

Rebuilding of Afghanistan begins with aid to schools

Rotarians are often the first volunteers to venture into troubled corners of the world where few private and public agencies can operate. In Afghanistan, Rotary club efforts are helping to bring change to a country devastated by more than 20 years of war and neglect.

A new grade school and a computer lab at a university in Jalalabad – projects cosponsored by the Rotary clubs of La Jolla Golden Triangle, Calif., USA, and Uni Town Peshawar, Pakistan – are just two examples of initiatives helping Afghans to lay the foundation of a brighter future.

“It is clear that in the area in Afghanistan where we are working, Rotary is making a measurable difference in lives,” says Past District 5340 Governor Steve Brown, one of several La Jolla Golden Triangle volunteers involved in the country. “We are doing things on the same or greater magnitude as [national] governments.”

Earlier this year, Brown led a delegation of four District 5340 Rotarians to the inauguration of the grade school and computer center at Nangarhar University. (A photo essay about the school will appear in the August issue of *The Rotarian*.) On 11 March, at a



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ceremony attended by some 350 guests, the visiting Rotarians handed over the US\$60,000 computer center to the university administration. To

complement the computer center, the club initiated a project to teach English and distribute 12,000 dictionaries. Two days later, the grade school was inaugurated.

The club is also involved with health initiatives in Afghanistan, including a project to donate an ultrasound machine to a Jalalabad hospital and establish an eye-care and surgery center through a Rotary Foundation Donor Advised Fund.

Two other District 5340 Rotarians, David Sanders and Steve Spangor, are

teaching in Afghanistan with the support of the Steve Brown Donor Advised Fund.

Another initiative, the \$33,250 Afghan Women’s Development Center, is funded primarily by the Rotary Club of Encinitas La Costa, Calif., with a Matching Grant contribution from The Foundation of RI.

As in many Rotarian efforts, the Afghan projects are yielding results beyond the original objectives, including work toward establishing the first Rotary club in Jalalabad.

“If we can get a club chartered in Jalalabad, that would have more potential than the projects we are involved in,” says Brown. “[With a new club, the] doors will be further opened for expanding world understanding and peace within Afghanistan.”

Afghan students fill the new grade school’s classrooms.

BY DONALD L. LACROIX