

## Afghan school co-ordinator visits Calgary students

By Emily Kreiberg, Calgary Herald April 8, 2011



*Photograph by: Dean Bicknell, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald*

**Raju Paul, the co-ordinator on a school building project in Afghanistan, speaks to a group of Grade 6 students about the project on Thursday at Calgary's Rideau Park School.**

Grade 6 students in Catherine McElroy's class at Rideau Park School have a special connection with students in Afghanistan.

Since January, McElroy's students have been learning about the Rotary School in Jalalabad, a two-storey, 20-classroom facility built last year by Rotary International in Afghanistan.

The school, which opened in September and now accommodates 4,500 Afghan Grade 1-12 students, has become a work in progress for the industrious students of Rideau Park.

In the past four months, the students have read books on Afghan culture, watched videos about the lives of students at the Rotary School and become directly involved with Rotary's fundraising efforts.

On Thursday, Afghanistan school project co-ordinator Raju Paul met with McElroy and her students to deliver a presentation on the school's progress, and to hear how Calgary's youth were helping to spread awareness about Afghan issues.

Paul spoke of the benefits of educating young Afghan women, and highlighted some of the positive educational and social impacts the school has had on the community.

"In Afghanistan, prior to this school being built, females were not receiving an education, children had to learn outside in the mud, and kids had to travel long distances to get to school," he said.

"But because of the co-operation we've had with local Muslim leaders, we have a school that is still standing, and the kids are eager to be there."

McElroy's students, who have been involved in various elements of the school's fundraising, from presentations to sales, were moved by Paul's slide show.

"I care about helping the sales group because I get to sit at a desk at my school," said Paul Sims, 12.

"All I have to think about is kids sitting in Afghanistan in the mud, and that makes me want to help."

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