



AFGHAN COMMUNICATOR
SERVING THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY

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Afghan Art & Film Festival

The first ever
Afghan Art & Film
Festival in North
America!

By Tawfiq Rahmani, Afghanistan 2003



The tour will kick off on
April 9 in New York City
and continue to Virginia,
Boston, Toronto,
Los Angeles, Chicago &
San Francisco.

In New York:

April 9 & 10 Art Show
April 16 & 17 Film Festival

@

Alwan for the Arts

16 Beaver St (between Broadway & Broad St.)
4th Floor - Lower Manhattan

Directions:

4,5 to Bowling Green; R,W to Whitehall; 2,3 to
Wall Street; J,M to Broad Street; 1,9 to South Ferry

For program & other cities please visit
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AFGHAN COMMUNICATOR  SERVING THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY BULLETIN

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MY TRIP TO AFGHANISTAN

By Rameen Moshref Javid
Executive Director
Afghan Communicator

I revisited Kabul after two years and Herat after 23 years, in November 2004. The purpose of my visit was to officially open our Kabul office and bring films, hand-craft and art work back for our seven city Afghan Art & Film Festival tour in North America.

The immediate purpose of the Kabul office is to function as a conduit for small aid going to Afghanistan. In return for five percent overhead charge, AC office will deliver and oversee any charitable project desired in Afghanistan. Thus far, we are acting as a liason between

the Raritan Valley Community College and the Amir Shir Ali Khan Secondary School in Kabul. Please contact our office in NY if you wish to utilize our services in Afghanistan.

Traveling to Herat after 23 years, I met many artists and film makers, thanks to the cooperation of Mr. Bakhtari of Aina. I also met with the Herat theater group and helped them financially with their trip to Kabul to participate in an international performance festival. Meeting various artists, I collected miniatures, blue glasswork, pencil work, paintings, kilim, and many other art pieces which we will exhibit at our art festival.

I also met Ms. Roya Sadat, director of the award winning film, Three Dots or *Seh Noqta*. She is a determined and passionate young lady, who has overcome incredible odds to make her first film. She has not studied film or acting, but has produced a wonderful film with the support of Golden Globe Award winning director Siddiq Barmak. We are proud to say that Three Dots is also included in our film festival.

I also met many other passionate and driven young Afghans who have great talent and work

(Continued on page 2)



Scenes from AC's Eid Party



Eid Party Kicks Off 2005

To wrap up 2004 and kick off 2005, AC hosted an Eid celebration on Friday, January 21st in a downtown Manhattan loft. The first part of the evening gave attendees a chance to network and socialize. Next, the attendees heard a synopsis of AC's projects and events from the previous year and viewed a video presentation on Afghan Heritage Day (AHD) 2004.

AC members also shared some of the on-going works and new initiatives for

2005. Highlights from 2004 included the Town Hall for Young Afghans, Woman's Day Benefit, AHD in Westbury, Afghan School fundraiser with Raritan Valley Community College, Afghan Girls Soccer Camp, and the opening of AC's satellite office in Kabul. In 2005, AC plans to continue its "Know Books" project, again host AHD, begin a domestic violence initiative, tour an Afghan film festival through major US cities, and expand the capacity and activity of the Kabul office.

This event was open to all NY area Afghan

professionals wanting to learn more about AC or looking to join other young Afghans in a small celebration. For remainder of the evening, the attendees socialized to international tunes provided by Bazi Entertainment.

For more information on AC's events in 2004 or to find out what is in store for 2005, please visit our website. Also, sign up for and keep an eye on our weekly list of events to hear about similar events in the near future to bring young Afghans together.

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with little or no resources. Artists like Mahbuba Jamshidi, the founder of the Herat Arts Club; Wais Ahmad, the twelve year old founding editor of a children's journal; or Khalil Abbassi, the founder of the Afghan Youth Movement of Herat.

In Kabul, aside from helping the school, I was introduced to a sports club, and was invited to speak with its members. Many young people who want to be involved in fitness, health and weight training do not have the right gear or sufficient nutrition to work out properly. Some even cannot afford the \$5 per month gym membership fee, but they are passionate and do their best to advance. Club members told me that they are eager to learn new techniques and proper way of body building. In order to increase their capacity and communications AC has purchased a



Tomb of Gawhar Shad Begum, Queen of Herat during the Timurids Period

new cell phone and service for them. AC is looking for sponsors for that gym. If you are interested please contact our office.

I also took few prescription glasses to distribute in Kabul. The need for such items is great. Capacity building is certainly much needed and Afghan Communicator is working diligently to make contributions in that direction.

We welcome your support in helping Afghanistan, Afghan women, widows, children, orphans, students, artists, filmmakers or any other segment of the population. Our Kabul office is committed to and capable of outreach and supervision of such projects.



KIDS WORKING IN HERAT

Terror's Children

"*Terror's Children, a documentary portrait of the young refugee children who are the often overlooked victims in the war on terrorism, is the work of Sharmeen Obaid, a 24-year-old Pakistani woman.*"

Watching this documentary, one's heart breaks for the Afghan children and the reality that has gripped Afghans all over the world. These forgotten children of war are the price of Afghanistan's new democracy and reconstruction. Let's hope that much like the orphan children of the Soviet-Afghan War residing in the former Soviet Union and Pakistan, these children are not vengeful of a country that is too involved in its own affairs to remember them.

Selling cold water, picking through trash, working at carpet weaving workshop, these children earn money for their families, instead of going to school. The Pakistani community

around them regards them as a burden, if not pests. It is a sad reminder that reconstruction of Afghanistan is more than just building roads and political structure.

