



The Voice of Innocence

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HELP THE AFGHAN CHILDREN (HTAC)

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, 501-C-3, TAX ID: 54-1695838, ESTABLISHED IN 1993

Volume XIII Issue 4 December 2009

2009 Progress Report from the Field

HTAC continually strives to keep our readers informed of how our work is making a difference for thousands of Afghan children. Here's what's been happening since our September "Voice of Innocence" newsletter:

- 42,447 primary through high school students (64% of whom are girls), completed their studies at 12 HTAC-supported schools in three Afghan provinces. The new Afghan school year begins in late March to coincide with the beginning of spring.



- 7,365 high school students (59% of whom are girls), completed our computer education program with many graduating seniors going on to obtain computer-related jobs.

- 875 students completed peace education studies at 12 schools, marking our successful launch of our innovative *peace education storybooks*. We began preparing for the launch of a new peace education initiative for 7 additional schools in the Paghman District, west of Kabul.

- 450 students at 6 schools completed our hands-on environmental education course with successful eco-related projects implemented at all six facilities.

- HTAC's unique bi-lingual "Read Afghanistan" literacy program was expanded to a full course and offered to another 450 students.

- HTAC expanded our landmine education program with the addition of a second internet-connected school in Laghman Province.

- We continued to provide general operating support, training, and maintenance of our 8 community-based model schools.



A special thanks to our partners and individual donors who make this work possible.

HTAC Memorial Fund Honors Fallen U.S. Marine

Capt. Matthew Freeman Cared About Afghan Children



“Can you get a fund raiser going for pens and paper, Mom? The kids are so cute and the people are so nice. The kids don’t care about water or food. They just want to learn to read and write. I’ve given out all my pens except what I can’t do without.” (A conversation Capt. Freeman had with his mother a few weeks before he died.)

Like so many American soldiers who have served in Afghanistan, Capt. Matthew Freeman felt strongly that education (particularly the education of Afghan children) was the key to making Afghanistan a peaceful, free, and democratic country. Tragically, Capt. Freeman had been married for only a month and had been in Afghanistan for only two weeks when he was killed on August 7, 2009. He was 29 years old.

Inspired by Matthew’s wishes, his mother, Lisa, family members, friends, as well as members of the Wilton (Connecticut) High School Class of 1969, wanted to establish a special memorial fund in Matthew’s name to benefit Afghan children and they turned to HTAC as their charity of choice. After careful consideration and discussion with his family, all of us felt that a wonderful way to honor Matthew would be to target all funds raised to support HTAC’s “Read Afghanistan” Literacy Program including: the printing and distribution of our storybooks to schools and school libraries, training teachers to utilize these books in the classroom to support the literacy curriculum, and storybook-related exchange activities between Afghan schools and their ‘sister’ schools in the U.S. to promote greater understanding and global citizenship.

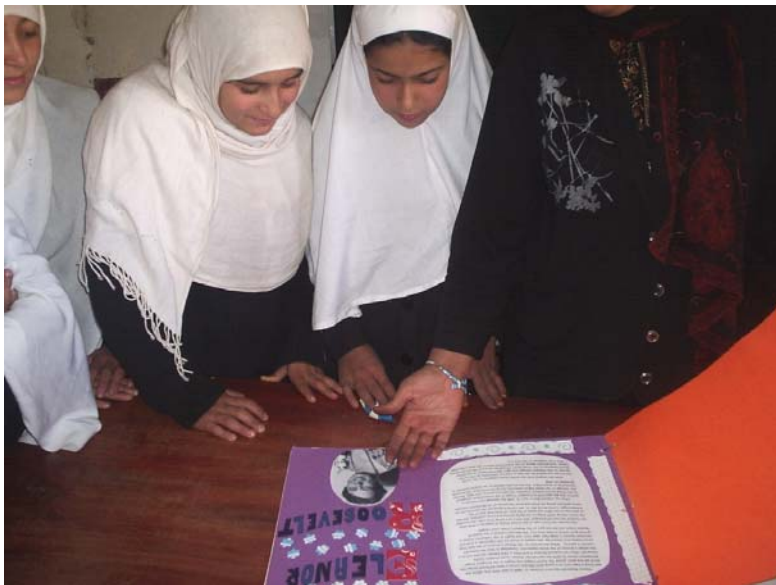
HTAC is honored to help sponsor and promote The Captain Matthew Freeman Memorial Fund and we invite our donors and friends to support this effort in giving deserving Afghan children the *gift of literacy*. To learn more and how you can support this fund, go to our website home page: www.htac.org and click on our ‘What’s New?’ link, or contact us at: 703 848-0407.

