

The Initiative To Educate Afghan Women

NEWS & Events

From the Founder

The Doris Buffett scholars have arrived! They spent a month or more in summer ELS honing their writing skills before going off to their many wonderful campuses. The learning system in Afghanistan is memorization and very little paper writing. During this summer class they go to school 40 hours a week and write papers at night so they are well skilled in writing when they leave.



Students and founder in Afghanistan

the smiling brigade. These new sisters talked about how they treasured getting to know each other and enjoyed this quiet entry into the U.S.

The IEAW has a very exciting year ahead. Our family has grown by almost one third, which makes us very happy indeed! While in Afghanistan, the students and I decided to take on our own fundraising this year. We will be selling note cards, eyeglass cases and key chains that are made in Afghanistan. The weaving on the cards and cases are made by Afghan women. In November the students will have them on their campuses for sale; these will also be available in bulk on the IEAW website. They are beautiful and perfect for gifts. We are all hoping to raise enough to fund two new students for the next academic year.

Soon Margie and I will be leaving for our campus visits to check in on our family members and their support systems at their colleges. We will be seeing their dorms, meeting with advisors, international staff, administrators and new friends. These trips are our way of making sure the students have all that they need and are on track with their academics. Normally there is a fall and spring visit to each campus. It has been amazing how much this has helped to comfort the students and build on our working relationships with the many great people on our college campuses.

The IEAW is a strong organization. We have a solid advisory board and a large group of committed colleges and supporters. In addition, Margie and I are extremely organized, so we have solid systems in place that are modified when necessary. The word "family" is used often by students and supporters when we describe the IEAW. This is probably the best endorsement of why this organization works so well.

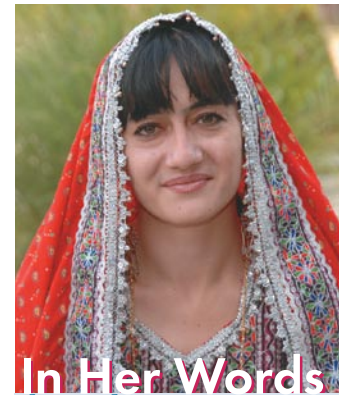
Thank you to the IEAW "family" for supporting another great year and giving college education to the deserving women of Afghanistan. Please continue to bring others on board.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paula Nushad". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Paula

In addition to school work, this time is a mini orientation into life in the U.S. We have done so many fun things like picnics, trips to the beach, dinners, walks in the woods, volleyball, and whatever else we could fit into everyone's busy schedules. Zahra loved the ocean so much that she sat for six hours looking at it before leaving for Mary Washington! Nilab and Geety outshined us all at volleyball and gave us a few lessons with Jane at the helm. Adela was taking a GRE prep class and played mother hen to all of the girls. Sweeta led



In Her Words by Zahra Noor

I feel so proud and fortunate to be a freshman at Mary Washington and at the IEAW. This is a significant step toward reaching my potential and working for a brighter future for me, my family and my country.

Eventually, I hope to help reform the economy and educational standards in Afghanistan. Studying in the U.S. will give me the skills needed to bring about effective progress and change in my country.

Currently, under the Taliban regime in many provinces in Afghanistan, women have no rights and are forced to suffer as noncitizens; they are forbidden from education and from basic human rights. The IEAW is a program that will improve women's conditions in Afghanistan. I thank you all for helping to change this dire situation.

Summer Jobs



Nadima: This summer I worked with the Women's Branch of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission. Despite the recent developments in women's rights in our country, there are still a large number of women who are at daily risk of forced marriage, abduction, rape, domestic violence and many other forms of abuse. I now have a better understanding of the plight of these women and the inequalities and imbalances that currently exist in Afghan society.



Kobra: During this summer, with the help of the IEAW, Caroline Firestone and Mary Gustavson, I had a very meaningful job with Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Support of Afghanistan. My main duty was to link the vulnerable families and orphans of Maristoon to sponsors in the U.S. My work had me traveling to different parts of Kabul and Bamian. I now, more than ever, appreciate the value of supporting vulnerable people and the importance of rehabilitating Afghanistan.



Adela, Zohra, Sofia and Muska: The four of us worked at the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Embassy. We had the chance to work with and learn from the experiences and knowledge of the U.S. legal advisors, Afghan

prosecutors, judges and lawyers. Our work taught us more about the Afghan legal system, law enforcement and the role that the law can play in rebuilding a prosperous democratic country.



Helay: Working in an IT department makes you think independently. It encourages you to analyze and resolve issues, as well as develop a person's practical skills; these exercises are all good for the human brain. This summer I worked at the Afghan Red Crescent Society IT department under the supervision of respected President Fatima Gailani. I succeeded in helping to produce more quality IT services to this important organization.



Palwasha: Teaching computers to the doctors at the Red Crescent Hospital in Kabul has been an experience full of pleasure and fulfillment. The doctors and head of the hospital call me "ustad," which means teacher. Ustad is a very respected and valued status position for an intellectual. I contributed to capacity building of the hospital by teaching its personnel how to operate computers. It is a great honor to share my knowledge with the people of my country.



