

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan Oakville Chapter

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Formerly Canadians in Support of Afghan Women



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Funds Raised to Train Six Teachers

(by Liz Watson)

The atmosphere in Milton, Ontario, was full of positive energy on Thursday October 26th, 2015 when the Oakville chapter of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan [formerly Canadians in Support of Afghan Women] hosted a fundraising event. The event consisted of a screening of the profoundly honest and graphic documentary "Honor Diaries". About 65 participants came out to watch the film and to hear remarks from special guest, renowned human rights activist and one of the writers and producers of the film, Raheel Raza. People lingered afterwards to discuss the film, to decide what action they could take, to ask more questions of Raheel, and to enjoy homemade refreshments and the Afghan marketplace. One young high school student who attended with her family was most excited about returning to her school and creating awareness among fellow students on the concept of honour violence against women. Another participant, Eric Balkind, was moved to publish a Letter to the Editor in the local paper, *The Milton Champion*. Because of this event, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan-Oakville Chapter, along with participants from all over Halton, raised enough money to train six Afghan teachers that night. The teachers will be trained through the CW4WAfghan Fanoos Project also known as **The Lantern Fund**. "A Teacher is a candle that burns to enlighten others" Afghan Proverb



Just Not Another Jewelry Party

(by Elaine Scott)

On May 12, 2015 a group of enthusiastic women gathered at the home of Sandy MacTavish in Mississauga to participate in a fund raising activity for us. This was not just another jewelry party! It was informative, thought provoking, entertaining and downright fun. Linda Middaugh spoke about her experiences when she visited Afghanistan and how every \$400 raised supports the training of a teacher to go out into her community and teach women and children how to read and write. Only 20% of Afghan women are literate, dropping to only 2% in some remote areas. Barb Wood set up the Afghan Marketplace. That afternoon 16 enthusiastic women spent \$800, which in turn allowed the Afghan artisans to receive fair trade for their goods. We also thank the women who made individual donations.

CW4WAfghan AGM/Symposium BANFF

Global Citizenship

(by Barb Wood)

Once again, our AGM experience in Banff was exceptional. The theme was Global Citizenship and, with the support of the Alberta Teachers' Association, we hosted 100 students for their own session on this subject. Dr. Lauryn Oates provided the keynote address and Christine Wilde provided input on Roundtable discussions. Lauryn talked about the new On-Line Library that is now available. Our presenters were Fawad Akbari, a senior program manager with the Aga Khan Foundation who talked about Development in Afghanistan, Mike Dawson on Ustad Mobile, an open source mobile learning platform, and Letha Goger on her work with Open Educational Resources. Joining us via Skype was Jawshidd Hashimi, founder of The Book Club Afghanistan and technology developer, and our own Murwarid Ziayee who was so disappointed not to be able to attend. She gave a very up-to-date report on our status in Afghanistan. At our Awards Dinner, Sally Armstrong spoke on what the future holds for Afghan women and Raheel Raza entertained us on Celebrating our Diversities. Congratulations to Murwarid on being our Champion of Education for 2015..



For our 2016 AGM/Symposium, we are off to Ottawa in September.

An Incredible Friend - Marianne Van der Wel

(By Linda Middaugh)

Kudos to Marianne Van der Wel who has been an incredible friend of our organization since we first met her at the McMaster University Fair Trade in 2007. Since then, she has been very generous with her computer skills, her knowledge, her passion and her financial resources. Marianne has been a member of our steering, education and communication committees and was a delegate to our conference in Kelowna, B.C. She compiles our yearly newsletter, which is distributed at the IWD Dinner Party and throughout the year. She has worn and continues to wear many community hats, both here and abroad. For 25 years, she was a Girl Guide Leader, District Commissioner and is a recipient of the Gold Merit Award. Her involvement with McMaster spans 56 years, as a student, as an employee in Computing Services (an operator, programmer, system manager, teacher, consultant, web designer and liaison the with Engineering Faculty) and volunteer with her retirees association. With this extensive background, Marianne created a Virtual Office and a Web Site for our organization. We have also benefited from her financial support of over \$2700. **THANK YOU Marianne for these past 8 years!**



Breaking Bread: One of our initiatives for fundraising is to ask people to hold Breaking Bread potluck dinners in their homes or community. The host invites a number of interested friends to a potluck supper and asks for donations towards CW4WAfghan. Please see us if you are interested in a Breaking Bread event or hosting a Jewelry party and we will only be too happy to help.

Khalsa Community School Takes Action

(By Liz Watson)

We have had a longstanding relationship with Khalsa Community School, from student presentations at the school, to connecting students to author Deborah Ellis, and to introducing them to Alaina Podmorro of "Little Women for Little Women in Afghanistan". This past March 2015, one of our members, Famia Haidary, made a presentation to the students which included her personal experiences in Afghanistan. There was one story in particular that profoundly affected one of the female students to come to Famia afterwards, in tears. "I met a 14 year old girl who was the third and youngest wife of her husband. She was pregnant. The older wives took care of her as a daughter and not as another wife," Famia said, and added "I tried to give her money but her husband refused. The women and girls in that family are not allowed out alone making going to school impossible." The students then raised \$3,847, for us. We sincerely thank the Khalsa Community School for continuing to support us, being the change we need in this world.



