

## Ninth International Mountain Day celebration at UVU

The Utah International Mountain Forum hosted its 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Mountain Day Celebration at Utah Valley University (UVU) on Monday, December 5, 2018. This event showcased the achievements and efforts that have been done by Utah Valley University students and faculty in coordination with the United Nations.



*Hagen Isaacson, UIMF member moderated the IMD 2018 at UVU*

UVU's International Mountain Day included various presentations that all acknowledged the great importance and impact that mountains have on the local and international communities. Sam Elzinga, UVU student and President of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, initiated the discussion by welcoming those in attendance and sharing about the impact the UIMF has had on his college experience. Sam has been able to present to the United Nations during the Commission on the Status of Women. He stated that mountains are among the most endangered parts of the world and how if we were to lose them then the rest of the world would follow to its ruin. UVU has been able to provide Sam and students like him numerous opportunities to have an engaged learning experience. He closed acknowledging that the future is not only looking bright for the Utah International Mountain Forum, but also Utah Valley University.

An estimated 39% of mountain people are vulnerable to food insecurity. Students are playing a role in the Sustainable Development Goals tasked by the UN when they participate in the Utah International Mountain Forum. These students are gaining professional skills as they work to address and come up with solutions to the real life problems that mountain communities face.

Dr. Baldomero Lago, CIO/Vice-Rector for Global Engagement at UVU continued the conversation as he shared UVU's commitment to student success and their work with sustainable development. Dr. Lago shared the power that is found knowing UVU is the only academic institution in the state that is an associate to the United Nations. People across the world are fascinated with UVU and the work it is doing as it strives to be a sustainable institution. He also shared how this work is not reaching beyond the university as Utah will be hosting the UN in August of 2019. This will be the first time that the United Nations are hosted in the US outside of New York City. The state of Utah is leading the way when it comes to sustainability.



*UVU faculty and students during IMD 2018*

Mayor Richard Brunst from the City of Orem, spoke on how Utah's mountains provide safety and life in modern times, but also during the settlement of the state. Mountains are key contributors to a better quality of life as they replenish the air, give water, minerals, lumber, recreation and other vital resources. He continued to express why mountains matter as every aspect of life has a tie to the mountains. Homes and buildings are made of rock, timber and other minerals that are found in the mountains. Water and food can also be found among the mountains. Mountains truly benefit those who live under their shadow and it is crucial that we take care of them for ourselves, but also for the generations to come.

Dr. Ross Butler, the Main Representative of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences addressed the uniqueness of UVU as it does not classify as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). As UVU is affiliated with the government as a state institution, it could not be registered

as an NGO of the UN. This is the reason for which it was made an Associate for the Department of Public Education. UVU since its beginning made efforts to host foreign dignitaries and ambassadors, these early efforts were crucial in helping get the university in the position it currently holds with the United Nations. The Russian Academy of Natural Science will be hosting a side event in New York City at the United Nations on the Commission for the Status of Women and hopes to work alongside UVU and its students.

Mrs. Wendy Jyang, President of the Utah-China F.I.S.H.&D&C has led valiant efforts to connect people through humanitarian efforts in China. She looks for people of good heart and integrity and provides them the means by which they can travel to China and help improve the quality of life for impoverished mountain people in China. There are many low income people who live near the mountains of China that are not granted access to many of the resources and commodities that we have in Utah. Her humanitarian work revolves around teaching and singing, two practices that she has seen have the power to connect people even across cultural divides. She hopes to help others enjoy that which she enjoys and share hope and joy.

The forum was closed by Rebecca Bindraban, Editor-In-Chief of the Youth and Mountain Journal. The purpose of this journal is to provide a place to highlight students who promote sustainability. It is truly beneficial for students in their academic and professional endeavors to have published work and this journal is set to share the work of such individuals. This journal also provides additional perspective on mountain living and sustainability

This event was truly a great experience for me as a UVU student. I was able to provide some basic help in some logistical aspects of the meeting and through that involvement was better able to understand the power and impact that UVU is having on a global scale. I enjoyed especially, hearing from UVU students who had benefited first hand whether it be by working for the journal or presenting at the UN. This inspired me to be more involved in the Utah International Mountain Forum and look for ways in which I can promote the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations in my community.

*Taylor Bell, UVU student*