Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the end of a five-year ban on girls attending school in Afghanistan.

On Saturday, for the first time since the oppressive Taliban regime usurped control of Afghanistan, young women will finally be able to return to school. The Taliban regime, which had declared girls' education illegal under Taliban rule, is moving out from beneath the cloak of secrecy and into the light of legitimacy.

Today, girls who once shared a few outdated books and a handful of pens and notebooks now have access to some of the 40,000 stationary kits, 10,000 School-in-a-Box kits, 7.8 million, textbooks and 18,000 chalkboards provided by the UNICEF Back-to-School Campaign.

Prior to the downfall of the Taliban, young women in Afghanistan, and especially the capital of Kabul, were poorly educated and employed. Seventy percent of school teachers, 50 percent of civilian government workers and 40 percent of doctors in Kabul were women.

And at Kabul University, females comprised half of the student body and 60 percent of the faculty.

In fact, the Afghan Constitution, which was ratified in 1964, had an equal rights provision for women contained within it. It is clear that in order for women in Afghanistan to regain a position of equality, quality education programs must be made available to the girls in Afghanistan.

I commend UNICEF and the Interim Afghan Government for the Back-to-School effort and look forward to seeing more than 1.5 million children on the school-house steps on Saturday.

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A.D. AND SHIRLEY McGREGOR: A GIFT OF LOVE AND GENEROSITY

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a very special couple, A.D. and Shirley McGregor of Spaulding Township, Michigan, and their community. They have not only derived much pleasure from the McGregor's efforts over the years is long and impressive. The list of the many volunteer organizations graced by the McGregors' efforts over the years is long and impressive, including the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church in Saginaw, the Salvation Army, various rescue missions, the Saginaw County Historical Society, CROP Walk for the Hungry, the Saginaw Fair and the Greater Mecosta County Emergency Medical Service. There are so many: her students, her colleagues, and her family. She is survived by her husband, three children, and three grandchildren. She will be missed by all who knew her.

Mr. Speaker, I salute Mrs. Elaine Cardonick and the ideals she represented and inspired in all of her students at the Loesche Elementary School in Philadelphia.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JOE JESIK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. McINNIS, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Joe Jesik and recognize his contributions to this nation. A resident of Pueblo, Colorado, Joe began his service as a sailor during World War II when he joined the Navy and served in the Pacific Theatre. During his tour, Joe was stationed on the light cruiser USS Honolulu, which was involved in numerous engagements and battles throughout the South Pacific. He was recently awarded several decorations for his service over forty years, and it is my pleasure to recognize his awards and service before this body of Congress and this nation today.

The USS Honolulu was involved in numerous engagements throughout the war and is credited with the sinking of a Japanese cruiser, four destroyers, and four enemy aircraft. Joe's exploits and service to his country were recently brought to light by his immediate family through a surprise ceremony attended by almost two hundred relatives. At the ceremony, Joe was presented with several long overdue decorations for his service in the nation during the war. Among the decorations awarded at the ceremony are the Navy Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Navy Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon, the Navy Unit Commendation Medal, and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon. Thanks for the loving family of twelve sons and daughters, and his dedicated wife Lucille, Joe is now properly recognized by his nation for his service over fifty years ago, and it is my pleasure to recognize him for his service to our armed forces and commitment to his nation.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege that I recognize Joe Jesik and his selfless sacrifice to our nation that Mrs. Cardonick exemplified throughout her career, and especially in September of 2001. Elaine love and kindness touched the lives of so many: her students, her colleagues, and her family. She is survived by her husband, three children, and three grandchildren. She will be missed by all who knew her.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a very special person from my district. Anne Considine is an extra-ordinary person who has demonstrated how an individual can impact their corner of the world in very ordinary ways. Her corner of the world is Charlestown, Massachusetts, where she is being honored this Saturday evening for her twenty-five years of dedicated service to the Charlestown Youth Hockey Association (CYHA).

Plain and simple, Anne Considine is a “hockey mom”. Long before the political pundits of the 1990’s realized the power soccer moms have in impacting political change, Anne Considine was improving her community through youth hockey. For the children in the family car for early morning ice time is an expected duty of a hockey parent in Boston. However, twenty-five years ago in most families, and in most neighborhoods, that would have been dad’s job alone. Long before women reached Olympic and World Cup glory, the women who have in impacting political change, Anne Considine was known as someone who could tighten a mean skate. Anne’s influence in her community did not stop at the rink or at the doorstep.