

# The Streets of Afghanistan

▼ A PEEK INTO THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF COLORADO'S MOST-TALENTED PEOPLE



SHANNON GALPIN  
 IS ONE WOMAN WHO  
 IS USING THE ART  
 WORLD TO MAKE  
 A DIFFERENCE IN  
 THE LIVES OF  
 GIRLS AND WOMEN  
 HALFWAY AROUND  
 THE WORLD

At the same time, Galpin remembers reading *Three Cups of Tea*, *The Places In Between*, and *Infidel*. "In Afghanistan, if a woman is raped, she is often put in jail. She's not viewed as a victim. It's a weapon of war used for controlling a population." She was incensed at the injustice happening to women, especially in Afghanistan. So, in 2006, Galpin, a former ballet dancer, world traveler, and athletic trainer, created Mountain2Mountain, (M2M), a non-government organization (NGO) to provide education and healthcare for women and girls in Afghanistan.

**PEOPLE SELL THEIR HOUSES EVERY DAY**

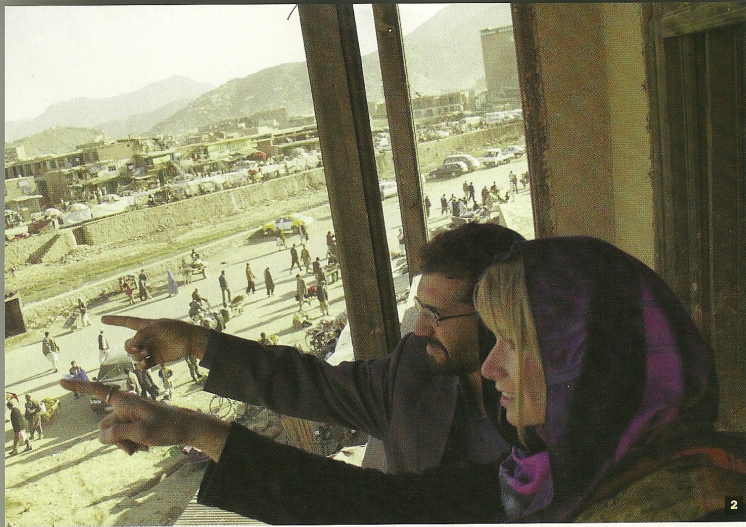
It's not often, though, that someone sells their house to help women in Afghanistan. Shannon Galpin, a blonde, single mother from Breckenridge did just that to found Mountain2Mountain.

**A VISION OF EMPOWERMENT**

An unexpected phone call from Galpin's little sister changed her life course. "My

sister called to tell me she'd been raped at college. Ten years before, . . . so was I," Galpin revealed during a recent phone call. "I never really discussed it. I didn't want it to define me. But, now I realize that of course it did. It gave me a passion for social justice and gender equity." She adds, "My parents have two daughters and it happened to both of us!"

STORY: MELISSA TAYLOR  
 PHOTOGRAPHY: TONY DI ZINNO



2



3

First, Galpin started fundraising. Then, she sold her house and used the money to help M2M. She continues fundraising and growing M2M, which currently includes a board of directors, an advisory board and two staff members.

**M2M IN AFGHANISTAN**

Galpin is about to take another trip to Afghanistan; she first started three years ago in Kabul, an urban valley city of three million people, and the capital of

Afghanistan. There, she funded a computer lab at a girl's school and set up kindergarten in a woman's prison.

Galpin blogged, "I spend my evenings riding a motorbike around Kabul. The bikes sneak in between traffic better than any car. Yet the muddy streets mean I often arrive at my destination happy, but looking a bit worse for the wear." Worn cars and rickety trucks navigate the roads with Galpin and overloaded bike riders. Roadside vendors and

**THE DETAILS**

**WHAT:** STREETS OF AFGHANISTAN PREMIERE AND FUNDRAISER

**WHERE:** DENVER ART MUSEUM  
100 W. 14TH AVE. PKWY., DENVER, 720-865-5000

**WHEN:** APRIL 28, 2011, 7 P.M.

**CONTACT:** FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXHIBIT OR M2M, GO TO WWW.MOUNTAIN2MOUNTAIN.ORG AND WWW.STREETSOFAFGHANISTAN.COM.

