

THE AFGHANISTAN BLIND WOMEN AND CHILDREN FOUNDATION

SEPTEMBER 2016, ISSUE 4

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Greetings from Nooria Nodrat!

First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation for all of the effort that each member of the Board of Directors, officers, and volunteers of the Afghanistan Blind Women and Children Foundation have made to advance the foundation's mission, especially in these past three months. Secondly, I congratulate each one of you for the success that we have experienced so far.

The ABWC, with great support from one of our student intern, Ms. Flora Sanilahijani, has engaged many activities which have advanced the quality of education amongst blind students in Afghanistan by providing computer classes via skype. These classes trained teachers in Kabul Blind High school to learn blind computer technology. Ultimately, these teachers will pass on the knowledge gained from Ms. Sanilahijani's class to their blind students.

In the near future, the foundation plans to have a 20 session health workshop for blind women through skype in order to educate them about health care, childbirth, childcare, nutrition, how to prevent domestic violence, as well as provide Psychosocial counseling. This program will begin in September 2016. We anticipate that

the sessions will make an impact on the lives of these women.

Furthermore, The Foundation was able to send more than \$1000 worth of supplies to Afghanistan for first to fourth grade students. These materials are critical in boosting blind children's development. Educational toys not only give students a chance to learn the names of the animals and shapes in braille, but it also gives them a chance to "see" and understand by feeling the shapes and texture of these animals too.

These toys and learning material include: Braille playing cards, Braille bingo, Math Braille blocks, Braille basic coloring books, Braille animal coloring books, Mini puzzles, wood puzzles, Mickey Mouse modeling dough, Braille caravan and Braille learning/practice Geometric toys, play-dough super color packs, color compound net, Crayola colored pencils, crayons, and stuffed animals such as: bears, pigs, fish, dogs, panda bears, monkeys, and unicorns. Other toys, such as bats, cell phones, and bowling balls were also sent.

Additionally, The Afghanistan Blind Women and Children Foundation sent the Kabul Blind High school Publishing

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Greetings from Nooria Nodrat! (Cont.)

Services the following items: two Braille Perkins machines, Tactile Geometric braille papers, 2800 sheets of braille paper, and one slate. The shipping materials sent to Afghanistan cost \$624.

Another great project that The ABWC is investing in right now is working with Ms. Dawn Suvino, who is a freelance grant writer. Ms. Suvino is working with Ms. Liz Perlman, President of the foundation, as well as a team of our student interns and volunteers in order to finalize grant proposal on behalf of the ABWC Foundation. This project will allow the ABWC to purchase two Braille embosser/printers for the blind publishing services in Afghanistan, as well as other electronic items for the Computer lab Center in Kabul Blind High school. We hope that this project will be completed by the end of 2016.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Ms. Perlman and Mr. David Cho for their financial contribution to this investment. Not only do we appreciate their financial contributions, but we are also thrilled to have such strong and dedicated Board of Directors who is always by our side.

I am also pleased to announce the partnership between two great charities, Help for Afghan Heroes Charity Foundation and Achilles International, which ABWC helped facilitate with the help of our country representative, Mr. Mandozai Badr. The Afghan Heroes Charity Foundation provides prosthetic limbs to war victims in Afghanistan. Heroes Charity Foundation and Achilles International's goal in partnering is to establish a new chapter in Kabul so that they can assist and engage disabled Afghan individuals with opportunities for socializing and engagement in athletic activities, such running, hiking, jogging, swimming, and tandem biking.

ABWC looks forward to the union between these two great organizations and wishes them success in their future goals.

In addition to our service projects, the ABWC foundation continues to tirelessly work to increase the quantity of our volunteers, and to promote our cause on so-



cial media. Without our volunteer force, the foundation wouldn't have been able to promote our mission and accomplished all that we have accomplished with in these past three months.

Thank you all. We could not have made it without your support; we hope that you will be able to join us in the 6th Annual Fundraising Dinner on Tuesday August 23, 2016.

Warm regards,

Nooria

Statement from the President, Liz Perlman



I would like to thank everyone who has supported the foundation over the years whether it be financially, by donating your time or by continuing to show your concern toward what is unfortunately a growing area of great need – assisting the under-served blind community in Afghanistan. It's thanks to you all that we've been able to create strong relationships and partnerships with organizations and facilities for the blind community in Afghanistan, such as the Kabul Blind School and medical services for the blind, in order to make a sustainable impact on the lives of blind individuals in a war-torn and poverty stricken nation. We have received many thanks via email, phone calls and even videos sent to us directly from the women and children that have benefited from our services, and we pass on this deep gratitude directly to all of you supporters.

