

International Mountain Day at UVU

On Monday December 4, 2017 members of the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU), professors, and college students gathered to celebrate the United Nations International Mountain Day. The event was organized and run entirely by students here at UVU. The preparation was extensive, but as someone who attended the event, I can say that I am grateful for their contributions. Dr. Baldomero Lago, Vice Rector for Global Engagement at UVU summarized the purpose of the event and briefly introduced some of the distinguished guests in attendance, and who later would participate in the event.



Dr. Baldomero Lago as a keynote speaker during the event at UVU

Dr. Lago also presented the mayor of City of Orem Richard Brunst with an award from the organization, followed by some brief remarks by the mayor. After Dr. Lago's remarks we had a video-conference call via Skype with a representative of the United Nations, who formally told us that UVU is now a recognized member of the United Nations Department of Public Information and is one of a few universities that will be working closely with the UN. Personally, I could not

help but feel excitement after this announcement as I know this will not only benefit me, but many other students who are looking for hands on experiences and the opportunity to participate in advocating at the level of the UN for various issues, and for mountain issues in particular.

Following the announcement and Dr. Lago's remarks various speakers were presented and given recognition awards for their participation in this year's event. It was in this part of the event where I feel I learned the most. It began with a small presentation of the current refugee crisis. Ms. Chelsey Butcherit, refugee advocate in Utah explained how many of these refugees are coming from different places under different circumstances and that those pushing them out of their country are forces from within. She highlighted how what is difficult for these individuals to experience unimaginable challenges including sudden forceful removals from their homes and separation of families. The refugee crisis is especially relevant as it pertains to individuals who come from mountain communities.

Once Ms. Chelsey Butcherit finished, Ms. Gina Cornia, representative of NGO Utahns Against Hunger, spoke to us about the growing epidemic of hunger. Her portion was very applicable to me when she spoke of how hunger also affects one in four college students in our state. A majority of the lecture also helped me see that the problem of hunger can greatly be associated with income. As income was a significant factor, housing also was brought to the forefront of issues. People choose for a place to live sometimes as opposed to food, or the high cost of housing leaves little to then buy food. After learning these things though I found comfort by learning how to help to stop and prevent hunger through the legislative process as well as humanitarian effort. The latter is a temporary fix, but it is still a step in the right direction.

With talk about the problems facing individuals the topic was then turned to issues facing the environment. Dr. Colleen Bye from the, "Citizens Climate Lobby", spoke about the effects on global warming. I have always believed that global warming is a real issue, but now I see how important it is to address. The greatest reason being that it puts at risk the possibility for sustainable development. With the growing risk that climate change has on the environment it also is an alarming issue for those not of mountain communities but the world as a whole. With this affecting so many people worldwide as well as other previously mentioned issues we listened a presentation of Megan Raines, UVU student. Her story begins with the help that she offers a man in Africa who has converted his home into an orphanage. As a single mother, she is also concerned about her

children's welfare, but that does not stop her from donating a little bit of money each month to the needy people overseas.

The even more than anything opened up my eyes to the many challenges faced by mountain communities, and organizations that exist to combat such problems in the world. The key to all this though is to actively participate in them and to encourage not only the participation of youth, but children, adults, elderly and all who can help in sustain mountain development and the world community.

Logan Perfili, UVU student