

Election observer en route to Afghanistan for vote

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer

Susan Reesor is going from managing a kitchen in Stouffville to managing election observers in Afghanistan.

Ms Reesor leaves Sunday for two months in Kabul.

While this is her first time in Afghanistan, she has done this type of work before.

Ms Reesor lived and worked in Cambodia from 1996 to 2003. She worked for the Asia Foundation overseeing local and international observers of the elections.

The foundation is a non-government organization that aims to improve governance and laws in Asia-Pacific countries.

Having an international presence at an election encourages local officials to run better elections and discourages human rights abuses, she said.

The Asia Foundation has hired Ms Reesor to manage the observers it has sponsored for the Afghanistan elections in September. Twenty Asian observers will watch over pre-election activities, including campaigning.



SUSAN REESOR: Lived and worked elections in Cambodia for seven years.

Ms Reesor, 45, is used to a very different type of managing. Her brother, Jay, owns Reesor Farm Kitchen in Stouffville and she manages the kitchen, cooking, baking, ordering food, managing staff and customer relations.

Ms Reesor has few qualms about her excursion, having been told the capital of Afghanistan is quite safe.

"I'm excited to work in a

Muslim country," she said. "I will take advice from people who live there ... I'm not overly afraid but I'll use caution, try to be sensible."

At the same time, she recognizes there are aspects of Afghanistan living she will have to get used to.

Ms Reesor, who was born and raised in Markham, knows she will have to dress appropriately at all times in a long skirt and head scarf in public. For the election, there are separate voting booths for men and women.

"I enjoy working in other cultures. It's seeing the inside of an electoral process ... meeting interesting people. You feel you're making a contribution to democratic development," she said.

Her 20-year-old niece, Leah, is also leaving this weekend for an adventure of her own. The Markham resident leaves Saturday to perform human rights work in Jamaica for a year.

For more information about the Asia Foundation, go to www.asiafoundation.org/



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We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers.



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