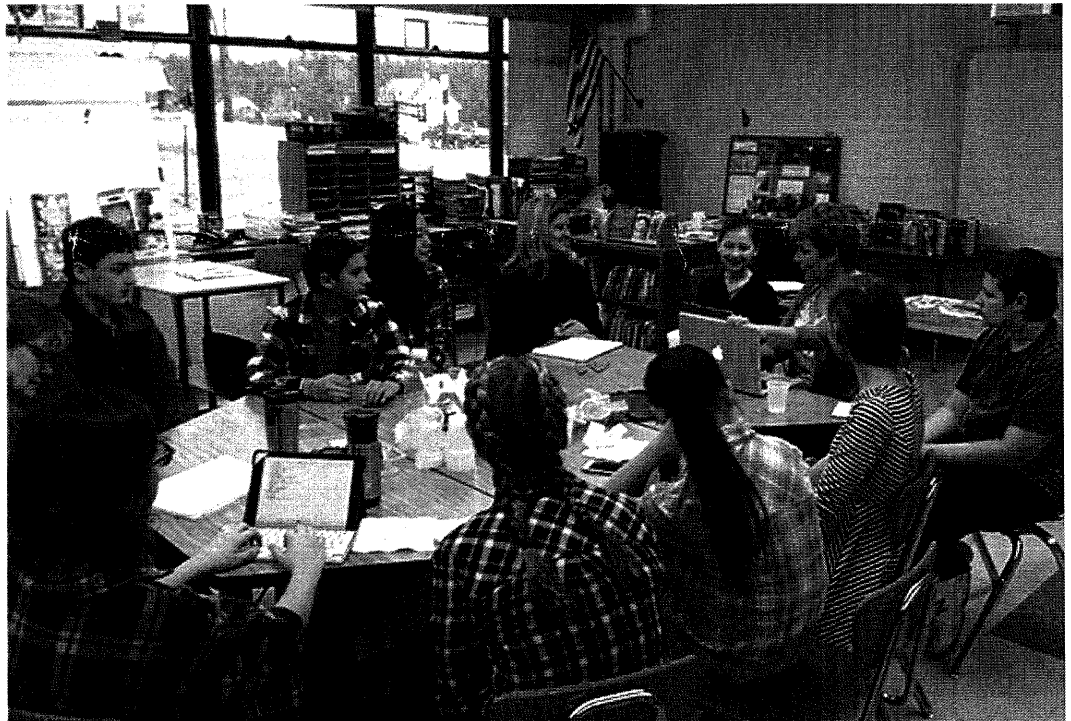


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Carlisle School club supports girls' education in Afghanistan

by *Cynthia Sorn*



Carlisle Middle School students have formed a club to support girls' education in Afghanistan and other impoverished areas of the world. Attending a meeting on March 11 are: teacher Liz Gray (at computer on right) and clockwise from her left: Jonathan Rolfe, Piper Harring, Linda Xu, Grace Sampson, Isadora Goldman-Leviton, Concord Rotary Club member Kat Edwards, Max Smith, Ian Dahr, Claire Sun, Rotary Club President Sharon Spaulding and Emma Tonies. (Photo by Cynthia Sorn)

A number of Carlisle School middle school students have formed a new club and, with the guidance of sixth-grade teacher Liz Gray, are raising funds to support girls' education in Afghanistan. They are also discussing ways to expand their mission to other countries, such as Cameroon. The student-driven club is an outgrowth of the sixth grade poverty research project. Recently, the club has been invited by the Concord Rotary Club to align with the Rotary's community service efforts as part of their EarlyAct program. The Mosquito joined the club at one of their Friday morning meetings, as did Rotary Club members Sharon Spaulding and Kat Edwards.

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The club name, currently called "Girls for Change," will eventually be changed to reflect that the club is open to all middle school students and includes both girls and boys, said Gray.

The club got its start in the fall of 2015 after Isadora Goldman-Leviton, a seventh grader and one of Gray's former students, approached Gray with the desire to continue the successful fundraising for Afghanistan girls' education.

For a number of years the sixth grade curriculum has included a unit studying the root causes of poverty, incorporating math, science, social studies and language arts in final research projects. For the last two years, the students have focused on poverty and education in Afghanistan. As part of their research students read Razia's *Ray of Hope: An Afghanistan Girl's Dream of an Education* by Elizabeth Sunebby, a fact-based story which details one girl's struggle to receive permission from the men in her family to attend the Zabuli Education Center outside of Kabul.

Sunebby and Zabuli Education Center founder Razia Jan visited the Carlisle School in 2014 and inspired the students to start raising funds. The sixth graders have raised almost \$7,000 in the last two years (some donated by students and some by parents), enabling many girls to attend the Zabuli center. Gray said that 13 girls were sponsored after last year's successful fundraising. The school received illustrated letters from the girls, which are posted in the Carlisle School Wilkins hallway. Centered on the display is the club's new logo, designed by club member Ian Dhar. Gray said the club members will be writing responses to the Afghan girls.

Rotary support

The students discussed upcoming fundraisers with the Rotary members at the 7 a.m. club meeting on March 11. The students decided to become part of the Concord Rotary community service outreach after Gray and a number of students attended a fall Concord Rotary event at which Razia Jan was presenting information on her education center in Afghanistan. After meeting with Rotary members at the event, the students invited Spaulding to attend the Friday morning student club meeting to discuss the ways in which the Rotary Club could support their Afghanistan goals.

During the meeting, Gray encouraged the students to lead the discussion and to take on the necessary fundraising tasks, for example, creating a poster to advertise a sale or making a morning announcement. The students made plans to sell ice cream cups and special bracelets at school recess on March 25. Spaulding said that she would help purchase the ice cream for the sale. Students brainstormed other ideas. They discussed the possibility of selling items during the intermission for "The Music Man," the 7th grade play, if permission is received from the parent producers.

Evening of fundraising on May 19

The club spent most of its meeting making plans for an evening of fundraising on Thursday, May 19 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Reached later, Gray explained: "The goal of the evening is two-fold: fundraising and equally important, to raise awareness and educate the community. If sixth graders end up sharing their research projects, a third goal will include the presentation of the 6th grade research papers."

The students discussed the format of the evening, which might start with a presentation in the auditorium. The students may interview Sunebby and their other special guest, Patti Quigley, the Executive Director of the Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation. Quigley, who is a native of Lowell, became involved in serving the Afghanistan community after her husband, who was on the second plane to hit the World Trade Center, died on 9/11. Other ideas include having displays created by the sixth graders based on their poverty project, which would be set up in the cafeteria. Serving refreshments was suggested and Spaulding said that the Rotary Club could help with the cost of the food. The students reacted with enthusiasm when Spaulding suggested serving traditional Afghanistan refreshments.

At the end of the meeting, the students discussed ways to broaden their outreach to other countries. Sixth grader Emma Tonies described her involvement in an

educational drive for Cameroon. Gray summed it up their goal. "We want education." She added, "The discussion started with Afghanistan. Now we can broaden it to others." Spaulding agreed with the group's vision and said the Rotary Club can help. She noted, "The Rotary is national and international."

For more information see www.raziasrayofhope.org (<http://www.raziasrayofhope.org>) and www.earlyact.com (<http://www.earlyact.com>)/. Δ

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