“Heroines” Scrapbook Inspires Afghan Girls

HTAC’s highly-successful Cultural Exchange Program not only promotes ‘global citizenship’ between hundreds of Afghan and American students each year; it oftentimes inspires. Such was the case between a class of students at Westfield High School in Westfield New Jersey (a chapter school of Girls Learn International, an HTAC partner), and students at their ‘sister school’ in Abdullah Bin-Omar Middle School in the Paghman District of Afghanistan, just west of Kabul.

The Westfield class of girls created a scrapbook of heroines with women as diverse as Eleanor Roosevelt, Gloria Steinem and Oprah Winfrey. The girls pasted photos of their heroines along with their biographical profiles. They wanted to let their sister school classmates in Afghanistan know why these women were so inspirational to them.

In late September of this year, HTAC Executive Director, Suraya Sadeed took the Westfield scrapbook with her to Afghanistan and delivered it to the Abdullah Bin-Omar class. Their teacher gratefully accepted this beautiful gift and shared it with her class, translating the profiles as she turned each page so her students could understand the amazing stories of the women behind these pictures.



Abdulla Bin Omar students learn about Eleanor Roosevelt and other heroines.

For the girls at Abdullah Bin-Omar, many of these heroines were new to them. One, though, was quite familiar – Oprah Winfrey – whose portrait happens to be displayed in the school’s *Peace Room*.

The pictures and stories so inspired the students, they decided to prepare a ‘heroes’ scrapbook of their own. The girls selected a wide range of people including Gandhi and even Muhammad Ali. Ironically, one of the women they included in their scrapbook was our very own Suraya Sadeed.

When the Westfield students received their scrapbook gift from their sister school, they discovered an ironic link between two heroines. Several years ago, HTAC’s Suraya Sadeed had been recognized by Oprah Winfrey (on her television show) as a champion and heroine for Afghan children. Ms. Winfrey was so inspired by Suraya’s personal story and accomplishments, her foundation provided the funds to establish Abdullah Bin-Omar and several other HTAC model schools!

HTAC believes strongly in these cultural exchanges as unique and meaningful experiences for students to share their lives and backgrounds, exchange ideas, and work on common projects that will promote cross-cultural appreciation, mutual respect, and learning. HTAC donors and friends can learn more about our program by going to our website: www.htac.org or contacting our office at 703 848-0407.

East & West Coast Benefits Raise Funds for Peace, Literacy & Schools

Thanks to our donors, partners, and friends, two recent benefits, one in Virginia, the other in California, raised approximately \$25,000 to support two key HTAC educational programs and one of our model schools.

On September 10, 2009, HTAC donors and friends attended a dinner and benefit program at the Crowne Plaza Tysons Corner in McLean, Virginia to learn about and give their support to our peace and literacy programs. Guests were treated to a delicious Afghan diner, presentations by Nina Sughrue (from the United States Institute of Peace) and HTAC's Executive Director and founder, Suraya Sadeed and a slide show highlighting these programs.



Over 700 attended Mom's Against Poverty annual gala that raised funds for HTAC and three other charities.

On October 3, 2009 in Burlingame, California, over 700 party-goers braved fierce winds and danced the night away at the second annual Moms Against Poverty (MAP) Gala which raised funds for HTAC's Rokhshana High School and three other charities. HTAC is extremely grateful to all our donors, friends, and good partners (such as MAP), who so generously support our work, making it possible for us to continue delivering our programs and services to thousands of Afghan children each year.

Important Information about Our Newsletters!

For the last several editions of "The Voice of Innocence", we've been telling our readers that beginning in 2010, we were 'going green'; that no more paper newsletters will be mailed out except for those readers who DO NOT have access to a computer and the internet. Readers would be able to read our quarterly newsletter on our website and we'd provide those interested in receiving an electronic copy, beginning with our March 2010 edition.

Because so many readers told us-they still wanted to receive hard copy newsletters-we have decided to do the following:

- We will continue to mailing our newsletters the *old-fashioned way* to those who want hard copy newsletters.
- We will provide *electronic copies* to those who provided us with their email addresses.
- We will *continue to post* our newsletters on our website: www.htac.org

Readers who have questions and/or wish to change their designations should please contact Stephen Perlman in our Fairfax, Virginia office at Stephen@htac.org or (703) 848-0407.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥ You Can Make a Difference ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

- \$25 Provides a month of essential school supplies to 5 students.
- \$100 Pays for planting a school garden (students will help maintain).
- \$500 Helps support a school's Peace Room activities for one year.
- \$1000 Pays for a school's cultural exchange program for one year.
- Other \$_____ General operations support

- Become an outreach volunteer
- Help sponsor a school or educational program

WAYS TO GIVE:

On Line: www.htac.org/donate

By Mail: **Help the Afghan Children**
3900 Jermantown Road, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22030, USA

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