Educating Children and Empowering Women
Growing the Future of Afghanistan’s Next Generation

John Bortner, President, Board of Directors
What We Do

Afghan Friends Network (AFN) delivers sustainable programs in education and cultural exchange that promote self-sufficiency and empower Afghans, in particular women and girls.

Through education AFN empowers the current and future generations of Afghans.

Founded in 2002 to extend a hand of friendship to Afghans who had already been through 22 years of war and were still suffering with continued unrest.

— Co-founders Carol Ruth Silver and Humaira Ghilzai knew the support was imperative.

AFN has low overhead as an all-volunteer, grass-roots organization.

Funds raised go directly to programs in Afghanistan.

— AFN provides support directly to the people who need it most in Afghanistan.

Afghan locals in Ghazni define and execute the projects based on real needs.

— AFN helps locals achieve their dreams.

AFN board sets a high standard for fiscal responsibility and program excellence.

— Financial checks and balances with professional book keeping firm.

— Ongoing program reviews.
Why Afghanistan?

**Afghanistan** has been ravaged by 33 years of war
- Women and children have suffered the most during the turmoil

**In the past decade**, the country is still lacking basic essentials based on US State Department guidelines
- Security, basic education, adequate healthcare, clean water, and basic infrastructure

40% of Afghans live below the poverty line

**Female literacy** is at a mere 16%; male literacy is only moderately higher at 34%

8 out of 10 Afghan females lack access to education

**AFN focuses** on regional educational programs that promote self sufficiency

**AFN empowers Afghans** to raise above the horrifying statistics
We Focus on Underserved Communities

**AFN projects** are in Ghazni Province

- Afghanistan’s 2nd largest province, 60 miles southwest of Kabul
- Historically Ghazni has had **little support** from the international community

**According to NATO forces**, Ghazni is the second most dangerous province in Afghanistan but also a very important province right in the center of Afghanistan.

**Most aid goes to Kabul** or other famous cities; **AFN** can make a difference in Ghazni with our support.

**We work with Ghazni locals** and have the support of the community.

**Ghazni Province residents** have advocated for improved education for both girls and boys.

**AFN has established strong ties** with local leaders, educators and NATO forces in Ghazni which enables us to effectively execute projects.
“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
— Nelson Mandela

There is deep desire among Afghans to become educated, especially among girls.

Many Afghan fathers, who have spoken to our board, want their daughters to be educated.

In the 33 years of war, the Afghan education system has suffered from lack of funding, administrators, competent teachers, and security.

In the past decade, more than 4.5 million children have re-entered school, 40% of which are girls.

The Afghan government is not able to keep up with the demand:
— School hours are reduced by 40%; school days are divided into 2 to 3 shifts
— Teacher to student ratio is 1:90

AFN works with local educators to improve education opportunities.
AFN Educational Programs

Khurasan Learning Centers
- Provides math, science, English, and college prep courses for 7th-12th graders
- Combined, our learning centers annually serve nearly 500 girls and 250 boys

Women’s Literacy Classes
- Designed to help women—especially widows—learn reading, writing, basic math
- They create handicrafts which generate funds that are used to buy rice, flour, oil, sugar, and other household items that support their families
- 80 women participate each year in the program held at two locations

Scholarship Program
- University education is just a dream for most Afghan youth
- AFN provides scholarship to achieve these dreams
- We currently have 16 girls and 4 boys receiving the financial support they need to attend university to reach their goal of becoming educated and successful
Khurasan Learning Centers for Girls

In 2006, the year before the first KLC opened, only one girl in our district of Ghazni was accepted to university.

In 2011, all 84 senior girls from the KLC passed the university entrance exam.

KLC centers are open 6 days a week, year round.

Learning centers are well established and are supported by the community:
- Teachers donate personal time
- Community members donate resources
- Parents help with fixing the roof or buying extra wood for heaters

Dedicated to their education, some girls walk up to 1.5 hours each way to get to our centers.
Parents of the girls who attend the KLC, asked us to create a learning center for boys too.

In a nation with 40% of the populations under the age of 14, boys can’t be ignored.

AFN is one of the few organizations who is also helping Afghan boys.

Established in April 2010, the boys learning center was immediately filled to capacity.

In 2011, all 35 senior boys from the KLC passed the university entrance exams.

“Only educated men with jobs and self-esteem will rise to support their women and girls.”

Humaira Ghilzai, AFN Co-founder
Women’s Literacy Class

The mothers of our students asked us to provide literacy classes so they could gain basic reading and writing skills

- At an age around 35, they finally learn to write their names, read, and do basic math

Literacy classes are for three years to cover grades 1-3; over 160 women have participated

Women create handicrafts which are sold in the market; they receive basic household items with the pooled profits

Participants asked to learn about women’s rights

The classes are a community where women can gather, talk, and support each other

Participants gain self esteem, confidence, and hope

“When the women first come, they are quiet. Some of them are depressed. After a few weeks, I see them laughing and talking. It makes me happy.”

Fatema, Director, KLC
$450 a year allows the brightest and neediest students to attend university.

In 2011, two of our first scholarship recipients graduated from university:
- Both Monisa and Fahima have returned to their communities and are working as a nurse and a midwife.
- Monisa now earns $300 a month; more than her father.

AFN representative in Kabul meets with scholarship recipients each quarter to check on their progress and learn about their coursework.
Touching the Community

**Educating entire families** such as Sameera, her sisters and her mother who attends the literacy program

**Putting money back into the Afghan community**
Providing salaries for almost 25 teachers, administrators, and other workers; and the rental of three buildings and the purchase of school supplies

**Bringing the community together** around their desire for education and a better future

**KLC attendees inspire** their families and communities to empower themselves through education
AFN is Making a Difference

- **Provided** 1,500 women, girls and boys access to education
- Helped **financially support** 22 university students
- Afghan Ministry of Education wants to use the **KLC model** in other provinces
The AFN Board is Active in the United States and in Afghanistan

○ **AFN educates our community** in the United States in various ways including on Afghan culture, the current situation, and Afghanistan’s history
  - Speaking engagements and support for talks at The Commonwealth Club, local schools and universities, community organizations, and at our own events
  - Support of cultural events, author talks, and museum exhibitions

○ **AFN board members visit** Afghanistan, the KLCs, and students and teachers every year
The Future

Expand programs in a way that is scalable and sustainable
- Increase the number of scholarship recipients each year
- Identify additional programs to supplement the current KLC model

Work closely with the community leaders to identify the most needed educational opportunities

Continue outreach locally on Afghan culture and issues
“When you **Educate** a Women, you **Create** a Nation.”

— Hafez Ibrahim, *Egyptian poet*

![Image]

Each dollar goes a long way in Afghanistan…

— $200 pays the salaries of 2 teachers for one month
— $210 pays to heat 2 KLC locations during the cold winters
— $450 sends one KLC graduate to university for 1 year
— $500 pays to educate 8 girls at the KLC for one year
— $1000 pays the rent of one KLC location for 3 months.

…. and in this giving, we gain so much.
Our students are the seeds that will grow the future of Afghanistan’s next generation
Thank You

Afghan Friends Network thanks Dining for Women for all you do to empower women and girls globally and for supporting us as we work to educate the girls and women of Afghanistan.