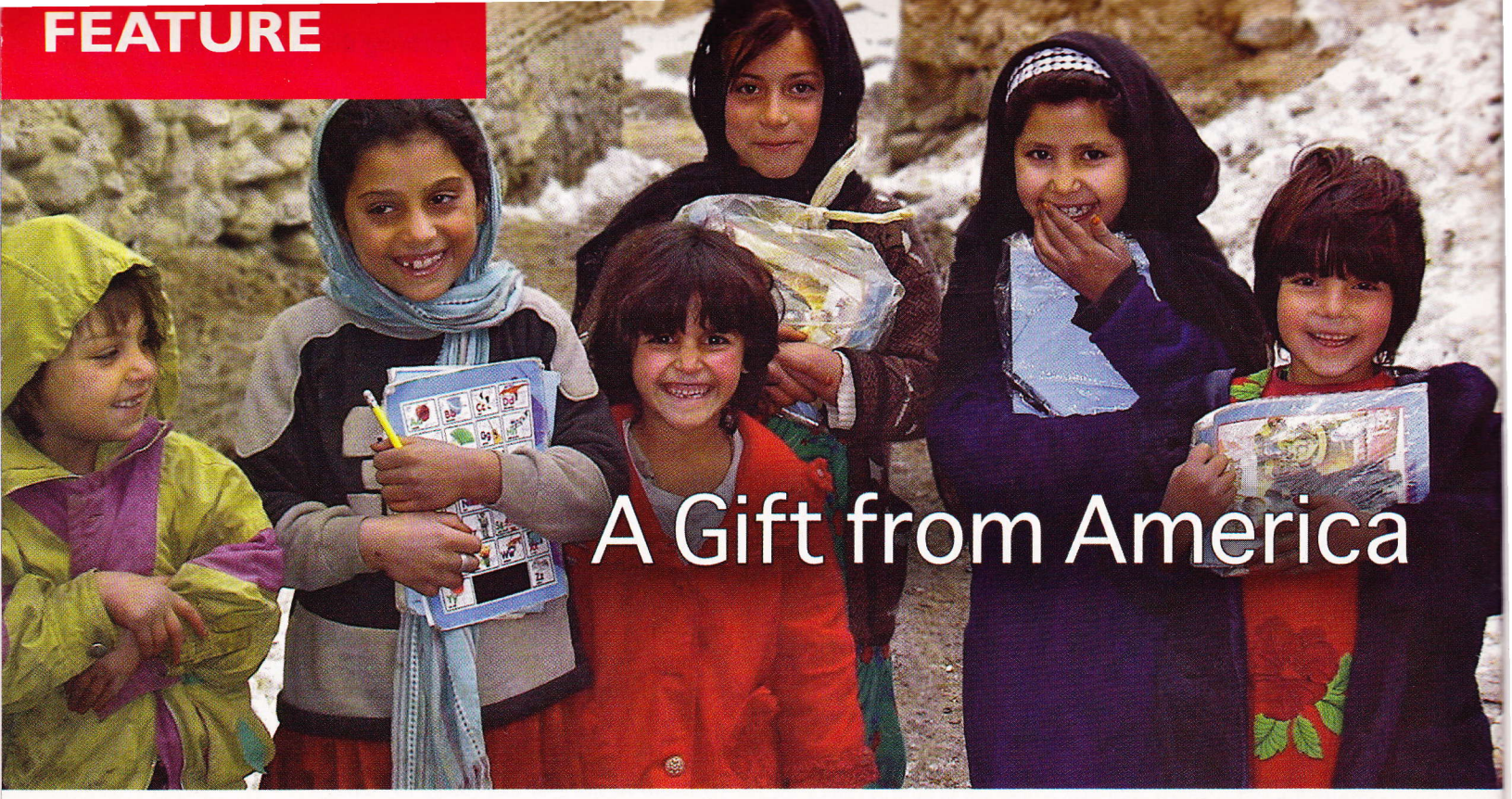


A Gift from America

From a small office in Lafayette, a man and his small army of volunteers are waging their own war in Afghanistan against the result of 30 years of conflict. For the past seven years, retired attorney Budd MacKenzie has been providing educational, economic, reconstruction and health care assistance to several villages in Afghanistan through his grassroots organization, Trust in Education (T.I.E.).

