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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Kite-Festival at Hillsdale High Promotes Literacy

HILLSDALE STUDENTS DOUBLE THEIR EFFORTS FOR GIRLS IN AFGHANISTAN

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Through a lot of hard work this weekend, the junior class at Hillsdale High School is hoping to provide an education for girls in a school half way around the world. Inspired by the popular novels The Kite Runner and A Thousand Splendid Suns and Greg Mortenson's Three Cups of Tea, these Hillsdale students believe they can do something to improve other's lives as well. Given these books' treatment of themes of the transformative power of education, Hillsdale students want to carry these messages into their community and beyond. The Kite Festival is a fundraiser for Afghans4Tomorrow, a non-profit organization that educates children in Afghanistan, where Khaled Hosseini's novels take place. Instead of sleeping in this Saturday and Sunday, Hillsdale juniors will hold the **3rd Annual Hillsdale Kite Festival** and promote literacy in the local and global community.

"Education has the power to break all kinds of vicious cycles," said student spokesperson, Gauri Vilash. "By holding this fundraiser, we believe we can break some of those cycles and start virtuous ones." The festival will feature a variety of booths with kite flying, kite-related arts, crafts, games and other activities. There will be story-times throughout the day where "big kids" will read to "little kids" and serve as positive role-models who enjoy reading.

But the event also benefits children on the other side of the globe. "There is so much we take for granted, that kids in other parts of the world would die for—like going to school. We want to give kids in Afghanistan the same opportunities we have here at Hillsdale," states Vilash. With literacy rates below 40 percent and a severe shortage of schools and teachers, it is going to take some work to provide those opportunities in war-torn Afghanistan. But Hillsdale students believe their efforts can make a difference.

Afghans4Tomorrow, a non-political humanitarian organization, has been working to improve the lives of children in Afghanistan since 1999. Marsha MacColl, vice president of the organization, can't say enough about the work Hillsdale students are doing. "It's amazing that they decided to expand this to a two-day effort," MacColl commented after recently speaking to Lance's classes about her organization's work in Afghanistan. "They are making a difference through this festival in their community and across the world, by helping more children become literate. One of the important messages they are taking from these novels and sending to Afghanistan is *hope*."

Students have been planning the carnival-style festival through junior advisory classes, which are part of Hillsdale's unique Smaller Learning Community structure. English teacher and advisor, Greg Lance sees many lessons being learned in the process. "This event gives students the opportunity to apply communication and planning skills in authentic situations, not just in the classroom. But even

more important, our students are gaining a sense of empowerment and the confidence that they can do something to make the world a better place.”

The Kite Festival will be held on Saturday, October 18th and Sunday, October 19th from 10am to 4pm on Hillsdale High School’s soccer fields on 31st Avenue in San Mateo). All funds raised will go to **Afghans4Tomorrow**. (www.afghans4tomorrow.com).