



Our Voices

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How Educating Girls Changes Lives and Societies

by Victoria Hirsche

WHEN ASKING A COUPLE expecting a baby whether they are hoping for a boy or a girl, you may hope to hear “we just hope he or she is healthy.” Unfortunately, in many circumstances around the world, the words “it’s a girl” can bring about reactions ranging from disappointment to anguish. The reality globally is that girls often face barriers to thriving that boys often do not face, and that is seen almost nowhere more starkly than in access to education. According to a report by the United Nations there are 33 million fewer girls than boys in primary school worldwide, and the divide becomes steeper the higher the level of education you consider¹. Educating a girl is an investment, and for families who are struggling financially it doesn’t necessarily make short-term sense to send a girl to school when she will soon be devoted to wife and motherhood. Venerable Metteyya Sakyaputta, founder of the Karuna Girls College in Nepal visited the Women’s Resource Centre in February 2014 for a screen-



ing of the inspirational film *Girl Rising*, and shared about the ways girls are overcoming challenges to education in Nepal.

In Lumbini, Nepal, Metteyya’s hometown, girls are often forced into marriage as young as ten years old, and can spend entire days from before sunrise to after sunset preparing food for their husband’s family and cleaning the home. Female literacy rates in Lumbini are among the lowest in the world at 18%², and national education statistics estimate that only 33% of Nepalese students are girls³. On an individualized basis, the benefits for girls to be educated are obvious—elevated status in the community, improvements in health, and increased earning ability in the future. According to the World Bank, a girl with one extra year of education can earn 20% more as an adult⁴.

Besides benefiting individuals and their families however, educating girls is one of the best investments a society as a whole can make. When it comes to identifying practical steps a society can make to improve economic circumstances, educating girls is on the top of the list. If India enrolled just 1% more girls in secondary school, its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would rise by \$5.5 billion⁵. Many around the world are catching on and taking up the challenge to empower girls to pursue education. Venerable Metteyya’s Karuna Girls College is one example of an organization that is making important changes for girls. Metteyya tells of holding meetings to convince parents in Lumbini to delay their daughter’s marriages in order to enroll them in school, some of them until they achieved a twelfth grade education and became eligible to work as district educators—

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DEAN, FACULTY OF NURSING

Dr. Dianne Tapp

DR. DIANNE TAPP, Dean of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary has a well-deserved reputation for personal and professional leadership and a passion for promoting and encouraging leadership qualities in others. She has been described by colleagues as a “visionary, authentic and insightful leader” and is a well-respected member of the University of Calgary community.

Dean Tapp has a long record of excellence in leadership in her profession, and as a key

member of administration working to achieve the University of Calgary’s ambitious goals to become a leader in research and education. Dr. Dianne Tapp has served as Dean in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary since 2007, and was recently reappointed for a second term. She was also recognized as one of the University of Calgary’s Top 40 Alumni in 2006, in the university’s 40th anniversary year. Dr. Tapp is passionate about leadership in nursing education, and has consulted and presented on topics related to the nursing shortage, nursing workforce issues and trends in nursing education. She serves on numerous committees at the University of Calgary and in the community. She also teaches a graduate level course in qualitative research methods, and supervises students with interest in family health and graduate students with interest in family nursing and hermeneutic inquiry. Dr. Tapp is the recipient of the 2012 Canadian Nurses’ Association Order of Merit for Nursing Administration. In 2014, she will be a scholar in the National League for Nursing (NLN) Senior Deans/Director’s Leadership Development Program.

In sharing her thoughts on the role of a leader, and her personal leadership philosophy, Dean Tapp emphasizes that “leaders are always in contention with change ... changes that organizations or communities want to see happen, or changing environments and contexts that call for responsive action. Leaders know that teams with diverse talents and strengths have more capacity to contend with change. This should motivate each of us to recognize and draw on the strengths and leadership of others in our midst, on our teams, and in our communities of practice.”

a well-paid and respected position. As a result of the work and support of a few dedicated people, the school now has 900 students at its various branches in Lumbini and the towns in the outlying areas.

Empowering girls to access education by changing cultural norms and providing practical support to girls and their families is integral to raising female quality of life around the globe, and improving economic conditions worldwide. There are many ways to support initiatives that are bringing about change to girl’s situations. To learn more about the Karuna Girls College, Venerable Metteyya’s visit to the Women’s Resource Centre, or the Girl Rising movement, you can visit: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/women/girlrising>. Educating ourselves on the issues, and learning about how to effectively donate time and money to the cause are all ways to lend your support to girls around the world.

¹ <http://bit.ly/1f5unJ7> ² <http://bit.ly/1fwOgiv>

³ <http://bit.ly/1fwOgiv> ⁴ <http://bit.ly/1f5unJ7>

⁵ <http://bit.ly/1f5unJ7>



The WRC Awards 2014 Presentation Ceremony was held on March 8 at the University of Calgary. The ceremony is supported by the Students’ Union and the U of C Alumni Association.



WRC Awards

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S WISDOM, RESILIENCE AND COMPASSION

Distinguished Alumna

ROSMIN BHANJI

ROSMIN WAS BORN IN EAST AFRICA and moved to Canada at the age of 18. She is married with 2 children and has 2 grandchildren. At the age of 34 Rosmin chose to pursue a career in Social work. She graduated from the University of Calgary in 1995 with a Bachelor of Social Work. For 10 years, she worked with the Alberta Government and volunteered for years assisting newcomers to Canada. Her love for working with refugees took her to Afghanistan where she spent 10 years working and volunteering in the most challenging contexts. In 2010, she returned to Canada to pursue her Master of Social Work at McMaster University. Her passion for helping refugee women in Canada and her work in Afghanistan led her thesis research, "Resiliency amidst the fragmented lives of Afghan Refugee Women".



