



CHAMPION AWARD

October 4, 2014

Victoria - The non-profit, charitable organization *Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan* (CW4WAfghan) is pleased to present the organization's annual *Champion of Education in Afghanistan Award* to a remarkable woman: Seattle native Marnie Gustavson, a long-time resident in Kabul, Afghanistan. The award is being presented at the organization's annual symposium, to be held at the Delta Hotel in Victoria Oct 4th. This award is presented annually to recognize an individual or individuals who have given outstanding service to the cause of supporting education for girls or women in Afghanistan.

Marnie Gustavson spent part of her childhood in Afghanistan, where her father had been hired to teach at the university during the 1960s, a time when the country enjoyed peace and an optimism prevailed in the country. Her love for Afghanistan never dissipated and she found herself back in the country after the fall of the Taliban regime. By then, Marnie had a long career as a social worker in the US, where she had raised a family. But Afghanistan called her back, and she eventually came to work with a long-time CW4WAfghan partner organization, PARSA (Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Support for Afghanistan), founded during the Taliban regime. Today, Marnie is PARSA's executive director, and has spent many years working to grow and strengthen the organization into an effective vehicle of social development.



Janice Eisenhauer, CW4WAfghan's Executive Director, states, *"Marnie has provided outstanding leadership throughout PARSA's growth, and has become a renowned advocate of the Afghan people, dedicating her life to community and social development in her adopted home, Afghanistan. We are honoured to recognize this most worthy recipient of the Champion Award."*

PARSA's motto is *"supporting communities as they make their own development solutions, focusing on promoting social change and a healthy and fair society for all people but especially women and children."* PARSA works on a range of social protection issues, training Afghans as social workers, fighting for the reform of Afghanistan's notorious state orphanages, managing the Afghan scouting program, and supporting women's economic development through their

Trade Afghan initiative. PARSA works with some of Afghanistan's most vulnerable populations, including the mentally disabled, orphaned children, and female heads-of-households.

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