

(Continued from the A4T School #1 webpage: www.afghans4tomorrow.org/default.asp?contentID=62)

2008 Report

We are currently serving 106 students*, and have a Principal, Vice Principal, nine teachers and three support staff (cook and guards). There is an average of 16 students in each classroom. Our teachers receive regular teacher-training seminars and those have paid off. This year 83 of the 85 students passed their most recent exams.

At A4T School #1, twenty six girls are participating in the Fuel Briquettes Project, (a vocational training program), after the school day is ended, from 1:00 – 4:00 PM.

We are currently raising funds to expand availability of teaching materials and salaries for the teachers and staff. Our annual budget for A4T #1 is just over \$20,000 per year.

(*note: in 2008 the MOE required all private schools offer classes only through the 6th grade. We therefore reduced the number of teachers and students at our schools when the seventh and eighth grades were ended.)

Annual Assembly

Shaima Shahbaz, A4T member volunteering at A4T schools, reports:

On November 8, A4T School #1 held its annual school assembly. The students and staff did a wonderful job of showcasing their academic, cultural, and artistic achievements. The program included poetry recitation (**see above right photo**), singing, humorous skits, and speeches by the principle Laila, the briquette production teacher Khadija, and board member Wahid Omar. Following the presentation guests were given a tour of the school's briquette production facility. Family members, as well as local government officials from the Ministry of Education, were invited to attend and share in the girls' accomplishments. They were informed about the current success and future potential of the Briquettes Project in A4T schools and for the families themselves. The assembly was a testament to the positive impact, success, and importance of A4T's work in the area of education. Thank you all for your ongoing support.

Wahid Omar, A4T Board Member:

The highlight of the annual school assembly was the surprise visit of former A4T girls who are finishing the 12 grade this year and will be ready for college! I had a small discussion with them and it was for me the reward of working many years at A4T.

2007 Report

A4T School #1 increased from 155 female students last year to 200. There are 13 teachers, including two new teachers, a principal and a vice principal. Since opening in 2004, the school has had an intensive year-round program where students complete two grades per year. Both of our schools in Kabul were approved by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to add the seventh and eighth grades this year. Seventh grade was added in late March and eighth grade was added September 23.

The students study literature, English, history, math, biology, geography, Holy Quran and writing in Dari. They also attend classes for Pashto language and take vocational training class where they learn embroidery and tailoring. The beautiful crafts and clothing they make are sold in the school's gift shop. Some of the money goes to the girls and their family and the rest goes to the school's programs.

They play volleyball and some jump rope also during their sports hour. The seventh and eighth graders also take physics and chemistry. Early in the summer, a library was constructed and opened in mid-July thanks to a generous donor. The students enjoy reading and checking out library books in Dari, Pashto and English.

There are two solar panels at the school which help with a small part of the power needs when the electricity is down.

Marsha MacColl, A4T's 2007 Vice President, and volunteer Susan Hall (see [Our A4T Volunteers](#)) traveled from San Francisco to spend two weeks in March volunteering in Kabul, Afghanistan. They taught English lessons at two A4T schools including vocabulary lessons, practicing dialogs, learning the alphabet, singing songs, etc. They stayed in the A4T Guesthouse with SF Bay Area resident, Sandra Cook. She is a friend of A4T who was volunteering with another Afghan non-profit organization. Marsha also distributed school supplies, seeds, trees from the A4T-Bare Roots Group, and 500 pairs of wool socks hand-knit for our students by *Afghans for Afghans* volunteers. (see [Humanitarian Aid http://afghans4tomorrow.org/default.asp?contentID=68](http://afghans4tomorrow.org/default.asp?contentID=68)).

Here is an excerpt of Susan Hall's journal about A4T#1:

The first morning that Marsha and I arrived at A4T#1, students and staff alike were very excited to meet us. After tea and introductions we proceeded to the classrooms.

We started by practicing with English language flashcards. 'Iguana' and 'Octopus' proved to be somewhat of a novelty but the students nevertheless enthusiastically matched the images with the words.

