



1 April, 2010

Dear Friends of AFCECO orphanages,

Naruz, the Afghan New Year may be a time to sit back and reminisce, but this March there was little opportunity to languish. On four fronts people are working daily to facilitate and usher in this period of growth as smoothly as possible without, (as often happens with grassroots organizations that prove effective and then get all kinds of attention) removing a finger from the pulse of our original mission and philosophy.

First, there is our Director Andeisha Farid, who continues to crisscross America raising awareness and support for AFCECO orphanages. The launching of this tour, receiving her Vital Voices award at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., could not have been more electrified. (Please read a detailed description of the event posted on our web site.) Validation for work often gone unnoticed is something anyone welcomes. This was a validation on a grand scale. More importantly, the doors Andeisha has and continues to open are growing with each report she sends back to Kabul. People are lining up to help, many with a great reservoir of resources. Talk of a serious building fund, a dream beyond wildest expectations, is brewing. Most recently a senior representative of the American University in Kabul is eager to establish a relationship with the orphanages, reserving several slots for capable students as they emerge from class 12 and look to further their education. This list goes on.



On a second front the staff in Kabul have managed in short order to open new orphanages in Jalalabad and Herat, and also the two new “hostels” for the older boys and girls who have grown out of Mehan and Sitara II. The logistics of such an undertaking under the present circumstances in Afghanistan are mind-boggling. Security and sustainability are at the top of a long list of variables to consider. Who is the landlord? How supportive is he? What neighborhood? How far from the school? The hospital? Who is trustworthy to hire? These decisions take a great amount of care in making.

The only area that is, unfortunately for Afghanistan, simple to attend to is finding the children to fill the orphanages. Calls come in daily from distraught relatives, in some cases begging for AFCECO to take their child (or in some cases more than one). The stories are heartbreaking. One boy has committed suicide, his sister is in danger of being sold, a widow has no way to feed her own children and cannot bear to watch them starve to death.



Consequently our new orphanages filled within a week, and there is very little we can do but offer hope that soon another will open. Of course in some cases the situation is so desperate we have no choice but to make room somehow, some way. At least we have the smiling faces of the new members of our AFCECO family as they settle into their life of possibilities at the new orphanages.

On a third front Ian Pounds, a volunteer who lived in Mehan for five months last year has returned, this time with a one-way ticket. He has obtained a volunteer work permit for at least two years. He arrives with

almost 17k dollars given to him by folks he encountered on his speaking tour in America over the winter. This money goes into an education fund with the expressed purpose of preparing a bridge for our older children into adulthood, as well as paving the way for ensuing generations of orphans. He continues to seek moneys to add to this fund, as the goal is to augment the mediocre public curriculum (teachers are paid \$30 a month and have to work two other jobs to survive) and to establish inroads to post secondary opportunities both within and outside of Afghanistan. He has started an ambitious schedule of classes teaching English to all the children of Sitara II and Mehan, as well as five intensive classes with small groups of the oldest children. The four areas of study: vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension and conversation are high on the list of priorities as he prepares them for the inevitable TOEFL exam they will have to score well on in order to be considered for university. He has purchased two new computers and other supplies, and full time tutors are already being hired to teach not only English but the other major disciplines as well. While touring his country, Ian also made personal connections with institutions and foundations interested in developing a relationship with AFCECO whereby several candidates may find scholarships.

On a fourth front, last but truly of most import on the list, is you the sponsor. We do not forget it is you who were there at the beginning, and it is you who will be there in whatever future awaits us.