**DETAILS:** STREETS OF AFGHANISTAN IS A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT OF WESTERN AND AFGHAN PHOTOGRAPHERS AND ARTISTS. THE LIVING ART EXHIBITION COMBINES LIFE SIZE PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO PROJECTION, MUSIC, KITS, STREET ART, AND HUMANS TO CREATE A UNIQUE STORYTELLING EVENT.

1 GALPIN RIDING A BUZKASHI HORSE BEFORE A MATCH IN THE SHOMALI PLAIN. 2 GALPIN AND NAJIBULLAH, AS HE POINTS OUT LANDMARKS FROM ROOFTOPS OF MURAD KHANE. 3 STUDENTS WALKING TO SCHOOL IN KABUL. 4 LEARNING TO FISH USING A NET WITH A LOCAL IN THE PANJSHIR.

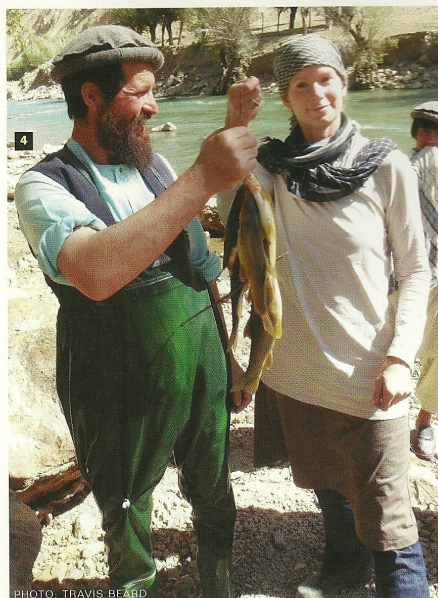


PHOTO: TRAVIS BEARD



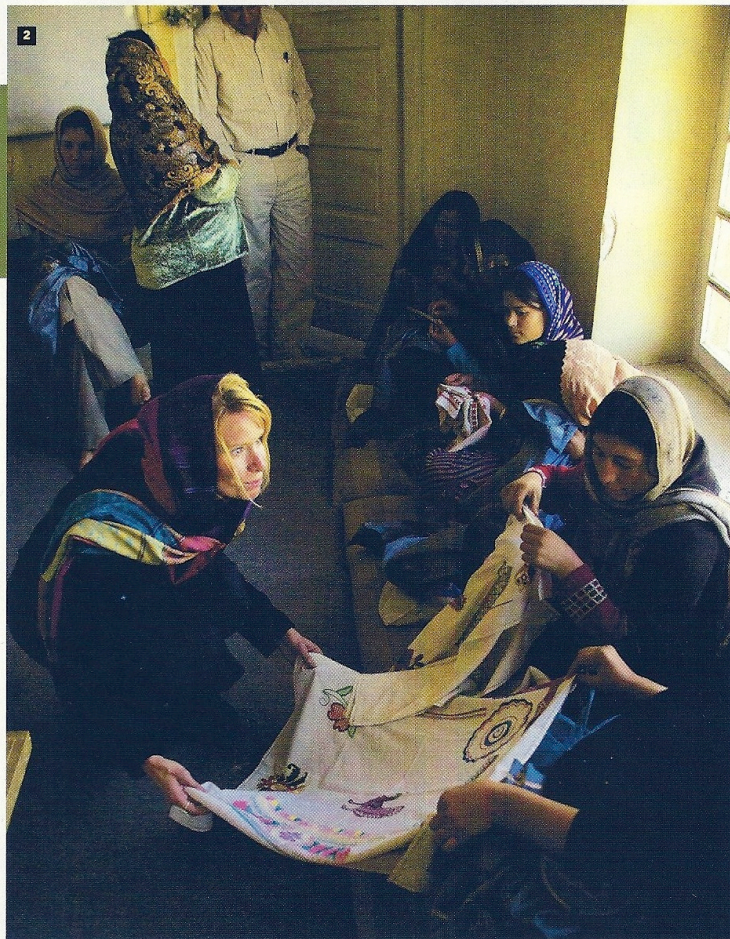
1 DEAF TEACHER AND STUDENT AT ANAD SCHOOL IN KABUL. 2 GALPIN MEETING WITH WIDOWS AT A TAILORING AND HANDIWORK WORK CO-OP. 3 SHANNON SPEAKS WITH GENERAL DASHTY IN PANJSHIR VALLEY.