Rosmin has received an Outstanding Community Service Award (1995) from the Aga Khan Education Board in Calgary and was profiled in the Canadian Ismaili Magazine (2009). Rosmin has volunteered countless hours for the good of the community in Calgary and internationally. In her international work, she coordinated a Community Case Worker program, mentoring 30 workers to assist over 60,000 refugees returning back to Afghanistan. Her commitment to the welfare of others led her to manage an Opium Addiction Program where she played a profound role in building capacity of the local staff while rehabilitating 3 villages. Today, the program has covered over 60 villages and continues to be very successful. The unique pilot project has decreased the relapse rate of the patients from 90% to less than 30%.

In her work to eradicate the usage of opium, while experiencing threats on her life, her strength derived from asking herself: "what is the worth of life if not serving those who need us?" More recently when she visited Afghanistan after her post-graduate studies to assist with program evaluation, she realized the need for a centre in one of the poorest areas of Kabul and decided to stay for another year to personally fund and assist in starting a centre for women and their children.

Distinguished Student

LIANNE LEE

LIANNE HOLDS A BACHELOR OF EDUCATION from the University of Calgary, and is currently undertaking her Master of Arts in Educational Research at the Werklund School of Education. During the last seven years, Lianne has led a broad range of community programs and systems-change initiatives that seek to enhance the wellbeing of children and youth of immigrant families and their families. From being a frontline staff in after-school programs early in her career, to her most recent role as c.a.r.e. for Ethno-Cultural Children & Youth Manager at the Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary, Lianne's efforts have focused on addressing systemic barriers faced by immigrant families in Calgary.

Since 2011, Lianne has been collaborating on the planning, implementation, and assessment of an award-winning educational initiative, the "Service-Learning Program for Pre-Service Teachers." A partnership among the University of Calgary, c.a.r.e., and ten community organizations, the long term goal of the program is to improve academic outcomes for children and youth from immigrant backgrounds by strengthening teacher education, particularly in the areas of cultural humility and culturally responsive practices. Building on these experiences, Lianne's Master's thesis will focus on the perspectives of community organizations in community/university service-learning partnerships.

Drawing from Lianne's personal experiences as a first-generation Chinese Canadian woman, she developed and implemented the "Glo Girls" program when she was Diversity Coordinator at Big Brothers Big Sisters. This program fostered positive mentoring relationships, knowledge exchange, and intercultural understanding between female adults and young females from immigrant, refugee, and Aboriginal backgrounds. Lianne was a Director at Antyx Community Arts and has advocated for children, youth, and women on various advisory committees for The City of Calgary and the University of Calgary.



THE SHEILA O'BRIEN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP 2014



Sabrina Islam

SABRINA ISLAM IS A FOURTH year student majoring in Psychology with double minors in Health & Society and Fine Arts and a concentration in Nanoscience. This interdisciplinary approach to learning has given her the opportunity to equally explore the Arts and Sciences. Currently, she is applying for

Honours in Psychology where her proposed research topic is on perspectives of feminism in the South Asian diaspora. This interest in cross cultural examinations of feminism stems from her realization of her own feminist identity. Along with her academic pursuits, she is very active in the local and campus community in volunteering at various organizations such as the Association for Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured (ARBI) and Women's Resource Centre (WRC).

Challenging her prior misconceptions about feminism, Sabrina decided to join the WRC volunteer program

upon realizing that she was a feminist after all. Being exposed to the wonderful table discussions encouraged her to become a part of this community and to engage in the conversations. The leadership and diversity trainings have helped her to evolve into become a thriving team leader of the Events and Education Coordination team since September 2012. The WRC volunteer experience empowered her to take action on the issues she is passionate about. As a result she became involved in activism and advocacy in the Calgary community. She deeply appreciates how the WRC impacted her life and is grateful for all the opportunities that the centre has provided. Sabrina embodies the WRC pillars of Leadership, Wellness and Diversity with her presence, and is always successful at inspiring other volunteers. Sabrina was selected by her WRC volunteer peers to be recognized for her outstanding contributions to the WRC and the campus community.

For more information on the award, please visit:
http://www.ucalgary.ca/women/volunteer_award



I support the Women's Resource Centre.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

- I would like to volunteer.
- I would like to be notified of events & information.
- I would like to have a copy of the WRC newsletter.
- I would like to donate to the WRC

There are several ways to donate to the Women's Resource Centre including online donations by credit card. We also accept donations by cash, cheques, and new books for our growing Women's Resource Library. A tax creditable receipt is provided with each monetary donation.

Enclosed is my donation of:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$ _____

Send donations to:

Women's Resource Centre, MSC 482, 2500 University Drive NW
 Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4

Online Donation: www.ucalgary.ca/giving

How can you support the WRC?

BY VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers are the heart and soul of the WRC. All of our programs are led by volunteers representing different sectors of the community campus including students, staff, faculty and members of the Calgary community. The WRC team works to facilitate the projects, ideas and creative initiatives of our volunteers and the centre is defined by and for the women who volunteer with us and enjoy our space. Volunteering is an excellent way to take advantage of our beautiful space, interact with women from diverse backgrounds, and learn through dialogue and research.

THROUGH SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is an excellent way to see tangible growth and success at the WRC. Our yearly outcome-based assessments include important consultations with the users of the centre as well as key community stakeholders. When you support our centre you will receive a yearly package highlighting our activities, challenges and successes as well as newsletters describing upcoming events and including feature articles.

GET INVOLVED! If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, mentor or a sponsor, drop by our centre, visit our website at www.ucalgary.ca/women, call us at 403-220-8551 or email us at women@ucalgary.ca