This foundation has been the "little engine that could" since its creation in 2009, when Nooria's dream became a reality. Since that time we have had many successes to celebrate and many challenges to overcome, just as many nonprofits do, particularly in the area of funding our endeavors. We continue to receive often heart wrenching cases of blind individuals in Afghanistan who are lacking proper resources and services especially for their health needs. Based on situation in Afghanistan, the Board of directors of the ABWC Foundation has recognized the difficulty and obstacles that blind individuals there are facing, especially those who are victims of war, poverty, and domestic violence. Currently, the ABWC Foundation is in the process of changing the name of our organization, as well as our mission and vision to better aid all blind individuals in Afghanistan. This will include men, women, and children. We are currently involved with our team of attorneys to finalize the legal status of the new name of our organization, and we

will inform you all in the near future when this change occurs.

Although we continue to help as many eligible people as we can, we cannot provide the services we do without the contributions and financial support of our donors. We must rely on your generosity and charitable hearts in order to continue to operate as one of the very few non-profits in the world that aims to uplift this vulnerable and often ignored community.

One strategy underway to help our financial position and increase the number of people we can aid is our work with Dawn Suvino, a professional grant writer. She is helping to secure funding on our behalf focused mostly on increasing Braille literacy and overcoming other educational challenges at the Kabul Blind School. Ms. Suvino's efforts will certainly help the foundation work toward its goals in education and give visually impaired blind children a much better opportunity to develop and thrive in their lives. However this grant will not be enough for us to sustain as an organization and to raise our level of available services to meet the rising needs.

With that said, it is only you all that can keep this foundation engine moving and allow our organization to uplift the lives of these fellow human beings

If you are able, I ask that you please make a donation through our website of any amount and certainly hope that you can join us for our fundraiser on Tuesday, August 23rd at the wonderful Khyber Restaurant. At this event we will have an opportunity to thank you all in person, share a fantastic Afghan meal with you and also share a bit more information about the people you have helped and will continue to help.

Our Chairperson and Founder Nooria Nodrat, continues to inspire me every day with her persistence, hard work and heart that she puts into making sure that the visually impaired in her native country do not go unnoticed. She knows first-hand the needs and challenges of this population and as you rally behind her and support the foundation, may you all feel deeply good knowing that you are improving the well-being and quality of someone's life. That is a beautiful thing, and on behalf of the entire Board of Directors please accept our heartfelt appreciation.

-Liz

It's That Time Again! ABWC Foundation Annual Fundraiser:

The ABWC Foundation is thrilled to announce that on Tuesday August 23, 2016 we will be hosting our annual fundraising dinner! The event will be held at Khyber Pass Afghan Restaurant on 34 St. Marks Pl. in Manhattan from 6:00PM-9:00PM. We invite all of our friends and family to join us and that ask each of you to contribute \$60 to our cause through our Paypal. Even if you cannot make it to the event, you can still donate and help us support Afghanistan's blind community. Go to our [website](#) to buy tickets or donate, and we hope to see you there! Check out our flyer below and our video flyer, as well!

[VIDEO FLYER](#)



ABWC Foundation
Presents Our Annual
Fundraising Dinner!

Join us for dinner, drinks, & entertainment, win prizes in our raffle, and enjoy a night to remember!



Donate to our cause at:
www.theabwcfoundation.org
www.facebook.com/ABWCfoundation

Date:
August 23, 2016

Time:
6:00PM-9:00 PM

Location:
Khyber Pass
34 St Marks Pl, New York,
NY 10003

Suggested Donation:
\$60

IN THE NEWS: Blind Afghan Officer Made Police Chief of Province

From the Asia Times, June 11, 2016

In a rare move, a blind police officer has been made the district police chief in the restive Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, local officials say. The Ministry of Interior appointed Commander Shah Mahmood as police chief of Dehrawood district.

Mahmood, who joined the Afghan National Police (ANP) forces 14 years ago, had previously served as the security chief of Tarinkot city, the provincial capital of southern Uruzgan province. Provincial governor's spokesman Mohammad Nayab told the BBC Afghanistan service that the Ministry of Interior elevated Mahmood for his experience in the field of security. According to Nayaab, the local residents of Dehrawood too made a strong recommendation for promoting Mahmood.



Mahmood (Center)

Mahmood is hell-bent on eliminating Taliban after he lost his vision in a bomb explosion by Taliban militants. According to Nayab, Mahmood was betrayed by one of his colleagues while serving in the Meher Abaad area one and a half years ago. The man led him to a location to show him an "enemy minefield." When they reached the location, the man told Mahmood it was payback time. He then detonated a bomb that blinded Mahmood and killed four of his men.

Later, Mahmood made two trips to India for medical treatment but doctors were unable to restore his vision. After returning to Afghanistan, he even thought of leaving the police force. But the province's military council persuaded him to continue his good work and promoted him.

