

CUC grads take Afghanistan schools under their wing

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Two new Canadian University College grads got a very different kind of education on a recent trip to Afghanistan.

Azalea Lehndorff and Jared Webb, organizers with Freedom Run 5000, spent 10 days touring Kabul and a northern district of the country with Eric Rajah of A Better World.

Lehndorff and Webb, who returned over the weekend, were in the wartorn nation to check out the groundbreaking on two schools they've started funding through their project, through which they hope to ultimately build 100 classrooms where girls can get an education.

"I realized the people of Afghanistan aren't really what I



These girls attend school in Afghanistan.

expected," said Lehndorff, 22. "They're sincere, they're hospitable. The average person isn't dangerous, they're just trying to survive. They've been in such a rough situation for such a long time."

In Sheberghan District, they visited the local university and Lehndorff and Webb travelled to the two schools they've taken under their wing. Freedom Run 5000 has so far raised about \$60,000, which allowed them to start their work.

"One of them needs four classrooms because some students are studying in tents," said Lehndorff. "The other one, we're going to be building between eight and 12 classrooms."

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While they were there, they also decided to help out a third school that has a student population of more than 4,000. It is in an aged Russian armoury, complete with bullet holes and even an old tank used as a sort of stand-in jungle gym.

"We need to build at least 40 classrooms (at that site)," said Lehndorff. "It's a very large undertaking it's going to cost at least \$200,000 to do."

A retired CUC math and chemistry professor, Howard Smith, was along for the ride with another professor. They were invited by Rajah to help out at the university, said Smith, who pointed out he had never been outside of North America prior to this trip.

"Talk about jumping right into the fire, missing the frying pan," he joked.

He brought notes and presentations from CUC staff to the science teachers at the university, as well as high school-level material, and supplied them with books. He even handed over his personal computer.

"The quality of teaching is pretty low," said Smith. "I think there's a big need to improve that."

Freedom Run 5000 is planning a cross-Canada fundraising relay run in the summer of 2011. They are also hosting a 10-km walk-run at Heritage Ranch in Red Deer at 9 a.m. on June 27.

For more information on the run or for pledge forms, visit www.events.runningroom.com
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