

The Initiative To Educate Afghan Women

NEWS & Events

From the Founder

This is the time of year that we give thanks for all that we have in our lives.

I wish to thank the many donors to the IEAW. I am increasingly motivated each time I receive financial backing from so many, knowing that you all believe in what the IEAW stands for. I will continue to educate as many Afghan women as I can: you all have my commitment furthering this opportunity to more Afghan women, ultimately increasing female representation in the professional work force in Afghanistan. We are all witnessing people from two countries coming to understand one another, learning to live together while the students are in the States, and sharing common goals.

At this time we must also give a major thank you to the colleges that offer scholarships. It goes without saying that if the scholarships were not there, our students would not be receiving their due education. Each college has given their commitment to educating Afghan women in an effort to affect the lives of so many going forward in Afghanistan. As we all know, when you educate a woman you educate a family, community and country!

There are so many people to thank on the college campuses that our students attend. The process normally starts with key people in admissions like Phyllis, Barbara, Jane, Kerry, and Marilyn, that really take it on as their mission to have the IEAW students on their campuses! Then there are the excellent folks in the international offices like Marina, Jackie, Uliana, Kathy, Effie and Carlisle. They welcome these women with open arms and offer them care and assistance that help these women succeed. First year program leaders like Elizabeth, and faculty advisors like Penny are on board helping the students know that they are special, unique individuals.

In this newsletter you will hear more about the "village" effort that is given at all the IEAW schools. The students and I join together and say thank you so very much for all of the support, financial and otherwise that is provided by these very special colleges and the people that work there.

Also we recognize that all of you who choose to financially support the IEAW help this mission to expand year after year.

This is my time to qualify candidates, solidify new scholarships, and match the two.

There are so many capable women on our waiting list. I hope that we can expand heartily once again next year.

Thank you all for being there. Wishing you and the people of our world a holiday filled with sharing and peace.

With warmth,



Paula Nirschel



Muska, Margie, and her daughter Fiona, who also attends the University of Richmond

IEAW Coordinator Hired

Margie Ellis is the new coordinator for the IEAW.

She will be wearing many hats in this new position. In addition to coordinating all the travel and plans for the academic year and intersession, Margie will be checking in with students monthly to hear what needs they might have. Locating new scholarship opportunities is also a part of her effort.

Margie was born and brought up in Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Cape Town, and her Masters in Education at the University of Rhodesia. Margie taught at high schools in Zimbabwe and at the college level in the US. She is a mother of 3 daughters and was a key volunteer in their schools and community. Margie also served as a church organist, pianist and accompanist for many years.

The students know that Margie can relate to their experience of leaving their homeland and having to adjust to life in a country unlike their own.

Her compassion, in addition to her professional and life skills highly benefit the IEAW.

We are very fortunate to now have Margie as a key partner in the IEAW mission!



New Villages

Each year new campus “villages” join the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women. When our new schools accept students they also make a substantial commitment to the extra care that is always given to these deserving women from Afghanistan. Each college knows that the IEAW will ask that they go beyond their normal course of overseeing student needs, since these women have been through the horrors of recent wars and female oppression.

This year is no different from the others. People from all parts of campus life have come together to ensure that our students know that they are special. Representatives from admissions, international, faculty, returning students and the like have done an excellent job at welcoming these valuable individuals.

Please join me in thanking the folks that are seen in these photos from our IEAW campuses.

