



Dunlap Has Literally Made the World A Better Place

by Cynthia Kincaid

“My whole thrust in life, from the time I was young, was to make the world a better place,” says **Toc Dunlap, '78**. And she's had much success.

Early on, Dunlap taught at an alternative school in Jackson, California. Her decision to go to law school was something she did to reinforce her teaching credentials and help some of her students. “A lot of the kids who were in our program had skirmishes with the law,” she recalls.

But law school opened up new challenges for Dunlap and she was off on another path, an eight-year career in Ford Motor Company's international legal department. Still, Dunlap yearned to work in social entrepreneurship. She resigned from Ford and traveled to Afghanistan, taking a job as a teacher. “I have a philosophy that you train the people who are there because they know best how to do it,” Dunlap says. “And then you walk away from the job.”

While in Afghanistan, Dunlap met Sakena Yacoobi, who was working with Afghan women and students. A professional friendship developed and in 1996 the two founded

Creating Hope International (CHI), a Michigan-based non-profit dedicated to improving the daily lives of the victims of world strife, devastating natural disasters, crumbling economies, and political systems that suppress natural human rights. The year before, Yacoobi had started the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), and CHI helped AIL with technical assistance, raising and dispensing money, and administrative functions. “CHI is the American arm of what they do, and AIL was pretty much our sole project,” says Dunlap. “When the U.S. bombed Afghanistan, overnight the money just started flooding in for Afghan work.”

Dunlap is pleased with the support both organizations give the Afghan people. “Very few organizations are doing the kind of work that AIL is doing, and in the long run it's going to have a huge impact on Afghanistan,” she says. “It's creating a base from which other things are going to flower.”

She credits her legal education for her persistence in seeking solutions, even when things look hopeless. “We work with the people and the laws within the system, so that when we establish a women's center in Afghanistan, which everyone told me I couldn't do, it works,” she says. “It isn't burned down or attacked because everyone going there is on board. You figure out all the ways to accomplish that, and law school helped me become very good at that type of problem-solving.”