

Afghanistan Educator to Receive Honorary Doctorate

University of the Pacific will award Sakena Yacoobi an honorary doctorate degree during the Commencement ceremony on May 19. Yacoobi, a Pacific alumna, '77, has gained international recognition and numerous awards for establishing and running underground schools for women and children in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule through her Afghan Learning Institute (AIL).

“Sakena Yacoobi has been recognized by leaders around the world as a true humanitarian who put her own life at risk for those who couldn’t defend themselves,” said Pacific President Don DeRosa. “She serves as a guiding example for all our students, alumni and for people around the world of what knowledge and determination can accomplish.”

Yacoobi founded AIL while working in the Afghan refugee camps of Pakistan, then operating clandestine home schools for girls within Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. A group of adolescent girls in the Afghan refugee camps of Pakistan are now provided text books, curricula, and information through a single computer.

Staffed and run by Afghan women, AIL has expanded to include a network of centers and mobile clinics that focus on maternal and child health, providing hundreds of thousands of people in remote villages with their only source of health care. Yacoobi developed and implemented the health and education programs of the organization and oversees all of the organization’s operations. Under her leadership, AIL has grown since the fall of the Taliban and now serves 300,000 women and children annually.

While in the area, she will make several appearances to discuss the current situation in Afghanistan and raise awareness of human rights abuses against women in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

A fundraiser organized by a Pacific first year SIS student whose parents are from Afghanistan will be held on May 16 at 6 pm in the Raymond Commons Room. A donation of \$50 is suggested. All proceeds will go to benefit the Afghan Institute of learning.