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BUSINESS**

The Institute for Economic
Empowerment of Women

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The Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women April Newsletter

We're already at the end of April, and spring is in full bloom. In the season's tradition of new beginnings, we have created a new pilot project connecting Oklahoma women and students to public policy, as well as a new class of Leadership Development students!

The In-Country students have now graduated in both Afghanistan and Rwanda.

The Afghan graduation ceremony was held at the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Kabul. Honored guests included the Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs and Director of Economic Empowerment, the Director of Private Sector Development Minister of Commerce and Industries, as well as Chairpersons of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce.



2009 graduate, Asma Ataie, presents
graduation certificates to the 2010
Afghanistan In-Country students.

The Rwandan graduation was hosted at the Rwanda Outreach & Community (ROC) Partners' Center in Kigali, featuring Jeanne D'Arc Mujawamariya, Rwandan Minister of Gender and Family Protection as the keynote speaker for the evening.



A cake featuring our program logo, created
by one of our Rwandan students, at the 2010
Rwanda In-Country graduation celebration.

While it was exciting to receive their graduation certificates, the moment keeping our students on the edge of their seats was the announcement of who was selected as Leadership Development delegates for 2010!

We are very careful to keep objectivity and quality as priorities in this selection process, which is why we formed a selection committee composed of board members, sponsors and supporters. Each student was evaluated on her In-

Country performance, her business plan and her potential to spread knowledge acquired during the program.

We are so excited to meet the following women this summer at Northwood University: (Afghanistan) [Abdollahi, Masouma](#), [Habibi, Masouma](#), [Hamid, Hangama](#), [Hissami, Parinaz](#), [Ibrahimi, Sakina](#), [Kaveer, Rahela](#), and [Mahmood, Yelda](#). (Rwanda) [Busingye, Rose](#), [Kabandana, Natacha](#), [Kaka, Nuriat](#), [Kankera, Marie-Josee](#), [Kayitesi, Molly](#), [Mazimpaka, Hortense](#), [Mugorewase, Honorine](#), [Muhimpundu, Micheline](#), [Mwunvaneza, Bonita](#), [Nkuruh, Leonia](#), [Nyiraneza, Charlotte](#), [Uwamwezi, Beltrida](#), [Uwizeye, Marcelline](#), and [Zirimwabagabo, Chantal](#).

We haven't spotlighted any of students recently, but we've had a unique opportunity with an American photographer, Peggy Kelsey, who started the Afghan Women's Project. Take a minute to check out her blog, which holds the incredible stories of life in Afghanistan, including the lives of our students.

Peggy traveled to Afghanistan in late March, and has interviewed and photographed several of our students, including Sakina Ibrahimi.

Sakina is an outstanding example of the wonderful women involved in the program. Married at 17 and a mother at 19, even with the duties of being a wife and mother, Sakina finds the time to run her own business and fight for women's rights. She has helped organize a public demonstration against Shea Law, and she encourages Afghan women to get involved in the public policy process. Read more of Sakina's story on our Web site.

We are so proud of all our In-Country Education graduates like Sakina. They have all accomplished so much, and they are such good ambassadors to our "I Educate & Empower Women" campaign – all it takes is one person to make a difference in the lives of women around the world. Our students are living testimonies to how lives can be changed through the education of women.



Sakina, who was all smiles during her session with Peggy Kelsey.

We want to give a special thank you to Peggy Kelsey for helping us to connect with our Afghan students on a personal level. She has graciously given her time to help us tell the inspirational stories of some of our PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS students.

Once our students arrive in the United States, we have so much in store for them! 2010 Leadership Development is really shaping up, with a weeklong focus on how to develop leadership and business goals. Our students will hear from experts like Mike Brennan and Elizabeth Hooper from SEVEN Fund, a non-profit that focuses on enterprise-based solutions to poverty, as well as Pennsylvania businesswoman Susan Daywitt and Dallas women business owners, including Nina Vaca and Terri Quinton.

Our 2010 International Women's Economic Summit is also developing into an exciting conference that will focus on the strength and contribution of women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan and Rwanda, the obstacles they face and free-economy solutions to peace.

As you can see, PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS has been keeping us pretty busy, but if you can believe it, we successfully launched our pilot project this month. The kick-off to our "I Educate and Empower Women" campaign pilot program started with Oklahoma's – and the nation's – very first "Take Your Constituent to Work Day."



*At the State Capitol with my mentee,
Olga Gonzales, a junior at ASTEC.*

I must take a moment and give credit and kudos to Rep. Leslie Osborn (R-Tuttle) and Sen. Constance Johnson (D-Oklahoma County). Without these two incredible women's coordination and organization, this day would not have been possible. Thank you, Leslie and Connie, for not only being public servants but also for believing in women.

"Take Your Constituent to Work Day" was Tuesday, April 13 at the Oklahoma State Capitol with 15 female legislators, 15 women business owners and 15 high school students from ASTEC Charter School in Oklahoma City.

During the day, the women had an opportunity to discuss public policy, issues surrounding small businesses in Oklahoma and most importantly, visit the Oklahoma Supreme Court, all in an effort to see how important it is for women to be involved in the public policy process. It truly was a great day for women in Oklahoma! We are excited for Phase 2, which will be "Take Your Legislator to Work Day" this summer!

We received excellent media coverage on the event, including an article and op-ed in Oklahoma's daily newspaper, The Oklahoman.

In the spirit of recognizing women for their accomplishments, we want to recognize the women we nominated for the 2010 Enterprising Women awards who received the award:

Donna Hegdahl and Sharon Evans of Dallas, Texas; Nancy Hyde of Oklahoma City and Sylvia Medina of Idaho Falls, Idaho. Congratulations!



*Sharon Evans, with her 2009 PEACE THROUGH
BUSINESS mentee. Razia Arefi.*

We also want to extend a warm welcome to our newest board members, Kathy Bennett and Sylvia Medina. Both of these women have been such strong supporters and sponsors for the PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program. We know that these dynamic women will have much to add to our Board of Directors, as they are all real movers and shakers!

We are now 27 working days away from our 2010 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS students arriving! We are matching up mentors according to our students' businesses. We are in eager anticipation of meeting them, getting a chance to inspire them, and to be inspired in return. Don't miss this incredible opportunity! If you want to be a mentor and help change a woman's life, apply today!

Warmest regards,

Terry Neese



*As always, a special thank you goes out to
our wonderful sponsors and partners!*