



This newsletter is written in honor of **Hajji Habib Kharoti**. It was he who in February 2001 accompanied his older brother Mohammad Khan Kharoti to ask the Taliban in Kabul for permission to start a school for boys and girls in his family compound. It was his land on which the original school was built starting in 2003. When the school was destroyed in 2008, it was he who was charged by other men in the village with enrolling his own daughters in the school, he who faced the Taliban tribunal alone in the desert, against the advice of the village elders. Habib had the courage to tell them that in fact he did enroll his daughters in the school, so that they could learn to read and write, so that they could read the Koran to him because he was illiterate. The Taliban had no answer for his transparency and his logic and he was freed to go, with their permission in writing to rebuild the school. He had the courage to enroll his daughters in secondary school in Lashkar Gah, against the cultural grain of the time, and now two of them are raising the bar for women in Helmand Province even higher by studying for medical degrees.



Habib (left) and Mohammad

Sadly, Habib is no longer with us. On September 19th he had a fatal hemorrhagic stroke. His body was returned to Shin Kalay from the hospital in Quetta two hours after Mohammad arrived from the US. His funeral took place the next day and he was buried in the same cemetery where their father, their mother, and one brother had been laid to rest years before. He is survived by two wives, 16 children, Mohammad, and an admiring village of Kharoti's.

It was important to Habib that he had travelled to Mecca two years before and in 2013 to visit his daughter, his son-in-law, and Mohammad in Portland. When our Board chair, Steve Boyer took the accompanying photo of the Kharoti brothers, the first attempt produced a very formal frown. He asked Mohammad to tell Habib that it was OK to smile in a photo and the response is included here. Apparently the smile remained as they drove across the country to the East Coast and Habib marveled at the landscapes, especially all of the trees, so different from the deserts of Helmand. This was the

last trip the brothers would take together. No more camel caravans of their youth, no one else for Mohammad to share those memories with now.

For the customary three days after his funeral, villagers came from afar to pray for him and to mourn with his family. After the news of his death was delivered to students at the school that Habib risked his life for, a parent came in to express his condolences to Mohammad and said, **"My daughter told me the father of our school has died."** Clearly, Habib claimed a special place in our students' hearts.

Ayub, as Habib's oldest son, is looked upon as the new family patriarch. He has assembled most of the family in Habib's larger home in Lashkar Gah while he, with his own wife and six children and his mother, is based in the family compound in Shin Kalay. From there he will remain as our administrator, although with far fewer duties, for as long as he is able and is needed. His work and the trust we have in him is invaluable to everything GVS has accomplished. With adequate land inherited from Mohammad and Habib, food is not a concern for the extended family but the land must be planted and harvested and adult males must be present in the homes at night so other brothers and half-brothers have made career sacrifices. One focus has been to keep the girls in school at all cost, whether driving them by car to Shin Kalay or by rickshaw to school in Lashkar Gah.

Shin Kalay

In the shadow of the tremendous loss, Mohammad still accomplished a lot on his second trip to Afghanistan of the year. With continued generous support from Afghan Appeal in London, and through them a generous donation from The British and Foreign Schools Society, GVS has completed the construction of the school in Shin Kalay as originally planned in 2011: 14 classrooms for boys, 10 classrooms for girls, teachers' office, administrative office, kitchen, storage rooms, and a canteen which is rented to a villager who sells school supplies and snacks on site. In addition, each side of the compound has a computer room, latrines, shower rooms, and guard room. All that remains is electric sockets for the computer rooms, a banister for the stairs to the second floor, and painting, which has to wait until summer when the walls are dry and students are not in school. The school lacks furniture in the offices and desks in the classrooms.

Enrollment is up to 550 girls in grades 1-5 and 1,150 boys in grades 1-12. The government pays salaries for 29 teachers. By their own standards, the government wants to bring the staff to 37 but cannot find teachers who will move to Shin Kalay or travel daily from Lashkar Gah - one of the challenges of education in rural Afghanistan. They have a computer teacher but he has no hands-on training and is only able to teach from a book.



Shin Kalay girls gather to celebrate the end of the school year in June.

Other projects

Without further funding support, we closed the Advanced Education Center (AEC) in Lashkar Gah in July. Several hundred students received certificates in the last three years for reaching a reasonable level of English and computer literacy, skills that should help them at home, at work, and for a number of them, in continued studies at a higher level.

Three female medical students have completed two semesters of premed and four semesters of basic sciences. They will begin the first of four semesters of clinical sciences in January, to be followed by a year of internship before they can begin to practice on their own. They continue to receive full tuition support from The LBW Trust in Australia. Four midwife students who finished their training with our scholarship support still await their government certificates before they can work in their chosen field. The delay of the certificates is most likely due to the transition to a new Afghan President and his Ministers.

The government is fully responsible for construction in Sarkar and will wait to start the school building until the latrines and a well are completed. In the meantime 160 students, including girls, are attending classes in tents by the town mosques, taught by three men who are enrolled at the Teachers' College in Lashkar Gah.

Looking into the future

Even though we no longer have the responsibility for the AEC and Sarkar, we still have a lot to do in Shin Kalay. Mohammad would like to add an auditorium and a library and to provide electrical power with solar panels. In order to operate the computer labs, we will have to hire another guard and, in the absence of solar panels, hire a mechanic to operate the generators, plus pay for fuel. We will also need to replace some of the computers from the AEC and perhaps convince one of the AEC computer graduates to move to Shin Kalay as a teacher. The construction expenses would be major ones, the operational expenses more reasonable but ongoing.

Visiting supporters in London

Mohammad had a productive visit with Afghan Appeal in London on his return home. He met with staff of The British and Foreign School Society to thank them for their generous donation through Afghan Appeal and to answer their questions about further needs, including the ones mentioned in this newsletter. He participated in the Afghan Women's Support Forum held in the House of Lords in Westminster Hall, providing the educational component in the series of talks. He emphasized the importance of educational opportunity for girls in rural Afghanistan. He met with staff at Wellington College (high school) where serious conversations took place regarding a possible affiliation with our school in Shin Kalay. All agreed there would be benefit on both ends and the discussion will continue. Among the needs for facilitating communications between the two schools would be a fully functioning computer lab, the groundwork for which is already in place.



Second floor construction at Shin Kalay school

New avenues to support GVS

We are exploring some new fundraising avenues including new grant opportunities and we are open to our donors' suggestions. If your employer hosts giving campaigns for its employees, GVS is a registered charity on Benevity which provides workplace giving services. We are also registered on AmazonSmile which donates 0.5% of eligible purchases to GVS. In addition, we offer the option of monthly giving through PayPal. Please visit our website to explore these new features.

Thank you for your continued support of GVS projects in Afghanistan where military assistance must at some point take a secondary role to the revitalization of education and other civilian needs, especially for women and in rural areas.

Donate to GVS at:
<http://www.greenvillageschools.org/donate>