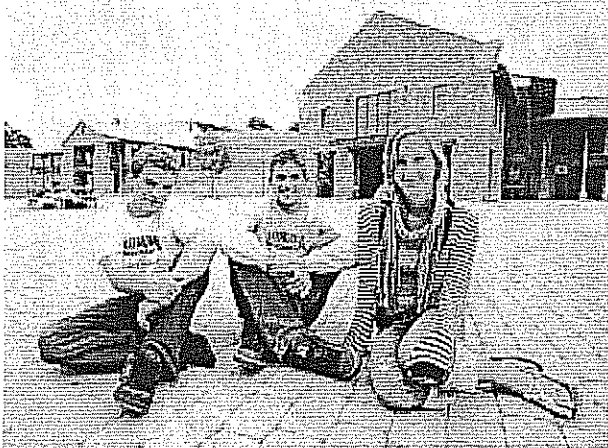


Students helping students: West Marin teen leads effort to help improve education in Afghan village

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Sonoma Academy students Percy Stubbs (left), Diego Canales and Kate Detrick have worked together to raise money to build a girls school in Afghanistan which is up and running. They are now having a fund raiser on June 20th to support an art institute and its teachers in kabul. (D photo)

How have a remote vineyard in West Marin and a village near Kabul, Afghanistan, been brought together?

Ask Percy Stubbs, 16, a resident of Stubbs Vineyard in West Marin and a junior at Sonoma Academy in Santa Rosa.

Percy heads a group of academy students whose

fundraising efforts have already built a school for 150 girls outside Kabul and who are now raising money for student scholarships and an arts program in that once-ruined city.

Percy, oldest of three children of ranchers Tom and Mary Stubbs, is a quietly confident young man with a long-standing wish to do good.

He and friends Kate Detrick of Petaluma, 16, and Diego Canales of Santa Rosa, 17, began their efforts to help beleaguered Afghans 11½ years ago when they were still high school sophomores.

"Everybody shared responsibility," Kate said. "We did whatever needed to be done."

Together - starting by making chocolate truffles and selling them outside Santa Rosa grocery stores - they raised \$20,000 to build their first school.

It has not been easy, but "the satisfaction from doing this work is just the best thing in the world," Percy said.

On June 20, at the Stubbs Vineyard near Petaluma, the students will stage their second big fundraising party, complete with a roast pig, local wines, a live auction and a popular dance band, the Sofa Kings. The money they raise will go to the Turquoise Mountain Foundation, which funds educational projects in Afghanistan.

Percy, handsomely quiet with dark hair and huge blue eyes, first learned of the Turquoise Mountain Foundation when attending - along with Kate, Diego and members of his family - a benefit showing of "Kite Runner," a film about Afghanistan based on the book by Khaled Hosseini.

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Introduced at the showing was Rory Stewart, a former British diplomat in Iraq who walked solo across the breadth of Afghanistan in 2001 and wrote a book about it, "The Places In Between."

At the showing Stewart described the work of the Turquoise foundation, which he founded on behalf of the Afghan people. Percy asked how he could help, and Stewart described foundation efforts to build a school for girls that would cost \$10,000 to build.

Percy's reply: We can do that.

He and eight friends took on the project as part of their service requirement at Sonoma Academy.

After selling truffles, they sold olive trees: Percy's parents had decided to remove olive trees on their 600-acre property to make room for more grapes.

They next staged their fundraiser at the vineyard, which attracted 200 people and several generous donors.

Using the money they sent to the foundation, the school was built; it opened in February.

Now students are raising money to support an art institute, set up in an area of Kabul that had been reduced to rubble by civil war. Instructors there now teach Afghan arts - ceramics, calligraphy - that had almost been lost in the conflict.

Some of the money will provide scholarships for orphans to attend the girls' school; "\$200 a year for each orphan," Diego said.

Percy, Kate and Diego all say the Afghanistan connection has been an educational one. "I've

learned a lot," said Diego. "I read about Afghanistan every day."

All hope to go there one day, and each is deeply committed to Schools for Kabul.

"Providing education will change things for everyone," Percy said.

He hopes that Schools For Kabul will continue even after he leaves Sonoma Academy a year from now. "I plan to do what I can to make sure it won't disappear."

Kate is equally committed. "We're all really proud of it. This project is really amazing."