. See more details under "A Deam Came True" on the front page.

With your generous help since its inception in 1999, we have now reached the \$500,000.00 mark in funding these three projects. **Truly a MILESTONE MOMENT in the history of CSAW!!!!**

WE COULDN'T DO WITHOUT YOU!

Thanks to all of our donors especially those who help to sustain our projects every year:

- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario - Halton Local
- Women of Halton Action Movement - WHAM
- Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan - Calgary
- "A Tiny Shift" and "John Beaudette Web Design" for their computer savvy and services

An **enormous thank you** also to each and every donor who contributed so generously as a result of the Fundraiser on November 23rd 2008 at which Sally Armstrong spoke. Sally's words about the women and girls in Afghanistan and the presentation about the new school moved us so profoundly motivating many to act selflessly by donating to the school fund

Kudos to the **grade 5 students of the Khalsa Community School** in Malton who raised \$900 for the new school project. The money will be used towards teachers' salaries and for supplies and equipment for the Afghan students.

Our holy religion Islam gives to men and women equal rights. Woman is a person that she can bring brightness for her society but unfortunately our society can not give rights to her. At this time there is a lot of violence to women but we want to get knowledge to improve the society because women are deserving her rights...Maria, an Afghan Girl

Want A Fulfilling Way to Spend Time?

Are you are looking for meaningful volunteer work, work that makes a global difference? We would welcome you at CSAW. Our goals are varied: presenting a Human Rights Program in schools; making presentations to raise awareness in the community; selling and marketing Afghan goods. Or perhaps your skills suit administration, finance or technology. Whatever time you have to give would be appreciated. Join us on the second Thursday of each month at 9:30AM for our monthly meetings at the ETFO offices, 4475 North Service Road, Burlington, Ontario, Room 101 in the Voortmans Office building at Appleby Line, just north of the QEW. If further information is needed, please call Daniela at **905 338 0416**

BOOKS ON AFGHANISTAN

"Bitter Roots, Tender Shoots" by Sally Armstrong,. This book is a moving portrayal of the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan in 2008. "Masterfully crafted. . .a stirring call to action that both honours women everywhere and shakes the very foundation of



our misconceptions. With the heart of a warrior, Armstrong dares to share the unspoken and challenge our beliefs. . .an absolute must read." Stephen Clare, CKDU Radio, Halifax

"Three Cups of Tea" by Greg Mortenson and David O. Relin. The inspiring account of one man's campaign to build schools in the most dangerous, remote and anti-American reaches of Asia. It's an unforgettable adventure and true story of how one man is changing the world, one school at a time.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM AGM/NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN KINGSTON, ON - October 2008

Courage To Learn: Education of Afghan Women & Girls

Welcomed by Janice Eisenhauer, Carolyn Reicher of CW4WA set the tone of the conference by using tasks that enhanced positive feelings we had about who we are, and about the tasks we were about to accomplish during our two days there. We came face to face with many inspiring women, such as; Roya Rahmani, Lauryn Oates, Donna Kennedy-Glans, Spogmai Akseer, Marianne O'Grady, Saghar Baqeri and Alaina and Jaime Podmorrow; women who enlightened us by gently forcing us to experience Afghanistan through their eyes and hearts and by encouraging us to examine our own thoughts and ideas about the education of girls and women in Afghanistan. Committees were struck to get other members and affiliate members across the country involved in strategic planning for the whole organization. Sally Armstrong supported our endeavours by speaking at the dinner held in the army barracks of the Royal Military College. Especially poignant was the tribute to not only the soldier from the Kingston area that was killed while on duty in Afghanistan but to the three humanitarian workers, such as Jackie Kirk [scheduled to present at our conference], who were murdered in August 2008 while working in Afghanistan. They were indeed **"The Best of Canadians"**.

Their legacy is the cornerstone for every decision we make regarding the education of Afghan women and girls in the future.



At the conference in Kingston, Linda Middaugh and Saghar Baqeri discuss the training of teachers in Kabul.

We have many hopes and dreams in our hearts. We want that our dreams and hopes become fact. We have many hopes from you. - Zerghana, an Afghan Student