fourth grade level, to be skilled birth attendants? Our idea is to identify potential candidates for a two year midwife program, but the program requires a ninth grade education.” According to UNICEF, female literacy in Afghanistan is 10%. The country as a whole? 34%.

So, Galpin can’t train midwives unless she can educate the girls. “We have to support a boys school in order to build a girls school to show we want all the children to have an education.”

Next, in her most ambitious project yet, she decided that M2M would build a K-12 Kabul school for the deaf. With this, she’ll fund a teacher training program, an interpreter program, an Afghan sign language development program and a vocational program. “There are 10,000 deaf children in Afghanistan. These kids are just falling through the cracks,” Galpin shared with Ann Curry in a recent Dateline NBC interview.

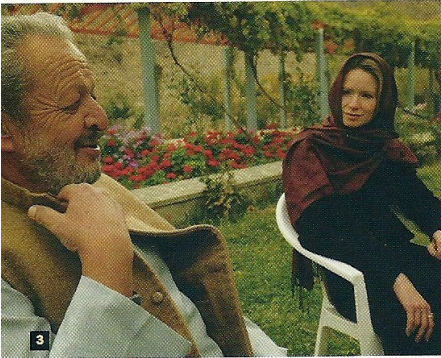
Galpin hopes the graduates of the school



markets sit next to bombed-out buildings of cement and corrugated metal. Women in burkas with their children, mustached men, and fatigue-clad soldiers all walk through the busy streets.

“At the same time [as the first projects], I wanted to train rural midwives . . . Afghanistan has the highest maternal death rate in the world,” Galpin explains, “because men can’t see women or deliver babies and there’s an enormous shortage of midwives.”

Galpin continues, “It all comes down to education. We’re trying to work in areas [outside of Kabul] that have no or little access to education. How can we train girls that are just barely literate, maybe only reading and writing at a



will come back as teachers or build more schools across the country.

**THE EXHIBITION**

Galpin wants to share the stories of Afghanistan. She created a touring exhibition, "The Streets of Afghanistan," which will be in Denver for one night only, April 28, 2011, in the Ponti Hall of the Denver Art Museum. After Denver, the exhibition will travel to Dallas, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, New York, Sonoma and Breckenridge. Galpin hopes the exhibition will transport guests to Kabul, as they walk among storytellers, women in burkas and Taliban guards, view life-sized photographs taken by Afghan and Western photographers, and listen to music and Kabul's city sounds.

It is true that one person can make a difference. Shannon Galpin and Mountain2Mountain are changing the lives in Afghanistan. She's just one woman. But she's changing the world. **CE**

*Melissa Taylor is a freelance writer, award-winning blogger, and educator. Find her at [www.melissatayloronline.com](http://www.melissatayloronline.com).*

**FASCINATION ST. FINE ART**

*Asencio* Meet Figurative Painter  
Henry Asencio May 20th & 21st

*"Comfort"*

315 Detroit Street, Denver ~ Cherry Creek North ~ 303-333-1566  
[www.FascinationStArt.com](http://www.FascinationStArt.com) ~ Free Parking in Back

**“My parents taught me  
the value of money.”**  
*community*

How will you be remembered?  
Let the story of your life reflect the real you.  
When you are ready to take your next step  
as a philanthropist, call us.

**ROSE**  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

We bring together generous people and  
innovative ideas to strengthen our community.

303.398.7459 | [rcfdenver.org](http://rcfdenver.org)