

Posted on Thu, Jan. 20, 2005

Ex-city official going to Afghanistan

FORMER COUNCILWOMAN SET TO HELP MANAGE BEAUTY SCHOOL PROJECT

By Kimra McPherson
Mercury News

Rosemary Stasek, a former Mountain View city councilwoman who has worked to improve conditions for women in Afghanistan, will move to Kabul this week to work as the logistics manager for the Kabul Beauty School.

Stasek, who served on the council for eight years and was mayor in 2000, decided to return to Afghanistan after term limits required her to step down this year. She plans to stay at least through the summer.

``This was just a really natural time to say, `OK, I'm going to go for a really significant time and see what I can accomplish,' " Stasek said this week while taking a break from packing boxes.

Stasek first traveled to Afghanistan in 2002, accompanying a delegation of young Afghan-Americans who wanted to help with the reconstruction. In the three trips that followed, Stasek worked to improve conditions at a women's prison and a maternity hospital and taught women how to make jam and preserves. She also founded a non-profit -- ``a little help," to raise funds for the projects.

The Kabul Beauty School trains women in Western beauty techniques so they can market their services to Kabul's international community. Stasek will work on fundraising, marketing and starting a practice salon so students can have on-the-job training.

Stasek said she's heard some say that the women of Afghanistan have much bigger problems than learning how to do hair and makeup. But she said the salon plays a vital role in Afghan society: It's a gathering place for women, and women who cannot work outside the home can still run in-home salons.

Contact Kimra McPherson at kmcpherson@mercurynews.com or (650) 688-7557.