Practicing their soccer skills at the Ethel Walker School, two of the girls are recently left to: Shamila A. Wali, 16, Khatera Mohammad-Zahir, 13, of Afghanistan. Joining in the fun is Pamela Newell, whose father coached the Afghan team.

"I'm not sure what I would have done if I had not been able to play soccer," said Ayub of Waterbury, the program's director. "All I knew about the girls before I entered the Ethel Walker School was that they had come from Kabul and were attending a soccer and leadership camp sponsored by the Afghan Youth Sports Exchange.

"I also knew that only a few of them spoke any English at all."

But from the moment I stepped in the room and was greeted with some practice cones, I knew that only a few of them spoke any English at all. I was also struck by the contrast between them and myself: These girls together can achieve a goal; the sort that makes one girl work her hardest so that all the girls can enjoy the victory."

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