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Mackenzie urges people to get 'Off the Couch' in new book

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By Sophie Braccini



Budd Mackenzie with Afghan boys and girls.

Photo provided

change a person forever, and when Budd Mackenzie launched Trust In Education, that was one has been one of Mackenzie's of those life-altering decisions.

has given nearly 100 percent of enzie cannot accept the terrible his time to the project that cre- treatment girls are still suffering ated schools in Afghanistan, is in the rural regions of Afghanikeeping kids off the streets of stan. A recent U.N. report states Kabul and in schools, and is con- that violence against women, intinuing to build libraries where cluding child marriage, forcing boys and girls learn and grow.

has now published his first book, ing continue to exist and remain "Off the Couch – Into the War for to a large extent unpunished. Hearts and Minds." As his reality has expanded, he wants to share cal leaders, he has been trying the joys of giving, and to inspire to push his agenda of education people to join or start something that will add meaning to their lives.

You can call Mackenzie an idealist. He believes that it is more important to conquer people's hearts and minds than to Lafayette and Lamorinda comkill them. He is from a generation that was impacted by the Vietnam War, and when he saw what was happening in Afghanistan, way for local children to give: he he could not believe that les- does not want them to ask their sons from the 60s had been for- parents for money, but for them stead, he really wants to tell peogotten. When he read that Greg to devise a way to make money ple to "get off their couches" and Mortensen was building schools and then give it to make a dif- spend some of their energy for in Afghanistan he contacted him ference in another child's life. some of those who need so much. and offered to raise \$30,000 to build an additional school. money," he says. "It's about rais- and the book is available at www. Quickly Mackenzie realized ing children." that accountability and reporting were not up to his standards, and that is when he decided to take over the building of the school in Lalander, Afghanistan.

The new book tells that whole story, of the dangerous trips, the setbacks, the dealing with tribal leaders, the difficulty to reach women and girls. And yet the "ordinary" man moving into his 60s and now early 70s never

stopped. Over the years Mackenzie became a different person as he traveled regularly to one of the most impoverished countries in the world. When coming back to privileged Bay Area, he found that everyday small talk revealed its vacuity, and it became harder to communicate on the same level with people who have no idea no real understanding – what he was talking about.

With his book Mackenzie wants to give his readers a sense of the urgency of the situation in Afghanistan, and make them realize how truly rewarding for them doing something is. "Yes, (what we are doing) is a drop in the bucket, but if everyone takes care of one drop, we can fill the bucket," he says, with his enthusiasm intact.

He also makes a plea in the book to have the U.S. support small nonprofits all over the world that he feels make a better job than some large one at being transparent and verifiable, and bypass corruption. He himself

There are experiences that has once or twice been asked for "gifts' but he never gave in.

Working with and for girls most pressing motivation. A fem-For 14 years now, Mackenzie inist by his own words, Mackor prohibiting marriage, forced The Lafayette philanthropist self-immolation, rape and beat-In all his interactions with lofor girls with enough cultural sensitivity not to be rejected. For him education in homes and with computers is a great way to reach girls and young women.

Being well connected to his munities, Mackenzie has talked to many of the schools at all grade levels. He invented a new "Raising money is not about the

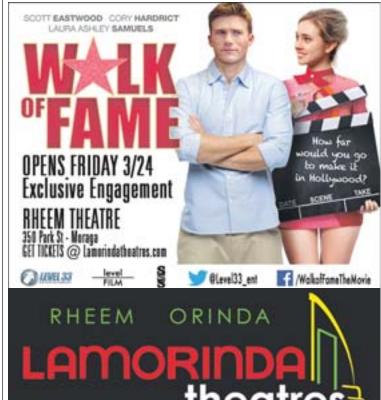
Over the years the mission of TIE has evolved. The new model, the one that he feels is the most sustainable and profitable to the largest possible number of children, is the implementation of community libraries that have computers that children and adults can access anytime and study at their own pace. The first software programs that TIE provides are Khan Academy's math classes that are free to use. TIE is now looking for ESL free classes to be provided to Afghan chil-

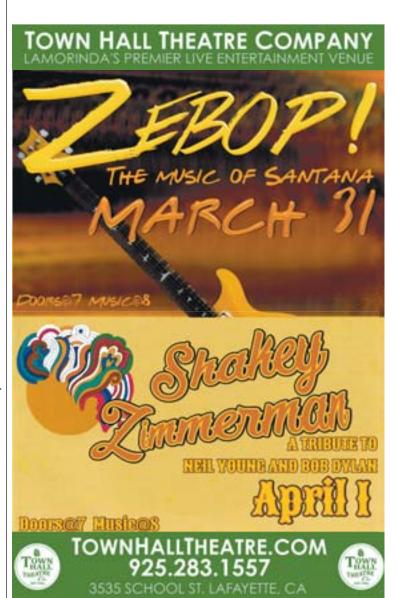
Another important TIE program is the education sponsorship program that gives \$50 a month to a child so he can go to school instead of working on the streets or at some kind of menial labor to help support their family. TIE supports the same number of girls and boys.

Mackenzie adds that the book is not made to get more supporters for TIE, though he does not refuse it and continually seeks new opportunities to speak to groups and organizations. In-

More information about TIE trustineducation.org.









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