

Woman brings education to poor children in war-torn Afghanistan

By Molly Nance
STAFF WRITER

RANCHO SANTA FE — Fary Moini's story is that of a woman with extreme courage and the will to make a difference.

Since the dawn of the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan after Sept. 11, Moini, a Muslim originally from Iran, has worked at the ground level in refugee camps at the Afghan and Pakistan border.

She continues to go back to the war zone area of Jalalabad, Afghanistan, as her current humanitarian project is to fulfill the dreams of women obtaining education beyond the sixth grade at the Najmul Jihad Rotary School in Jalalabad.

"All of these years of the Taliban, women have not been allowed to continue their education," Moini said. "It's their families and their traditional culture. They don't allow girls to attend school because of the lack of female teachers."

As a La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary member and resident of San Diego since the early 1980s, Moini has spread

TURN TO EDUCATION ON 9



COURTESY PHOTOGRAPH

Fary Moini and Steve Brown of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary are helping young women to further their education beyond the sixth grade in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

EDUCATION

CONTINUED FROM 3

the word from Jalalabad to San Diego that in order for female teachers to reside on the school campus, they need a private dormitory, separate from the men.

She has teamed up with fellow Rotarian Steve Brown, who has assisted Moini in gathering resources that span from financing a co-ed school in Jalalabad, to stateside moral support.

Brown accompanied Moini on five departures to Jalalabad, but he said the most memorable trip was during the opening ceremony at the school.

"Who would ever have thought that a Rotary Club in San Diego would ever be able to build a very nice school in

Afghanistan? It was a dream come true for Fary, myself and other members of the club," Brown said.

Moini's and Brown's efforts to raise money for the school piqued the interest of two Rancho Santa Fe residents.

Anne Pelling, a former social worker, and Jane Scallan, a retired elementary school teacher, jumped at the chance to help Moini once they heard of her work.

"These women have been extinguished by the Taliban," Scallan said. "Fary saw the plight of the women and because of that, she really effected us."

"I think she's done what a lot of people would like to have done in Afghanistan," Pelling said. "And she's accomplished it."

Scallan and Pelling initially raised \$40,000 that went

directly to the school in Jalalabad. They are continuing to support Moini and the school through fundraising efforts at Nativity Church, where aid is flowing from people with a variety of religious backgrounds.

"We had such multi-religious help," Scallan said.

Moini said she is extremely grateful for Scallan's and Pelling's contribution.

"These are amazing, amazing women. I am blessed to have them in my life," Moini said.

As Moini continues to travel to Jalalabad, she said that despite the fact that the city is in a war zone, the community has been supportive of her.

"The parents are welcoming. We talk with the elders and are aware that education is an important key for success for their children," Moini said.

When asked is she ever gets frightened in that environment, Moini said she believes that her work in Jalalabad is not compromised by danger.

"In a wrong time, wrong place, there is always danger," Moini said. "My philosophy is, I will not allow those cowards that are trying to scare us, scare me. I will not allow that. I'm not scared, it's my passion, and it's my reason. I love what I'm doing and will continue to do whatever I can."

In an effort to raise more money for the new dormitory at the Najmul Jihad Rotary School in Jalalabad, the Nativity Church is hosting a jewelry drive Dec. 9.

For more information, contact Anne Pelling at (858) 759-9016.

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