

Ayni Education International Highlights for 2011 and 2012

Ayni's President of the Board of Directors, Catherine Gelband, comments on 2011 successes and plans for 2012. Catherine has served as the Board President since 2010 providing the steady hand of leadership required for a growing non-profit.

Ayni Highlights: 2011

2011 was a year of change for Ayni. We transitioned from a devoted founder, Julia Bolz, to our wonderful new Executive Director, Ginna Brelsford. Ginna has done a great job getting up to speed on our work in Afghanistan and in the United States. It was also a year of great achievements for Ayni in Afghanistan. Early in the year we dedicated a new school for 3,000 girls thanks to generous support from The Janet W. Ketcham Foundation and National Geographic. We were privileged to share the excitement of the girls as they initiated their new classes.

As the year came to a close, we dedicated two new computer centers. One in a village school outside of Mazar and one in a girls' school in Mazar. I have marveled at the idea of the Ministry of Education supporting computer access for girls. One dignitary, Asif Nang, Deputy Minister for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Kabul, visited the centers and expressed his ongoing support. The centers have already become a focus of their communities. The Ministry requested that we keep the centers open even when the schools are out on winter break. A truly life-changing experience for the girls and their communities. Thank you to the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation for its support of the centers. In addition, two courses of the teacher training programs were completed, granting certification to 225 teachers. Continuing teacher training is critical to the improvement of education in Afghanistan.

Ayni's Plans for 2012

This year we will focus on expanding several of our village schools while continuing teacher training and the computer classes. I am thrilled that we will be able to expand one school in particular allowing high school girls to continue in school. While the boys in this village have been able to attend high school in the neighboring village, girls who are not allowed to travel, have had to attend school in over-crowded rooms. As we construct new

classrooms completing the high school, hundreds of girls will be able to attend and finish their high school education. We continue to observe increasing numbers of older girls in the villages who want to attend high school. When we make this possible, even girls who are engaged and married who are allowed to attend school, will be able to walk to school, sit in a classroom and have the experience of high school literacy. These realities make it even more important for us to expand their schools to make this experience as fulfilling as possible.

Seattle to Afghanistan: Building Bridges of Understanding



Coe Elementary's Partners in Afghanistan

"I have so much, at my school, at home. They (Ayni) are building their school and have so little, and I wanted to help," Anika, second grader, Coe Elementary School

Ayni's mission includes educating school children in both Afghanistan and the United States about each other. We call this relationship, "Building Bridges of Understanding" and it was initially piloted in several Seattle schools.

Ayni has partnered with Seattle's Coe Elementary School for several years. Recently one of its students raised \$166.00 for her school's partner school in Afghanistan. Her mother shares her story:

I asked Anika why she did this project. Here is her response: *"I have so much, at my*

school, at home. They are building their school and have so little, and I wanted to help. This project was Anika's idea. She went by herself to the librarian and checked out the materials. Arriving home with the enormous poster and fundraising box, Anika stated her intention and decided to make cookies to sell during the holiday season. A full day (and a kitchen covered with sprinkles) later, Anika had made a hundred Christmas cookies. On a cold day, she stood outside with her poster and asked people to donate to Coe's sister school, so the Afghan girls could have a chance to learn. She also gave up her piggy bank and all her tooth fairy money, which she had been saving, to the school. Talking with friends, neighbors, and extended family about why it was important to help these girls have a school, she raised 166 dollars. I am so glad Coe has this meaningful partnership, so that our students can have a chance to work in small ways to make a difference in literacy and opportunity for young women.



Catherine Gelband, Board President



School addition completed in 2011