

STORY **Afghanistan** April 9, 2002 12:00AM

# Giving Back By Going Back

Scott Heidler

He comes from a place called Sheen Kallay, or green village, but after four years of drought there are only small patches of green near the southern Afghanistan hometown of Dr. Mohammad Khan Kharoti.

Kharoti, who has lived in Portland since 1989, has spent the last six weeks in the province of Helmand assisting Mercy Corps by meeting with government officials, assessing medical facilities and evaluating programs.



Photo: Scott Heidler/Mercy Corps.

Giving back to his community in Afghanistan and helping the Mercy Corps programs there is not new to Kharoti. He has visited Mercy Corps program sites over the past several years on his trips home and provided findings and observations to Mercy Corps headquarters upon his return.

But the trip home this year was special for several reasons. It was Kharoti's first trip back to Afghanistan since September 11th and the first opportunity for him to visit a school that he and his brother Gul Habeb started one year ago this month.

The Sheen Kallay School sits just next to the Kharoti family compound in the agricultural area of Nad-e Ali district west of the Helmand capital of Lashkar Gah. With special permission from the then Taliban leaders, Sheen Kallay School was the only school in the area allowed to teach girls.

When the school first opened, it only had 10 boys and 6 girls. Last week the school population was near 200 and received school supplies donated by Mercy Corps and transported to Afghanistan on an Evergreen humanitarian flight in February.

In addition to basic curriculum taught in the mornings, Sheen Kallay School conducts English classes in the afternoons and students received new English lesson books during Kharoti's visit this month.

Kharoti is very pleased with the growth and progress of the school despite being shut down by the Taliban for two and a half months during the early days of the bombing in October. As soon as Taliban rule fell, the school was reopened.

He has big plans for the school. Looking over a field behind the main mud brick building, he extends his arm to map out the site where he wants to build another building to house classrooms for girls and an area for the teachers.

Born into a nomadic life that his family maintained until age seven and illiterate until 12, Kharoti is a classic example of local boy making it big. While working as a nurse at Lashkar Gah Hospital, his dedication and drive were recognized by an American doctor.

It was the help of Dr. Roberts that led Kharoti on the path to fulfilling his father's dream of him learning to read and write. Roberts helped him gain acceptance to a high school in Lebanon and then later to a college in Iowa where he received his bachelor's in medical science.

After college, Kharoti returned to his country and attended medical school in Jalalabad in northeastern Afghanistan before returning to Lashkar Gah Hospital. This time he entered the hospital as a doctor.

He will never forget the trust and support that Roberts showed him. While taking a tour of Lashkar Gah, pointing out Roberts' house was just as important to Kharoti as the Governor's house. As he stood in the operating room of Lashkar Gah Hospital, Kharoti fondly remembers Roberts finding him scrubbing the operating room walls at one in the morning. Roberts' reaction, "Why don't you go home and see your family."

## Share this page



## Related content



August 23: [Helping more than 647,000 Ethiopians survive drought](#) by Roger Burks



August 19: [Walking for weeks to reach Mogadishu's sprawling camps](#) by Cassandra Nelson



August 17: [In Mogadishu's overcrowded hospitals](#) by Cassandra Nelson



August 15: [An unimaginable situation](#) by Roger Burks



August 11: [Stranded and struggling eight miles from water](#) by Erin Gray

## Sign up for our newsletter

GO

Your email address

Follow us on [Twitter >](#)

Like us on [Facebook >](#)

**DONATE** to Mercy Corps >

At the hospital it's impossible for Kharoti to walk down a corridor or poke his head in a room without running into someone he worked with as a nurse, doctor or both.

This hospital is as much his hometown as Sheen Kallay. As the hospital's assistant administrator Dr. Nassar Barak put it "Dr. Kharoti knows every corner of the hospital and the pain of the people."

Kharoti's family, with four children ranging from one to 10, fled Helmand for Quetta, Pakistan during the war with the Russians in 1987. This is where he was introduced to the Mercy Corps family. He was hired by Mercy Corps to train and teach paramedic techniques to medical staff who transported Afghans to Quetta with injuries or illnesses that required specialized treatment not available in Afghanistan.

After a year with Mercy Corps he joined the US Consulate in Karachi where he learned the process of how he could take his family to America. Kharoti's family immigrated to Portland in 1989 as refugees and he now works in nuclear medicine for Kaiser Permanente.

Kharoti is the only member of his family in Sheen Kallay to live outside of Afghanistan. He appreciates all that America has to offer, but he feels the pull of his homeland. "In a perfect world I could spend the days in Afghanistan helping the people and the nights with my family in Portland."

## Filed under

---

Countries: [Afghanistan](#)

Tags: [Education](#)

Topics: [Child protection](#), [Health](#)

## Related content

---

## Related Content

---

[Helping more than 647,000 Ethiopians survive drought](#)  
[Walking for weeks to reach Mogadishu's sprawling camps](#)  
[In Mogadishu's overcrowded hospitals](#)  
[An unimaginable situation](#)  
[Stranded and struggling eight miles from water](#)

---

### Mercy Corps

PO Box 2669, Dept W  
Portland, OR 97208-2669 USA  
To give: (888) 256-1900

Follow Mercy Corps:

[DONATE >](#)

#### About Mercy Corps

Mission & values  
Staff & leadership  
History  
Accountability  
News clips  
Press releases  
Visit us in Portland  
Jobs & Internships  
Endorsements  
Financial information  
Contact  
Events  
For development professionals  
Office locations

#### Where We Work

Afghanistan  
Central African Republic  
China  
Colombia  
DR Congo  
Egypt  
Ethiopia  
Georgia  
Guatemala  
Haiti  
Honduras  
India  
Indonesia  
Iraq  
Japan  
Jordan  
Kenya  
Kosovo  
Kyrgyzstan  
Lebanon  
Liberia  
Mongolia  
Myanmar  
Nepal  
Nicaragua  
Niger  
North Korea  
Pakistan  
Philippines  
Somalia  
South Sudan  
Sri Lanka  
Sudan  
Syria  
Tajikistan  
Timor-Leste  
Tunisia  
Uganda  
United States  
West Bank and Gaza  
Yemen  
Zimbabwe

#### What We Do

Agricultural development  
Child protection  
Climate change  
Conflict management  
Disaster risk reduction  
Economic development  
Emergency response  
Environmental stewardship  
Food security  
Good governance  
Health  
Microfinance  
Social innovations  
Sports for change  
Urban initiatives  
Women's empowerment  
Youth development

#### Ways to Help

Donate online  
Monthly giving  
Fundraise for us  
Symbolic gifts  
Partner with us  
Gifts of stock  
Planned giving  
Community fundraising  
Volunteering  
Email signup  
Link to us