Interview with Flora Sanilahijani

Bre Sonnier-Thompson, a current student intern at the ABWC Foundation interviewed Flora Sanilahijani, a former intern of the ABWC Foundation, to learn more about her work with blind instructors at the Kabul Blind School. Ms. Sanilahijani taught instructors how to use software that helps blind individuals navigate computers. The ABWC Foundation greatly appreciates Flora's efforts! She details her experience below.

Ms Sonnier-Thompson: How long did you work with the ABWC Foundation?

Ms. Sanilahijani: I worked total of 13 weeks at ABWC foundation as a part time intern with 20 hours a week.

Ms. Sonnier-Thompson: Please let us know about your experience with working for the ABWC Foundation in general.

Ms. Sanilahijani: The similarity of my native language, culture, and my values helped me to have a better understanding of them and enabled me to work with them more effectively. Working with Ms. Nodrat impressed me to a great degree because she is a hard worker, intelligent and a brave woman whose mission is to improve the health of blind Afghan women and the blind Afghan children education to her best abilities. Also, working with other interns in a friendly environment under the supervision of Ms. Nodrat was a new experience for me

Ms. Sonnier-Thompson: Please let us know about your experience with Afghan blind teachers regarding computer technology.

Ms. Sanilahijani: During my work with blind teachers in Afghanistan I noticed that despite their needs to expand their comput-

Interview with Flora Sanilahijani (Cont.)

-ter skills, they do not have access to those applications which has been designed for blind and visually impaired individuals such as Jaws (the screen reader), Magic (Magnifier), Open book (the application which is used for downloading the text book in the computer) and the Outlook application which can be used to send and receive emails in a less complicated way by the blind individual. I also realized that they never had an organized lesson and they valued my work as an organizer and the simple way of learning the key's functions in English and Farsi (the common language for Afghans and Persians).

Ms. Sonnier-Thompson: How many sessions did you teach, and what subjects did you teach?

Ms. Sanilahijani: The materials that I have covered during my internship are as follows:

April 14: Orientation of a standard key board

April 16: Orientation of a Laptop computer

April 18: Continuation of the orientation of laptop computer and Window Explorer

April 18 &19: Jaws key board commands

April 25: Continuation of Jaws and starting Flash drive

April 26: Outlook program which has been designed for the blind and visually impaired to send and receive emails.

April 27: Continuation of Outlook, Flash drive and creating Folders

April 30: Continuation of Flash drive (How to remove it safely from the computer)

May 02: Magic/Jaws and Microsoft word 2007

May 03: Continuation of Microsoft

word2007 and Skype (how to use it)

May 04: Internet keyboard commands and Open book (the program for downloading books and texts in the computer).

May 16: Calendar (an option from Outlook program)

May 17: Laptop charging and connecting to

Ms. Sonnier-Thompson: How did you manage with the time difference between New York and Kabul?

Ms. Sanilahijani : That was a challenge for me because I needed to wake up at 5:45 AM three times a week and prepare myself to have my sessions with Afghans at 6:00AM for one hour and 30 minutes through the skype. Of course the materials were ready and it was sent ahead of time to Mr. Shaheen by email... I am happy that it worked well.

Ms. Sonnier-Thompson: What were some of the challenges or obstacles you faced while demonstrating the technology during your sessions?

Ms. Sanilahijani: In the beginning more teachers were attending to sessions but because of bombing in Kabul, 2 of my students' family members were affected badly and they could not participate any longer. Very often the electricity was disconnected during the session and it was not possible to continue the lesson. However, Mr. Shaheen [Hesam] who is the head of the computer lab in the high school tried hard to record all the lessons as video and has the hard copies of all those materials for sharing and teaching them in future.



“...despite their needs to expand their computer skills, they do not have access to those applications which has been designed for blind and visually

INTERVIEW (CONT.)

Ms. Sonnier-Thompson: In your opinion, how much do you think the teachers and students benefitted from your workshops?

Ms. Sanilahijani: The head of the computer lab in the high school was so grateful about those lessons, and very often he mentioned that they never had access to an organized and systematic computer lessons for the blind and visually impaired in their high school before. I believe the materials that I have covered could be beneficial for blind and visually impaired students in different age groups and teachers because is written in simple English and is available to them as audio in Farsi. Also the materials are written in an understandable way for the blind user.

Ms. Sonnier-Thompson: What did you enjoy most about working with the instructors in Kabul?

Ms. Sanilahijani: I enjoyed their hard work, their honesty, their persistence and their strong fate and their positive thinking despite all difficulties that they were

“I enjoyed their hard work, their honesty, their persistence and their strong fate and their positive thinking despite all difficulties that they



facing everyday including political, economic and cultural obstacles to learn computer. perhaps they have realized that learning computer and using it will make a great difference in a blind individual's life and will direct them to independence.

ABWC FOUNDATION

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**THANK YOU FOR
READING!**