Khalsa Community School, Brampton, ON, Canada

A Journey through Light

by Liz Watson who wrote this piece after visiting the Aga Khan museum

Walking into light

feeling a sense of calm, a sense of peace, immediate and lasting,

Light, drawing us into every aspect, every crevice of this place

Light illuminating every facet of the geometric designs on the floor and the walls

Islamic calligraphy, words celebrating the spirit of Allah

Light, creating shadow patterns on the wall

Illusions in stairs of royal blue and white like the inside of a shell

Reflecting pools, frozen in thought

Light in the white plaster walls being carved skillfully into geometric designs

Stunning beauty emerging.

The soft pattern of the crystal lights showing us the way

And the lapis lazuli bar reflecting soft shades of blues with thin stripes of gold

All chosen from the very heart of the earth

An architect's vision celebrated

A pearl, a diamond at the top of the hill shining into the dark night like a giant star

Bathed in the light, we feel whole.



Aga Khan Foundation

(by Dale Butterill)

"The Aga Khan Foundation aims to offer insight and perspectives into Islamic civilizations and the cultural threads that weave through history binding us all together, a centre of



education and of learning, thus acting as a catalyst for mutual understanding and tolerance." In early January, Jan Beddoe organized a wonderful day for our steering committee at the Ismaili Centre and the Museum. Starting at the Ismaili Centre we saw spaces for religious, contemplative, cultural, educational and recreational purposes. Its design reflects the traditions of Islamic architecture, with the most striking feature being the prayer hall with a stunning frosted glass dome. Then we walked to the Museum across the Aga Khan Park with five pools, reflecting the two buildings. Between the tours we rested over lunch in the open-roofed courtyard. This space is filled with light that changes depending on the time of day and throws patterns on the interior. While waiting for our docent for the Museum tour, Ontario's Premier, Kathleen Wynne, came in with her family for a visit. After a few pleasant exchanges and a photograph, our docent greeted us to begin the tour.

On display are 300 works, just under a third of the collection whose origins span the Iberian Peninsula to China. We saw architectural friezes and panels; calligraphic works; colorful ceramics; metal work, such as a very large embossed candlestick made out of hammered brass with sculptural lions encircling the base; tex-

tiles; carpets; and hand painted manuscripts of minute scale and great delicacy selected on a rotational basis to encompass respect for different cultures and religions. The Museum also houses a magnificent teak performance hall and a brilliant blue lapis lazuli refreshment bar outside the hall. We left with a much deeper understanding of the Ismaili view of Islam: a thinking, spiritual faith with an emphasis on compassion, tolerance and human dignity. From the architecture to the artifacts, we were moved. The Aga Khan Foundation has created a wonderful, welcoming introduction to the great Islamic contributions to the world's interwoven cultures, history, and sciences.

Our Jan. 2016 visit to the Aga Khan museum while Ontario's Premier Kathleen Wynne was visiting as well.



"Be the change you wish to see in the world" Ghandi
Aga Khan Museum web site: www.agakhanmuseum.org

We Couldn't Do It Without You!

(by Linda Middaugh)

CW4WAfghan-Oakville (formerly CSAW) thanks you for your interest, time, financial and in-kind support over the last 17 years. Since 1999, your contributions have resulted in thousands of Afghan children being able to get an education. It's remarkable! We have received \$697,000.00+ in donations that we distributed to our partners in Afghanistan. Once again, we are pleased to name our long-term, sustaining donors:

- Women of Halton Action Movement (WHAM)
- Zonta Club of Oakville
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: Halton Local
- Brampton Business and Professional Women's Group
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers – District 20 Halton
- Khalsa Community School
- Kortright Hills Public School
- 'John Beaudette Web Design' & MarianneVanderWel 's skills

Applaud the many named below for their support this past year:

- Women of Halton Action Movement (WHAM) & Zonta of Oakville donated \$15,700 from their 2015 International Women's Day Dinner Party (IWD) for a 12 year total to over \$134,200.00!!!
- Ontario Secondary School Federation (District 20 Halton) & the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Halton Local who participated in the IWD Dinner Party fundraiser and directly contributed to Afghan teachers' salaries.
- Ms. Sheila Zanyk, on our Steering Committee, and her enrichment students at Kortright Hills Public School in Wellington who held an Evening of Arts which raised \$1103.00 in donations and sold \$105.00 worth of Afghan goods.
- St. George's Lowville Anglican Church for providing both storage, meeting and event space for our organization.
- The Lydia Snow Retired Women Teachers', United Church Women at High Country United Church and the Toronto Occasional Teachers groups for hosting an information event, selling Afghan goods and donating to the Lantern Fund.
- Sandy MacTavish for hosting an information & Afghan jewelry sale: It's Not Just Another Jewelry Party,
- With the help of our volunteers, over \$13,012.00 worth of Afghan goods and books were sold this past year.

Additional Reading

(by Elaine Scott)

The Lovers: Afghanistan's Romeo & Juliet - The true story of how they defied their families and escaped an honor killing. This is a non fiction book written by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author Rod Norland. Published in 2014 by Harper Collins, it is a dramatic and heart wrenching story of determination by two lovers to defy cultural norms to be together.

Available at the Different Drummer bookstore in Burlington.