Malalay: My experience at American University of Afghanistan in the finance department was amazing. It was an

unparalleled opportunity to interact and network with people. Besides working at AUAF, I made an educational video about language and culture in Afghanistan for the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, located in Amherst, Massachusetts. I also attended the Afghan-Pakistan peace conference (Jirga) held this summer.



Shamim: This summer I worked as Finance Assistant at National Construction and Logistics. I worked under Tim Brown from the U.S. He was a great support, training me further in the finance field and he provided books for me to improve my knowledge so I can bring my skills into action when I return. Studying books and working in the field are really different experiences. Working answers all those questions that cannot be answered in lectures.



Benafsha: My summer job was as HR assistant at DynCorp International. My main area of focus was calculating the amount of tax employees would need to pay. Staff who were making more than \$250 monthly needed to pay the 10% tax, based on new Afghanistan. We had to also help employees complete their forms that were then sent to the Ministry of Finance, where the tax would be deducted from salary.

Nilab's Mom

I really appreciate the IEAW and the University of Mary Washington's wonderful efforts in supporting my daughter, Nilab, in realizing her goals and making her dreams for her country come true. Nilab has always felt responsible for her family and for her community; because of this, she did not think that she would be able to continue her education. The IEAW has restored my faith that one day my daughter will become an independent Afghan woman who will be able to provide any kind of support that her community and country needs. I strongly believe that when she returns with the experience and knowledge that she gained from studying in the USA, she will be a symbol and role model for our family and for our society. As her mother, I would like to encourage all Afghan mothers to give their daughters strength and support and encourage their daughters to get education so that together we can change our male-dominated society and have our own rights.



Muska's Father

As Muska's father, I would like to thank IEAW for providing such a great opportunity for my daughter. It is a great opportunity for our entire family. It was always Muska's dream to get a higher education; however, this dream was not possible in Pakistan, which was where we emigrated during the civil war.

I was so happy when I first heard that Muska was granted a scholarship to study in the U.S., but along with the happiness came fear. I was afraid that she might lose her Afghan cultural values. However, today is the third year from the day that I made my decision to let her go and I can see that I have made the right decision.

Muska has benefited from this program not only in terms of education; she has also become more perceptive of her culture, traditions and most significantly, her religion. Three years of college have matured Muska in all aspects of life. She is now the role model for her siblings and her surroundings.

I would like to extend my sincere and genuine appreciations to the IEAW and the University of Richmond for making our daughter's dream come true.

International Achievement Summit

Nadima and Arezo were nominated to attend the 46th annual International Achievement Summit in Washington, D.C. on June 19-23, 2007. This summit, which was hosted by the Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation, was founded on "the belief that great achievers can educate and inspire by serving as role models." The Academy of Achievement invited 50 exceptional men and women to share their experiences, advice and encouragement with 250 graduate students who were all nominated by administrators of international exchange programs.

During the four-day summit, Nadima and Arezo, along with their fellow graduate students, were invited to join distinguished professionals from a variety of fields and backgrounds in an extraordinary series of symposia and round-table discussions. Featured speakers included Bill Clinton, Laura Bush, Barack Obama, Alberto Gonzales, Ruth Ginsburg, Nancy Pelosi, Joshua B. Bolten, Toni Morrison, George Lucas, Andre Agassi and many others. As Arezo describes, these prominent individuals spoke "about their own leadership experiences and also gave us very nice and golden advice on how to become a great leader in the future." Arezo expresses that she will never forget the following three pieces of advice: 1) Said by President Clinton, "To measure success, first measure your failure and overcome it," 2) "Whatever endeavor you take on, think higher and feel deeper," Elie Wiesel, and 3) "Doing the little you can do wherever you are... that changes the world," Archbishop Desmond Tutu.



Catherine Reynolds



Although the advice that the speakers provided was unforgettable, both Nadima and Arezo agree that the most

memorable part of the summit was the Banquet of Golden Plate Ceremonies, in which Mrs. Bush publicly introduced both students to the crowd. As imagined, after such an introduction, fellow delegates became increasingly interested in both girls' journeys. Overall, as Nadima expresses, the summit was an "extraordinary opportunity which not only generated dialogue between eminent achievers and promising young leaders of tomorrow, but also provided us with the opportunity to exchange ideas and form friendships."

Visit to Afghanistan, Summer 2007



Photos

1. Zahra and her family
2. Rory Stewart, Rabia and Haseena
3. Minister of Education Atmar at family party with students
4. Haseena and Paula in the garden of a restaurant in Kabul
5. Fazila and her family
6. Zohra in the driver's seat!
7. Dinner at Anwar and Fatima's with U.S. Ambassador Wood, Princess Wana and Dr. Zalmay, Minister of Security
8. Bookseller of Kabul
9. DynCorp teaching us about their successful demining projects
10. Shopping on Chicken Street
11. Lunch at Salma's with her family
12. Street children

Computers Needed

Twenty new laptops are needed for students next year. If you are interested in helping a student by purchasing a laptop for her, please contact Margie Ellis at mellis.ieaw@earthlink.net. Service agreements are also needed with the computers.

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

One Old Ferry Road
Bristol, Rhode Island 02809-2921
Fax: (401) 254-3855