

The Difference One Person Has Made

On October 2, 2017, I had the pleasure of attending a round table discussion hosted by the students of Utah Valley University which featured guests who have made it their personal and professional focus to engage communities, intellectuals, professionals, and governments for combined benefit of mountain communities around the globe.

Students heard from Dr. Baldomero Lago, CIO and Vice-Rector for Global Engagement at Utah Valley University; Dr. Jed Shilling, Board of Trustees of The Mountain Institute; Dr. Andrew Taber, Executive Director of The Mountain Institute; Dr. Rusty Butler, main representative to the United Nations for The Russian Academy of Natural Sciences; and Ms. Wendy Jyang, founder and president of an international NGO focused on humanitarian issues, students, and families.



I was incredibly impressed with the presentation by Ms. Jyang. She began with the encouragement for students to “welcome hard things in your life, my young friends.” Reminding us that “a tough project is for tough people,” Ms. Jyang described how, as a non-traditional student from Taiwan studying

at Brigham Young University, she was exposed to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. During her frequent travels to Taiwan, Ms. Jyang developed an interest in humanitarian issues after seeing people living in extreme poverty in China. She recalled that “when we were children, we all wanted to do something good, big, great.” In Ms. Jyang’s case, her association with the United Nations provided the opportunity for greatness.

Recognizing that family unity and the empowerment of women were keys to helping lift families out of poverty, Ms. Jyang formed a non-governmental organization (NGO) which utilizes

social enterprise ideas to involve youth throughout the world in educational and service activities focused on caring for refugee families; using social media technology to increase awareness of family stories and aspects of national heritage that tie families together; and recognizing and caring for the poor among us. This organization, Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce (FISHD&C), was granted special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations in 2015, and Ms. Jyang's affiliation with the UN has allowed for the expansion of her organization's efforts.

In closing, Ms. Jyang encouraged students to get involved with the UN because of the many opportunities it provides for helping others. She also encouraged students to always "ask ourselves 'what if?' What if I know something? What if I design something that can help others?," as this simple challenge to herself resulted in the formation of her NGO.

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