Photos (people listed from left to right)

- Duke:** (front) from Admissions: Phyllis Supple, Assoc. Director, Coordinator, Int'l Admissions; Rabia; Anne Sjostrom, Assoc. Director; (back): Leonard Satterwhite, Senior Assoc. Director; Janice Rutherford, Staff Specialist, Int'l Admissions; Milton A. Blackmon, Asst. Director, Pre-Major Advising Center, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences
- Middlebury:** Monica McCabe, Int'l Student & Scholar Services Program Coordinator; Kathy Foley-Giorgio, Assoc. Dean,

- Student Affairs/Director, ISSS; Zohra; Jennifer Havlicek, ISSS Immigration Specialist
- Middlebury:** Barbara Marlow, Assoc. Director, Admissions, who oversees int'l student admission, meeting Zohra for the first time
- Mt. Holyoke:** Jane Brown, VP, Enrollment & College Relations; Donna Van Handle, Dean, Int'l Students; Kay Althoff, Director, Frances Perkins Program; Sadiqa; Malalay; Penny Gill, IEAW students' advisor; Carolyn Dietel, Assoc. Director, Frances Perkins Program



- Richmond:** Michele Cox, Director, Int'l Programs, Muska's host mom; Muska; Kritika Onsanit, Int'l Student Advisor; Dr. Uliana Gabara, Dean, Int'l Education; Pam Spence, Dean, Admission
- Montclair State:** Judith Hoogendyk, Front Desk Manager; Tracy Hogan, Study Abroad Coordinator; Jackie Leighton, Director Int'l Services; Forozan; Patty Doherty, Int'l Student Advisor; Dr. Marina Cunningham, Executive Director, Int'l Affairs; Peilin Cebi, Community Asst. in the Int'l Living Community
- Montclair State:** Forozan; Judith Hoogendyk; Aditi Patel, Int'l Student Advisor/Sevis Coordinator; Tracy Hogan; Patty Doherty; Dewa; Dr. Marina Cunningham; Alean



In Her Words by Sadiqa Basiri

I am so proud and happy to be a student at Mt. Holyoke College. I am the oldest of nine children and the first in my extended family to attend college. I am fortunate that my parents, unlike their siblings and most villagers, always

valued education for women. War and the lack of educational opportunities for his daughters prompted my father to move to Pakistan 20 years ago and I finished high school in one of the Afghan refugee schools.

I will never forget the day, ten years after I left Afghanistan, when I re-visited family who had remained in our town of Godah, Chak Wardah during the war. At that time I was the only female in my extended family attending school. My girl cousins crowded around asking me multiple questions about what a school looks like, what the teachers look like, what I did in school and so on. All these questions made me sad at first as I thought they were perhaps making fun of me, but then I realized that they too wanted to learn. I was in 9th grade then and as I pondered the situation I became filled with a passion to do something right away, as the questions were an indicator to me of how passive we were and how backward we had remained. I was determined that my cousins should also be able to go to school. However first I had to finish high school and then make some money in order to start a school so I took a job teaching Holy Quran and English. When I felt I had enough money

I asked my father if I could return to Afghanistan but as the Taliban was still in power it was not possible, so I continued working and dreaming. The day came when the Taliban's regime collapsed but then, because of the bombing, people were leaving for Iran and Pakistan. As soon as the humanitarian organizations started working in Afghanistan I moved back and opened the first girls' school in Godah. My dream was fulfilled and now there are 118 girls studying of whom 11 are my cousins. Since starting that school I founded the OMID Learning Center, a female led local NGO which focuses on girls' primary education on the provincial level. Through OMID I opened 4 schools in Wardak and Nangrahar Provinces.

Were it not for the civil war I would have already completed my degree, so I am extremely thankful to the IEAW for giving me this opportunity now. My goal is to work as a policy maker in my country. I would like to help clean up the educational sector which has been corrupted by previous regimes, and has not in the past had as its primary focus the education and welfare



Sadiqa and Malalay presented with prayer rugs from Mt. Holyoke

of Afghan children. In the past three years five million children have been placed in schools but now we need to think about providing them a quality education. My dream is that thanks to the education I will receive through Mt. Holyoke College and the IEAW, I will be able to make a significant and beneficial impact on education in Afghanistan.

Zohra's Mission

Zohra is an IEAW freshman this year at Middlebury College. She has decided to start a new organization on campus in addition to excelling academically.

