

## **International Mountain Day Commemoration**

The Global Engagement Office and Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU) had the opportunity to host the seventh annual International Mountain Day on December 4, 2017. This celebration is a unique time to recognize the mountains, what they offer and the conditions of the people who live there. UVU's celebration is unique because of the precedence of holding the event and that it encourages student participation. UVU's initiative is to have students engaged in the learning process, meaning that this event was student run.

Utah is an example of extensive prosperity in a mountainous region and a good example of sustainability. However, Utah still has areas to improve upon to become more sustainable and a better living environment for the citizens. The focus of this year's International Mountain Day was "mountains under pressure: Climate, Hunger and Migration." The panel of speakers discussed the impacts of these factors on mountains and especially pertaining to our society in Utah.

Ms. Bye, representative of the NGO Climate Change Lobby, discussed the impacts of climate change in mountainous regions, especially Utah and what it means to be sustainable. Sustainability is protecting important resources and developing, that meets the needs of the present without endangering the future. Utah and UVU have had a large increase in pollution and need to make changes to sustain these large increases (changes may be in power). She continued to discuss the fact that we need to protect the environment and the communities we live in. Climate change doesn't cause severe weather but it can make the weather more extreme. Utah is known for its snow and skiing, while its climate is rising twice as fast as the National average. The inversion in Utah may be effecting this, even if it is not, it still makes the living conditions worse. The community and the youth can get engaged to make a change and determine how much of an effect climate change can have in our community, in our mountain community.

Food insecurity is another huge problem in Utah that is often overlooked, which needs to be addressed. Ms. Cornia, Executive Director of Utahans Against Hunger, presented about the massive problem that Utah, a mountainous community, has with hunger. Many of the people in Utah that are eligible for help don't think they are, and others don't want to ask for help. But we see that 1 in 8 Utah households experience food insecurity; but the numbers rise for college students, 1 in 4 students feels insecure. She encouraged the members of the meeting to get

involved in the process to make a difference and to vote to make policy changes. One important way to get involved is to speak up with respect and have discussions with others. The point was stressed that in local elections every vote counts, and this is where we start to make changes.

The third focus was migration and refugees and how they affect Utah. Ms. Butchereit, as the refugee advocate, talked about our current situation in our state. She discussed the large number of refugees that have been moved throughout the world and the stresses that are put upon them. In all displaced persons, about half or most of them are children. When comes the situation with resettlement and where to resettle, about 37 countries have these programs. But the speaker changed the focus from the number of refugees to what the audience can do to help the situation. The speaker encouraged the audience to educate their communities by means other than media and social media, that would be more reliable. Engaging the community in service, reading narratives and advocating for policy to reduce suffering are excellent way to begin.



*(R to L): Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, UIMF Adviser presents FAO-UN certificate to Kimberlee Anderson*

Throughout the entire meeting the theme seemed to be in alignment with that of the University's, student engagement. The meeting was run and set up by students who are

passionate about the subjects and substantiality in the mountains. Several students presented research projects or causes that they had been involved in to make a difference throughout the world. But when we review each of the speaker's topics, they all encouraged the student and the entire audience to become engaged, take a stand and extrapolate a policy change. International Mountain Day was very informative on the pressures and struggles that occur in the regions, especially in Utah, but also that every one of us can have an impact and make a change.

*Kymerlee Anderson, UVU student*