So how did a past President of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and Lafayette Citizen of the Year end up getting involved with Afghanistan? No stranger to community service, a 2003 Lafayette public forum regarding the United States war in Iraq inspired MacKenzie. With the U.S. already in Afghanistan for the second time in 30 years, left him wanting to know what the U.S. should do to help the people of these countries. T.I.E. was founded shortly thereafter in direct response to this question. MacKenzie explains, "Whatever happens regardless of the war, we need to assist these people. Whatever the military decides, we shouldn't abandon the Afghans a second time."

Around the same time as the forum, MacKenzie read an article from Parade Magazine featuring Greg Mortenson, the now co-author of Three Cups of Tea, titled, "He Fights Terror with Books." It highlighted Mortenson's belief that building secular schools is the cheapest and most effective way of combating terrorism. MacKenzie was intrigued by his unique approach in which villages donated land, labor and some materials, resulting in project completion for a fraction of the normal cost. MacKenzie reached out to him and began his own journey in Afghanistan.

With a decision to be a part of Afghanistan's rebuilding efforts, MacKenzie, along with a group of friends and neighbors, raised over $60,000 to build a school. This was just the beginning.

30 Years Ago…

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked the beginning of the United States' first significant commitment in Afghanistan. Documented in George Crile's book, "Charlie Wilson's War," it is described as the Central Intelligence Agency's largest, most expensive and successful clandestine operation in history. Charlie Wilson, a congressman from Texas, and Gus Avraktos, a CIA operative were credited as the architects of a multinational effort that turned an "army of primitive tribesmen into techno-holy warriors."

The United States, along with other nations, funneled billions of dollars of weapons to the mujahideen through Pakistan to fight a proxy war. The mujahideen then fought against Soviet and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan troops. By the time the Soviets were driven out of Afghanistan in 1989, the mujahideen were well-trained, seasoned fighters, armed with modern weaponry, and held to no external control. As many as 30,000 "holy warriors" traveled from other countries to join in the war. By December 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist. The result of this war included 1.5 million deaths and created five million Afghan refugees.

In 1992 the United States withdrew all humanitarian aid from Afghanistan while the Civil War pressed on. Warlords were fighting against each other for control over the country. By 1993, they were well trained, armed, and ready to respond to a further calling. Afghanistan was left with no roads, no schools and destroyed country. Warlords, Islamic extremists, drug lords, and defenseless Afghans fought over what little remained. Afghanistan became a perfect haven for Osama Bin Laden and the Al Queda. Afghanistan became a breeding ground for militants.

The Taliban rose to power in 1995. Initially, Afgahns supported the Taliban as they were able to stop the Civil War in portions of the country. This changed as the Taliban's interpretation of

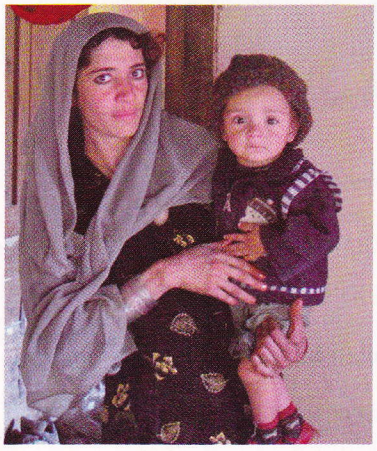
the Koran included the belief women should not be allowed to work or read, and there should be no music, art, dancing, or even kite flying. Soccer fields were used for public executions, books were banned, and women were publicly flogged for walking in a suggestive manner. These young militant Muslims, most of whom were not Afghans by birth, assumed total authority over the daily lives of all Afghans.

On October 21, 2001 the United States invaded Afghanistan, following the tragic events of 9/11, to search for "Osama" and Al Queda. U.S. Special Forces removed the Taliban from power within two months with less than 300 special troops and $10 million dollars to "buy back" the aid of the mujahideen and former warlords.

"Millions of Afghans are struggling to be free – 98 percent of the country wants nothing more than peace," said MacKenzie. "Refugees and expatriates are returning by the millions to rejoin their families in an effort to rebuild their country." He adds, "Buried beneath the 'bad news' are thousands of small struggles being won each day going unreported. These victories, while individually small, are collectively framing a nation eager to rid itself of oppressors and totalitarian rule."

