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Soldier's Memory Lives on with Well That Benefits Hundreds of Children and Families in Afghan Village

Richmond, Va. – Monday, Dec. 22, 2008 – Forrest Ewens – a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army – had a knack for putting a smile on a child's face in Afghanistan, often sneaking treats to them.

"Forrest had a real heart for the children in Afghanistan," Ewens' mother, Carol, said. "When he wrote home, he would write more about the help he was able to provide to the local people rather than his military adventures."

Forrest was 25 when he was killed in the line of duty in 2006. But his mission to help the Afghan people lives on in the form of a well that brings clean water to 500 families in the remote Samady Village in Badakhshan Province in northeast Afghanistan.

Thanks to Forrest's parents, Michael and Carol Ewens of Gig Harbor, Wash., the well means the community now has clean drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Before the well was built in the village, children – especially girls – had to walk to nearby villages to get water. They often waited several hours in long lines to take home only a few gallons of water. If water was not available, children and their families would rely on river water, only to become ill from water-borne diseases.

The Ewens, who have been active contributors to Christian Children's Fund (CCF) since 1992, wanted to provide funding for a well near the area where Forrest was killed.

"Being a soldier is a hard occupation and Forrest walked that path with honor," Michael Ewens said. "He got to build relationships with the locals, and his captain said when elders would come to the base Forrest was one of three soldiers they asked for by name."

The well was completed in September with Forrest's name stenciled on it.

Forrest's three brothers are also in the Army – Oaken, 27, Elisha, 25, and Stephen 23. Oaken, Forrest's twin, was deployed this month to serve in Afghanistan and Elisha will deploy there in January.



Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, CCF works in 32 countries and assists approximately 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin. CCF is a member of the ChildFund Alliance.

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“We pray for peace to finally come to these people (in Afghanistan),” said Carol Ewens. “We hope to have the privilege of visiting there one day.”

CCF has worked in northern Afghanistan since 2001 under the name of ChildFund Afghanistan. ChildFund Afghanistan currently assists approximately 533,000 children and family members through community development improvements including renovation and construction of schools, teacher and health worker training; and construction of health posts. ChildFund Afghanistan facilitates programs to create a protective environment for children and families through community-based approaches.

“Afghanistan is still considered one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a child,” said Anne Edgerton, CCF’s director of Child Protection/Emergency Response.

“However, ChildFund Afghanistan is well-positioned to address widespread threats to children’s well-being and in a way that strengthens communities and helps the Afghan government transition to long-term development.”

The Badakhshan Province is one of the poorest and most remote areas of Afghanistan. More than 80 percent of the children do not have access to clean water, something that is changing with the construction of wells.

“We wanted to pursue Forrest’s mission of stability for the Afghan people,” Michael Ewens said of their donation.

“It is especially encouraging to us to see that our decision to be involved in CCF long ago has been so worthwhile,” Carol Ewens said.

For information about CCF, visit www.christianchildrensfund.org.

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