Canadian Federation of University Women - Ottawa

 (correction *in italics*; August 2, 2016)

Lorraine Mangwiro, Programme Officer

Graduate Women International (GWI)

lm@graduatewomen.org July 29, 2016

Dear Ms. Mangwiro;

CFUW-Ottawa nominates Hally Siddons for the 2016 GWI Chitra Ghosh Award

Hally Siddons of CFUW- Ottawa is our nominee for the 2016 GWI Chitra Ghosh Award because of her outstanding contributions to CFUW, to Afghan women and to the re-building of Afghan society after so many years of conflict and discrimination.

*Hally was President of our CFUW-Ottawa club from 2006-2008, and Co-Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2010 CFUW National AGM.* She learned from keynote speaker Dr. Sima Samar of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, about the pressing needs of Afghan women for education and human rights. Inspired by Dr. Samar, Hally recruited 45 women, and they became our University Helping Afghan Women (UWHAW) group, dedicated to learning, advocacy and support for the women of Afghanistan.

Now in its sixth year, UWHAW has raised over $70,000 CDN for scholarships at Dr. Simar’s Gawharshad Institute in Kabul. Our first 10 scholarship winners graduated from the 4-year program in January 2015; our second cohort, 20 young women, will graduate in 2018. UWHAW is committed to support these young women, and to raise awareness and support for more young Afghan Women, locally and across Canada. Hally and her husband host an annual UWHAW Garden Party fundraiser which has become a notable social event, with prominent speakers and guests.

UWHAW members and guests have learned about Afghanistan issues from experts, including diplomats, officials of development organizations, Afghan students in Canada, and others with experience and expertise in women’s empowerment, gender equality and education in Afghanistan. We meet regularly, invite speakers, and review printed information. Our concern has increased since Canada’s military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, with subsequent re-direction of Canada’s official aid priorities to other areas.

UWHAW corresponds with political leaders, and is on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/University-Women-Helping-Afghan-Women-UWHAW-555114927900850/> and on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/4UWHAW>

Hally has built strong relationships with CFUW clubs in our area, and has pioneered a National CFUW Afghan Women’s support group, whose members share information and discussions on social media and in web-based meetings. She delivered a Workshop at CFUW’s 2015 National Conference. She’s attended the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) as a CFUW delegate, and as a GWI delegate. She’s spoken about Afghan Women and UWHAW’s priorities to Women Graduates USA (WGUSA) and to the American Association of University Women (AAUW). At the 2013 GWI Triennial Hally presented a paper “Educate Afghan Girls: Sustain The Nation” together with members from Britain, Australia, Rwanda and the USA. She presented a Workshop “Ideas for Action: Developing Sustainable Education for Girls and Women in Afghanistan” with special Afghan guests, Dr. Sima Samar and Ms. Nasima Rahmani.

Hally has built strong relationships internationally in support of Afghan women and girls and has mentored developers of the Afghan women’s group which is currently completing requirements for GWI membership (http://www.graduatewomen.org/what-we-do/projects/)

Hally’s accomplishments with UWHAW have been recognized and supported by Canada’s diplomats, senators and government officials, including Canadian Ambassador Deborah Lyons, and Ambassador-elect Ken Neufeld.

Hally’s work with UWHAW has provided our CFUW members with increased understanding of international issues and opportunities, and how we can support education of young women. Hally’s work has been fundamental - in contributing to a future for young women in Afghanistan, and in building a CFUW community of knowledgeable women who are committed to supporting women outside our own country. Membership in UWHAW has been a life-enhancing experience for many of our CFUW-Ottawa members.

We strongly support her nomination for the 2016 GWI Chitra Ghosh Award for an Outstanding Graduate Woman.

Sincerely

Dr. Charlotte Rigby

President

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cc. Karen Dunnett, President, CFUW

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 Sandra Thomson, CFUW VP Ontario