However, what is most disappointing is the negative and patronizing way in which this story is told. Ms. Sharmeen Obaid was given a camera and no sense of history or direction. She fails to mention Pakistani involvement in running Afghan prostitution rings, drug production, child organ thieves, child enslavement and systematic destruction of Afghan history and culture for the past 25 years.

Although this film sheds light on the condition of Afghan children living in Karachi, Pakistan, it has little substance, depth, background and sensitivity. We are surprised that the editors of The Discovery Time Channel showed the same disregard for facts and taste for insensitivity to air such sensationalizing programming by a parachute journalist.

NEW COLUMN: *SALAMAT* Overcoming the stigma of mental illness

In many societies, and certainly in the Afghan culture, there is a stigma about mental illness. Seeking mental health services is equated with being "crazy" and shameful to both the individual receiving help and his or her family.

Such a barrier to accessing professional help was mitigated in traditional cultures by a close-knit extended family and community whereby, in the face of difficulties in adjusting to life's demands, one could turn to trusted family members for help and guidance. However, with immigration and life in a non-traditional Western society, individuals are left to fend for themselves during what can be extremely stressful and traumatic times. It is in this situation where the stigma of mental illness takes its greatest toll.

Hence, it is the first aim of this column to help dismantle some of the barriers that exist in our community to receiving needed mental health services. Second, in each future issue of the bulletin, topics such as stress management, substance abuse, depression and anxiety, parenting skills, domestic violence, and psychiatric medications will be addressed, in order to promote a wider understanding of these common concerns and how they can be helped. Third, questions, suggestions, and reactions from our readership are most welcome and will periodically be published. They should be sent to:

sshokouhi@nyc.rr.com.

Sherry Shokouhi, MA, CASAC, is a NY-based psychotherapist and a specialist in addictions treatment. She is on staff at the Asian Outreach Clinic of the Queens Child Guidance Center in. She can be reached through the Afghan Communicator or at 718-899-9810 ext. 304 or 200. She is solely responsible for opinions expressed in this column.

بخش جدید سلامت رفع بدنامی بیماری روحی

در بسیاری از جوامع، بشمول جامعه افغانی، به نظر میاید که داشتن بیماری روحی سبب بدنامی میشود. اشخاصی که برای گرفتن کمک مراجعه به روانشناس میکنند، احساس شرمندگی میکنند. بنابراین بسیاری از افراد که برای مقابله با دشواریهای زندگی احتیاج به رهنمایی دارند، از گرفتن کمک خودداری میکنند.

در افغانستان بزرگان و دیگران اعضای فامیل هستند برای رهنمایی. اما در دنیای مهاجرت، این خودداری از جستن کمک روانی، به زندگی یک شخص و خانواده اش لطمه اور است. بدین سبب ما وظیفه داریم که خود، دیگر اعضای فامیل و دوستان خود را تشویق به طلب کمک روحی کنیم. جستن کمک روحی مانند کمک خواستن برای سلامتی بدن مهم است.

برای اطلاعات بیشتر، اضهار عقیده، یا مشاوره خصوصی با افغان کمیونیکیتور یا شری شکوهی تماس بگیریید.
تلفن ۲۰۰ یا ۳۰۴ X ۰۸۱-۹۸۱-۸۹۹-۷۱۸

sshokouhi@nyc.rr.com

فستیوال آرت و فیلم افغانی

برای اولین بار در امریکا شمالی!

شروع فستیوال در نیویارک در ۹ اپریل.
بعدا به شهر های باستون، تورانتو، ورجینیا
شیکاگو، لاس آنجلس، و سانفرانسیسکو.
برای معلومات بیشتر با ما بتماس شوید.

718-445-6438

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Happy new year! We hope that new and open doors greet you. 2004 was our most active year so far. We have accomplished a great deal and hopefully 2005 will be just as fruitful.

Returning from Afghanistan in December 2004, I brought home some great projects. Among them were officially opening our Kabul office, building a school's capacity, visiting all 8 soccer girls we sponsored in the past summer, acquiring films and art, founding a newspaper, Karyaby, dedicated to finding jobs and other classified ads in Kabul, helping the Herat theater and a sports club in Kabul, and laying the foundation for future involvement in Afghanistan.

Our largest project so far, and one that has never been attempted by any organization in North America, is our seven city tour of Afghan Arts & Film Festival. The seven city tour will kick off on April 9th in New York City and continue onto Boston, Virginia, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Toronto.

Afghan arts and culture has been eclipsed by violence for too long. This year, we aim to introduce Afghan arts and films in North America. Next year, with proper support, we hope to organize an even larger event.

The film festival will also serve as capacity and coalition building tools. With this project, we are bringing smaller Afghan organizations together in the US and Canada, and building their capacity through event planning and financial sponsorship, so that they can independently organize bigger projects in the future.

Please look for our upcoming events in the near future. Thank you for supporting our cause. We hope to have your continuous support.

DONATE AND HELP AFGHANS REBUILD

Afghan Communicator is a community based, grass-roots organization that was founded in 1997. Our programs are local, national and international in scope. We organize a number of cultural, educational and humanitarian projects and events throughout the year. Working towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan, AC is proud to announce the opening of its new office in Kabul.

PLEASE PRINT:

Yes, I would like to help Afghans rebuild their community here and abroad.

Full Name: _____ Tel: _____

Email: _____ Address: _____ Date _____

I am donating: Patron: \$500 Friend: \$250 Benefactor: \$100
 Supporter: \$50 Helper: \$25 Other _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ payable to **Afghan Communicator**.

* AC is a 501(c)3 not-for profit organization. All contributions of cash or in kind are tax deductible.

To learn more about our work, please visit us at www.afghancommunicator.com.