Next we decided to teach the 'ABC' song followed by the 'Eensy Weensy Spider', 'I'm a Little Teapot' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'. Marsha, Sandra Cook and I did a rendition of 'Old Lange Signe' as a tribute to the Afghan New Year, Nawroz. At the end of the first day I said to the students, 'See you tomorrow'. One of the girls responded 'Sure, why not.' which seems to be a popular English phrase that they all know and use frequently. 'As you wish' is another one.

On the second day our lesson plan was 'writing letters'. Vocabulary included; letter, postcard, stamp, address, friend, photograph and the sentence 'I write a letter.' We had planned to do a letter and photograph exchange with the students at Knightsen School in California. It was going pretty smoothly until I got out the Polaroid camera, at which point, all heck broke loose. As I should have anticipated, the girls were very excited to have their picture taken and weren't willing to give up the Polaroid's. The most commonly repeated phrase on day two was 'Teacher take my picture!'

Also in March, we received a visit from a reporter from Public Radio International 'The World' program; Aaron Schachter, who aired a report called '**Afghans4Tomorrow School' on March 12th, 2007**. To read the article, please click www.pri.org/theworld/?q=node/8612 .

During June and part of July 2007, Soraya Omar, Director of Education, and her daughter, Sabrina, volunteered in Kabul. Please see the article written for Scholastic Inc. an online magazine for students:

Back to School in Afghanistan

With the help of volunteers in the U.S., Afghan girls return to the classroom

By Sabrina Omar | September 28, 2007

Please see www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3748117 to read the rest of the article.

Soraya Omar spent time improving the A4T school administration to help make a more successful school. She created new job descriptions and evaluation forms for staff at all three A4T schools, and organized meetings with administrative and teaching staff.

She observed and evaluated different teaching styles at the schools. As a result, she presented better teaching methods to A4T teachers to increase the education level in our schools including:

1. Incorporating Audio-Visual methods in class to cover students, which are visual learners and also audio learners
2. More individual reading over group reading
3. Using more learning materials such as flash cards and dry-erase boards
4. Using new ideas regarding vocational training productivity and sustainability.

On September 21 students celebrated International Peace Day by putting on a performance for all students, staff, A4T members and invited guests. They recited poetry, sang songs and acted out plays about resolving conflicts peacefully, two in Dari and one in English. Please see the photo album International Peace Day in the Photo Library on our website.

While the school made improvements this year it also has challenges: lack of reliable electricity, the breaking down of the computers and printers and cleaning of it's water well.

Currently our school needs new textbooks for the eighth grade, school supplies, other textbooks and teachers pay are also needed for the school.

If you would like to help, please see [Donate to Afghans4Tomorrow](http://www.afghans4tomorrow.org/donate) (www.afghans4tomorrow.org/donate)

2006 Report

The year 2006 was important for A4T since our first students graduated from our two Kabul schools: A4T Vocational & Training Center and Janet/A4T Vocational & Training Center (A4T Schools # 1 & # 2). In March of 2006, we officially introduced our first graduates to the Ministry of Education (MOE). The protocol we signed last year with the MOE allows A4T to educate children up to grade seven. Of the 44 graduates, seventeen of them went to Dakiki Balkhi Middle School and twenty seven of them went to Aicha Durani High School, both well-known government schools in Kabul.

In addition to our regular educational curriculum established by the MOE, we also teach English and Computer Science. Once a month the administration office has a teacher conference day where all problems are discussed. Our teachers are evaluated once a month and the results are kept in files. We also have one student representative for each class with whom we meet once a month to discuss issues concerning students.

In 2006, A4T schools boosted their vocational programs teaching students traditional Afghan carpet weaving, embroidery, and tailoring of clothes-in an effort to move toward self-sufficiency. Each school has earned a very modest budget from the sale of their products in Kabul and the US. Receiving fabrics and sewing materials from American donors helped the schools to move toward the goal of supporting its programs, however, we have a long road ahead and A4T is exploring ways to expand its vocational programs.

We understand the need to move quickly toward self-sufficiency but we also take in consideration the realities of Afghanistan. The challenges facing the Afghan government and the people of Afghanistan will impact directly any strategic planning for economic independence.