Zohra writes the following about her organization that will be launched soon, "Women for Global Peace is a network of women who come together to work towards the development of peace and the foundation of justice and freedom in the world, without any kind of distinction of race, color, sex, language, religion and ethnicity. Our main focus in the beginning will be on conflict and post-conflict countries, where we will exercise due diligence to secure women's rights, including the rights of equality, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as well as freedom from discrimination, torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment."

Originally Zohra wanted to work exclusively on issues related to Afghanistan. She then met people on her campus from all over the world and found many of them also have been oppressed in their countries. This cross-cultural exposure opened Women for Global Peace worldwide.



Zohra (far right) and friends at Middlebury College



From left to right: keynote speaker Renee Amore, Hawaii's Governor Linda Lingle and Paula Nirschel

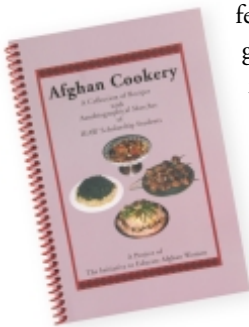
Women Who Make a Difference

Hawaii's Governor Linda Lingle had Paula Nirschel speak in September at her Women's Leadership Conference: Women Who Make a Difference.

More than 300 delegates at the conference were inspired by the stories of women leaders from China, Japan, Iraq, Israel, Washington, DC, and Hawaii. Speakers shared their personal stories of the challenges and success that led them to the top of various fields including business, education, government, health and wellness, travel, media and communications.

IEAW Cookbook

Afghan Cookery is a cookbook of the IEAW students and edited by Laura Krawitt, a Vermont supporter. When Laura visited Paula Nirschel and the students for a dinner celebrating the women's favorite foods from home, she came up with the idea to put a cookbook together. In it are short bios of the students and their feelings about the foods and dinners in their great country. Many of the students' family recipes are included. Laura tried all of them many times over. She recommends that people buy this book and learn the joys of cooking and eating Afghan food!



This book, *Afghan Cookery: A Collection of Recipes with Autobiographical Sketches of IEAW Scholarship Students*, provides typical recipes as well as

captivating stories of twelve of these young women, their lives during the Taliban era, and the importance of meals as a reflection of the strong ties of Afghan families.

What better way to bring people together than a meal! This book is an outcome of one of those meals. Several of the IEAW scholarship students were gathered at Roger Williams University for winter break, before returning to their respective colleges. During the day, the students were busy in the spacious kitchen of the President's Residence, peeling, chopping, mixing and cooking.

That evening, several Americans interested in the IEAW sat down with these students to enjoy their Afghan dishes and to listen to them tell of their aspirations for their country and for themselves.

Paula Nirschel has introduced Afghan dinners as a way of connecting with these women in an informal setting. In addition to providing a venue for a cultural exchange between the Afghan women and Americans, such events have also brought about a bonding among the students themselves, as they had not known each other before coming to the United States.

Editor Laura Krawitt, member of the IEAW advisory board and resident of Vermont, earned a B.S. in home economics from the University of Wisconsin, and a M.A. in history from the University of Vermont (UVM). She has worked as a program coordinator at UVM's Fleming Museum.

Proceeds benefit the IEAW.

To order, make checks payable to *IEAW* and send to:

The Initiative to Educate Afghan Women
One Old Ferry Road
Bristol, RI 02809

Cookbooks are \$10.00 each, plus shipping and handling charges as follows:

- +\$2.00: 1 cookbook
- +\$3.00: 2-5 cookbooks
- +\$5.00: 6-10 cookbooks

Contributions are received through our web site at www.ieaw.org
Requests for information regarding the Initiative should be addressed to Paula Nirschel at the following e-mail: pnirschel@ieaw.org

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Calendar of Events

December 2005
Boston Fundraiser
Intersession, Washington, DC

April 2006
Manhattan Fundraiser

May 2006
Commencement ceremonies of the first six IEAW graduates