

Janaury Newsletter

Last Updated Friday, 01 January 2010

Dear Friends of AFCECO orphanages,

Winter is in full swing, and snow has begun to fall in Kabul. To brighten the dark nights we recently celebrated Mohsin's birthday. While some children have gone to visit their villages, the rest are getting some extra schooling thanks to twelve volunteers on break from Kabul University. All major subjects are covered, including English and a computer tutorial. This is the time of the year to plan for the future, and with yet another boost in support from NBC (the Today Show re-broadcast the Brian Williams story on Christmas morning) we have the means to act on those plans. The donations received from these broadcasts in conjunction with major donations from Terry Cardwell, Doffie Rotter and Rose Vines have propelled immediate and long range plans. In the days to come, Mehan orphanage will be equipped with a gymnasium. The older girls historically have had very few opportunities for physical activity, and as we all know exercise is vital for fitness as well as emotional health. New orphanages are going to be opened in Herat and Jalalabad, and twelve children are going to Italy in the first week of January, where for two months they will be immersed in a new language and culture.

In this and ensuing newsletters we are adding a special section in which we address common questions regarding the orphanages. One question just about everyone asks is, given so many orphaned children in Afghanistan, how do we choose which ones will enter our program? To answer this we must first discuss the mission of our orphanages. Our main objective is not merely to save an urchin from the streets but to nurture a new generation of empowered Afghans. By empowered we mean people who have been given a secure and healthy home life, education, secular and democratic in nature, a place from which they can rise above racism, fundamentalism, and escape the destructive environment of poverty and drugs. To that end, we might take a child who has access to food, shelter and even parents, but who has no future. This is especially true for the girls. Often they are kept from school, treated like slaves and are likely to be sold into bondage. What is necessary is a hint that here is a child who, given a chance, just may become a leader in her or his community. To grab orphans from any of a thousand streets and create a super citizen in a bubble is of no use, given their lack of connectedness to any particular family, village or neighborhood. That is why we maintain a level of inclusiveness. Our children have a sense of khak, the earth that is their homeland, and in most cases there are scores of Afghans who support their entry into the orphanage, who keep track and await their return as midwives, engineers, teachers, or even political leaders.

AFCECO tries to take children from all over Afghanistan, of all ethnic backgrounds and languages. We are in close contact with a variety of grass-roots organizations, councils and minorities. These people know about AFCECO orphanages and about our philosophy and principles and they forward to us requests from families they think are good candidates. AFCECO people also visit most of these places and make general verifications. We do have some criteria. Preference is given to orphans, child laborers, abused girls and children from remote areas where Taliban and extremists dominate society. True, the cost of raising just one of our orphans could most likely feed and clothe five from the streets of Kabul. But it is not difficult to imagine the powerful effect that our one child will some day have on the welfare of hundreds of Afghans. This is not a humanitarian mission. This is taking responsibility for the future of one's own country. We believe the notion that democracy cannot be imposed. It must spring from within.

We see a bright future, thanks to your support. May 2010 bring goodness to your lives, and allow for our children to thrive. Best wishes from all of us to all of you.

December Newsletter

November Newsletter

October Newsletter