

Monday with Mikey: September 5, 2016

September is Basic Education and Literacy Month

Worldwide, 67 million children have no access to education, and more than 775 million people over the age of 15 are illiterate. Our members support educational projects that provide technology, teacher training, vocational training teams, student meal programs, and low-cost textbooks to communities. Our goal is to strengthen the capacity of communities to support basic education and literacy, reduce gender disparity in education, and increase adult literacy.

Here's one example of how Rotarians are helping:

In 2005, Razia Jan came up with a dangerous idea: to start a free private school for girls in her native Afghanistan. The Taliban were using extreme violence to keep girls from learning. In 2008, the year she opened the school, terrorists in the country -- armed with bombs, poison gas, guns, grenades, and acid -- killed 149 teachers, students, and employees in Afghan schools.

But Razia did not intend to let terrorists stop her. She approached Afghan Ministry of Education officials and persuaded them to donate a piece of land in a village 30 miles outside Kabul. Today, the Zabuli Education Center is in its ninth year and has a roster of more than 400 girls in kindergarten through ninth grade.

Without the school, many of the students never would have had the chance to receive an education. "I can feel a change happening in these girls and in this community," says Razia, who moved back to Afghanistan after building a successful tailoring business in Duxbury, Massachusetts, USA. "Knowledge is something nobody can steal from them."

There's a very real link between Literacy & Education and Polio Plus:

When my son, Rick, returned from a Marine Corps deployment to the Nowzad region of Afghanistan, he told me he wasn't sure if Polio will ever be conquered in that nation. The major issue is that rural and small village Afghanis practice unsanitary cooking and cleaning habits – they actually cook on "chips" made from human waste. We know feces is the primary conduit for transmitting the Polio virus.

My belief is that, the higher the literacy rate – the better basic education level – in a nation, the higher probability exists that people in that nation can learn the *science* of Polio. Better knowledge of the *science* can lead to changes in sanitation and other public health practices –including a rethinking of that very basic element: the fuel used in cooking meals. I'm not saying that literacy is the cure to Polio in Afghanistan, but I live by a belief that "nothing works, but everything works." If people *can't* read, there's NO chance they will comprehend the urgency of changing habits to prevent this disease from recurring.

So let's keep on looking for ways to help people read and learn – like Razia Jan has done!

Until next Monday, keep **"Doing Good, Having Fun!"**
Your Friend in Rotary Service,

Mikey

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