Today… Rebuilding Afghanistan

The conditions of Afghanistan today are a significant measure of the unintended consequences of the U.S. involvement in the region. Since its inception in 2005, T.I.E. has made a clear commitment to be a part of the rebuilding efforts. "The decision to help Afghanistan began with the premise that a nation should not topple another's government without engaging in the reconstruction that follows," said MacKenzie. "Destruction without reconstruction is simply wrong."



T.I.E. works under a model that eliminates "patchwork" remedies but instead pools resources and, simply put, gets things done. The organization works people-to-people and village-to-village to eliminate bureaucracy and provide more immediate results. T.I.E. sets out to inform and enlist Americans and other organizations to become directly involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan by working directly with the Afghan people. It works in partnership with organizations such as Stop Hunger Now, Rev. Billy Olsen and his congregation, Aschiana, One Million Lights, and American University of Kabal among others.

MacKenzie takes two, ten-day trips a year to Afghanistan. He works with three Afghan T.I.E. program directors in Kabul to assist in his efforts. He learned early on while helping to build the school in Lalander, a village 15 miles from Kabul, that if you want to know what the Afghans need, ask them. Together with T.I.E., they make a "wish list" by identifying and prioritizing needs. T.I.E. then sets about addressing as many as it can. All programs are implemented with the community, thereby empowering these communities with control over their lives and livelihood. MacKenzie explains, "It's the best way to go toward the ultimate goal, which is helping Afghans free themselves from their dependence upon others."

Education is Everything

T.I.E. first provided funding to build a secular school for boys and girls in Lalander, Afghanistan that opened in March 2005. T.I.E. has since assisted in building classrooms, libraries and playgrounds in a number of Afghanistan villages. T.I.E. now provides classes for over 900 students, 70 percent of which are girls. Over 90 percent of the students are studying courses not offered in their schools including art, computer, and English. T.I.E. funds classes in homes and villages, in response to threats and actions taken by the Taliban. "If we provide a safe forum they will come," says MacKenzie.

Most recently it made critical repairs to a school's water well. Within two weeks from the request for repair, it took just $305 dollars to get the well up and running. "This is but one of several problems we have been in a position to address and solve quickly, says MacKenzie. "That's one of the advantages of the grass roots village-to-village model." T.I.E. has also financed soccer fields and sponsors soccer programs for both boys and girls. Afghan children can be seen wearing Lamorinda soccer uniforms collected by a local Girl Scout Troop.

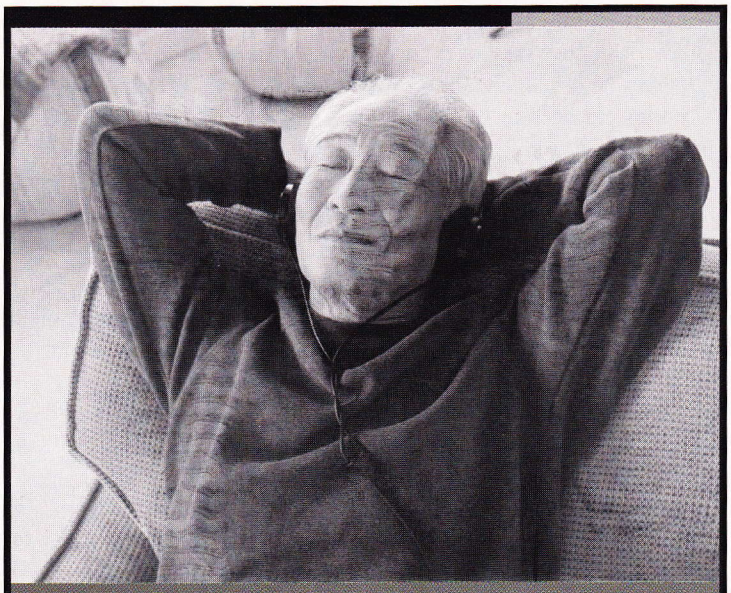
MacKenzie's most passionate cause in Afghanistan is the education of girls and women. There is a considerable segment of the Afghan society who question the need for a woman to be educated. For them, a woman should marry, have children, and stay home. Unfortunately, many Afghan families who are now allowing their daughters to attend school, will "marry them off," often against their will before they complete their education.

