



darNEWS

[View printable]

Stasek sheds light on Afghanistan today

9/29/2006 2:23:00 PM, Lakeside Lines

Rosemary Stasek does not wear a head scarf. She lives alone. She is not married. She drives a car. And through these choices, she purposely sets herself apart from the other women in Kabul, Afghanistan.

"When I leave my home, I drive through the area around the school, where people gather, so that young girls can see me driving a car," said Stasek, when she spoke at the Upper School on Sept. 29. "I want them to know that there is more out there ... They cannot aspire to something they never see."

Stasek, an American woman currently living in Kabul, is a logistics consultant on reconstruction projects. She has traveled to Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, leading projects directly benefiting women, including the women's prison, maternity wards and employment training.

This summer, Darlington's faculty, staff and students were asked to read Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner," a novel that illuminates the realities of life in Afghanistan that are not covered in television news reports. Stasek, a friend of Hosseini, addressed the Upper School during Parents Weekend, shedding light on what life is like today in Afghanistan.

"'The Kite Runner' is about an Afghanistan I never knew," said Stasek, who moved to the country four-and-a-half years ago. "From stories I hear, the book is accurate. It portrays Afghanistan in a romantic sense, the way many who have since left the country tend to remember it."

Stasek went on to say that Afghanistan is currently at a low point – as low, if not lower, than when the U.S. first entered the country five years ago after the 9/11 attacks. And while the Taliban was removed from power for a period of time, it seems to Afghanis that these efforts have been abandoned and forgotten. The Taliban grows stronger by the day, gaining control of each province one at a time. Schools are burned down; government figures, including principals and teachers, are assassinated; and rocket attacks happen daily.

"It was interesting to be able to compare my life here in America to the kind of life I would lead if I were an Afghan girl," said senior Anna Krueger. "It opened my eyes to the comforts and advantages that I have and encouraged me not to take anything in my life for granted ... Afghanistan and the Taliban are in the news



Rosemary Stasek



News by Category

[All Recent News](#)
[Academics](#)
[Arts](#)
[Athletics](#)
[Community](#)
[Faculty/Staff](#)
[Alumni](#)
[Student Life](#)
[College](#)
[Centennial](#)

[Upper School](#)
[Middle School](#)
[Lower School](#)

School Announcements

[Upper School](#)
[Middle School](#)
[Lower School](#)

Search the Archive

View a Lakeside Issue

[Pick an Issue](#)

every day and it was intriguing to hear about these topics from someone who sees it first hand.”

Some people, like Stasek, are doing all they can to make life better by starting programs such as underground schools, but they need help.

“Americans must remember Afghanistan. You do not have to wait until you are 18 to do something,” she said to the students. “You have the right to ask your congressmen and women where the U.S. stands with its efforts in Afghanistan ... If we could get ten cents out of every dollar spent in Iraq or one out of every 10 soldiers sent there, Afghanistan could be in great shape.”

The former mayor of Mountain View, Calif., Stasek has a broad history of political involvement, especially women’s issues activism. In 1989, she co-founded California Catholics for Free Choice and serves as state director. She has served on the Board of Planned Parenthood Advocates Mar Monte and the Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women. Her honors include being named a Distinguished Woman of the 14th Congressional District, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights Freedom of Religion Award and the Alameda National Women’s Political Caucus Pro-Choice Champion Award. She was a nominee for the Silicon Valley Women of Achievement Award and a candidate for the California State Assembly in March 2002.

In 1999, Stasek was selected by the Secretary of Defense to participate in the Joint Civilian Orientation Conference, which took her to military installations across the country and aboard an aircraft carrier in the Pacific Ocean. She broadened her knowledge of military affairs, especially issues involving women in serving in the Armed Forces. She now also serves as a member of the U.S. Air Force Space Commanders Group.

Stasek has also worked for over a decade in the computer industry as a Web developer and system administrator for prominent high tech firms in Silicon Valley. She spent six years as an instructor at DeAnza Community College teaching Introduction to Microcomputer Networks.

Stasek’s interest in international issues has taken her to Nepal, Ecuador, France, Britain, Holland, Germany, Italy, The United Arab Emirates, The Czech and Slovak Republics, Canada, Mexico, Thailand, Azerbaijan and Venezuela. In 1998, she traveled to Cuba as a member of a special women’s delegation, and in May 2002 she was a member of a one of the first delegations to return to Afghanistan.

In addition to her social and political involvements, Stasek is an award-winning food preserver and teaches classes on food preservation including making jams, jellies and pickles. In June 2004, she developed and led a class to teach Afghan women to make preserves in an income-generating project. Stasek holds a bachelor’s degree in economics from Cornell University, where she currently serves on the President’s Council of Cornell Women.

“To quote Rosemary, ‘We cannot aspire to what we

never see,” said David Powell, Thatcher Chair of English. “We are committed to showing our students the worlds which exist beyond the walls of our institution, and to understand that the calls to experience and service are limited only by their imaginations.”