

Afghans4Tomorrow

By Ann Mizel

How many children on your Christmas list would be moved to tears over receiving a pencil? Or a backpack full of school supplies?

This Christmas, by donating to the nonprofit, all-volunteer Afghans4Tomorrow (A4T), you can give a gift that will truly make a difference in the lives of young people deprived of a formal education during the many years of war and conflict in Afghanistan.

In the words of one 13-year-old student at a girls' school in Kabul, Afghanistan, "We are happy to know that we have the opportunity to learn — like Americans."

When you give a gift honoring a child in your life, you also are teaching a lesson about the dire needs of children many thousands of miles away. Your gift will help provide education to over 675 needy Afghan students served by A4T in four schools, which offer intensive academic programs year-round in many subjects, including math, science, history, English and computers, as well as vocational training.

The A4T schools earn a very modest budget from the sale of their own handmade products like colorful, embroidered and hand-woven items both in Kabul and the United States. Dream catchers (\$10 and \$15), universal good luck talismans reputed to bring good dreams because of a knot made to trap bad dreams, would make perfect stocking stuffers. Some gift items made by students sell for as little as \$2.

To purchase a gift or make a donation, you can contact Marsha MacColl, of Greenbrae, a dedicated volunteer and Vice President of A4T, who has traveled to Afghanistan and knows first-hand what a big impact even a small gift can have on Afghan youngsters.

Twenty-five dollars will supply five students with notebooks and pens for one year; \$50 will buy new textbooks for one A4T class; \$75 will provide one month of lunches for teachers and staff at one A4T school; and \$100 will pay a month's salary for one teacher.

To donate, e-mail www.afghans4tomorrow.com/donate and go to the quick link on the right for information on making donations or contact MacColl at 925-9857. By mail, send contributions to A4T, California Branch, P.O. Box 2176, San Rafael, Calif., 94912. (Include the name and address of the person you are honoring, the holiday or occasion, and how cards should be signed.)

MacColl is an active member of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Tiburon. The church held its annual Alternative Christmas Faire on two weekends in November, and A4T was one of ten local and international nonprofit agencies that participated. Shoppers were able to make donations by buying gift cards and can still do so by contacting MacColl, who will be happy to send a beautiful gift card with a choice of three original designs by young Westminster Sunday school students, a hand-made Christmas ornament, a photo and an explanation of A4T's mission in Afghanistan.

MacColl is passionate about helping to build a better future for the people of Afghanistan. "We cannot forget about that country again," she said. A4T president Asma Eschen, head teacher at Strawberry pre-school and a native of Afghanistan, drew her to A4T.

MacColl pointed out that a gift to A4T delivers help where it's needed the most. For every \$10 donation to A4T, over \$7.50 goes directly to the organization's projects, and all donations are tax deductible. This Christmas, by simply writing a check or donating online, you can remember a youngster in a faraway land who yearns to learn.



Afghan children with a desire for an education get a helping hand from across the world in Marin County. Photo: Marsha MacColl

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**Corrections:** In the second to last paragraph, the last sentence should read:

...A4T Director of Agriculture Asma Eschen, head Pre-K teacher at Strawberry Pre-school and a native of Afghanistan, drew her to A4T.

The last paragraph should say:

...For every \$10 donation to A4T, \$9.00 goes directly to the organization's projects, and all donations are tax deductible.