One of the most satisfying accomplishments for T.I.E. is witnessing the empowerment of girls and women. The first big step was enabling the villagers to send their girls to school. Given the opportunity to learn, these girls and women gain a sense of self worth and a desire to be and do more. Over the course of his trips, MacKenzie has seen a change in their body language – they are actually making eye contact and speaking to him.

A most memorable moment for MacKenzie came from a community meeting in a classroom where he was speaking. A young mother holding a baby raised her hand and asked, "What about me?" She went on to explain she stayed home all day with her children and she was convinced she was sick. The doctors told her she wasn't sick. She then said, "I know I'm sick because I'm hitting my children." She was suffering from depression due to isolation and lack of socialization. From that moment on, women of all ages were allowed and encouraged to enroll in classes offered by T.I.E.

Trust in Education's latest education project, "Zohra's School for Girls," is to provide funding for materials related to the completion of a 10-room classroom to educate over 350 girls in Farza, Afghanistan. To escape the war, Zohra Aziz and her family left Farza when she was 10 years old. In 2006 she returned to Farza where young girls were amazed she could read and write. Aziz was touched by the girls desire to read and write and their lack of opportunity for an education. This became the catalyst for her plan to build a school for girls in her village.

A half-acre of land for the school was purchased and the villagers are providing the labor to build the school. With construction underway, T.I.E.'s program directors are overseeing the project.



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Most notably, the Ministry of Education has approved the school. As a result, it will be accredited and the Afghan government will pay its operating costs. The budget for materials for the school is $95,000 for ten classrooms, playground equipment and a separate bathroom.

T.I.E.'s fundraising efforts also support 78 street children through the Aschiana Foundation, a non-profit organization in Kabul that works to educate street children. There are an estimated 60,000 children working in the streets of Kabul, begging, selling gum, looking for scrap metal, shining shoes and doing anything they can to survive and support their families. A typical street child earns an average of $2 a day or $60 a month. Often, they are the breadwinners in their family. For just $40 a month, T.I.E. supporters basically buy the children's time to get them off the streets and into school.

Helping Afghanistans to Help Themselves

With Afghanistan being the world's largest opium producer, T.I.E. provides farmers with viable alternatives. When given the choice, most want to grow fruits and vegetables. Farmers receive superior seeds and fertilizer producing quality fruits and vegetables, which triples their income. Other economic accomplishments include a $19,600 irrigation system that restored 150 acre of farmland to productivity. Over 23,900 fruit trees were distributed to 250 farming families. T.I.E. also provides training seminars to improve farming techniques. Information is then shared with adjoining villages.

Up next, T.I.E. is working on bringing solar oven kits to Afghanistan villages and refugee camps. Ninety percent of the cooking in Afghanistan is done using fires that burn trees, whose wood is usually collected by women and children. The children can't attend school and the women are being exposed to smoky cooking fires, causing sever respiratory problems. Local solar enthusiast Jack Howell built five solar oven kits in his garage for T.I.E., and Mackenzie will supervise the set-up of the cookers and provide some training. If successful, the plan is to build 200 additional cookers, sponsored by various organizations including the Boy Scouts and local high schools.

Get Involved

T.I.E. spends an equal amount of time devoted to educating Americans about its involvement in Afghanistan to inspire and motivate. MacKenzie now adheres to the philosophy that "giving is a much better way to spend your day than accumulating." He adds, "Afghanistan has asked the world for help. We cannot reverse history, but we can certainly embrace the role we have been invited to play. Under the circumstances, the least that we would want to do is try." To contribute to T.I.E. and its ongoing efforts in Afghanistan, visit trustineducation.org or call (925) 299-2010.



Jennifer Rogers is a Seattle native who has lived in Contra Costa County for five years and is still amused by local turkey sightings. In her life before motherhood she had a successful career in public relations. She is a stay-at-home mom who loves volunteering at her son's school, walking her dog around the Lafayette Reservoir and beating her husband and son at putt-putt golf.