

Utah International Mountain Forum Presents at the UN's 63rd commission on the Status of Women

CSW63
Commission on
the Status of Women

Social Protection • Public Services • Infrastructure

11-22
March
2019

**Student Engaged Learning to
Empower Mountain Women and Girls**

With greetings by:

Dr. Baldomero Lago, CIO / Vice-Rector for Global Engagement,
Utah Valley University (UVU)
Taylor Bell, UVU Student Body President

Presented by members of the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at UVU:

Michael Hinatsu, Vice President, Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF)
Abdulrahman Alghanmi, UIMF
Noorani Barkat, PhD Candidate, Washington State University
Hannah Bieker, UIMF and Rotaractor
Yeronica Caballero, UIMF
William Gum-Causey, UIMF
Laila Mitchell, UIMF

Viktorlia Bahrli, UIMF
Rebecca Bindrahan, UIMF
Megan Davis, UIMF
Hallee Hodgson, UIMF
Ezra Pagliano, UIMF

Alden Trimble, UIMF

Date: March 19, 2019
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Venue: Church Center for the United Nations
Room: Second Floor

WOMEN OF THE MOUNTAINS
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

On March 19, 2019, 13-members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University, presented their parallel event titled “Student Engaged Learning to Empower Mountain Women and Girls” at the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This was the pinnacle of our effort that began in January this year. We have been working to present and perform at our highest level at the UN in order to successfully explain how we are making differences in the lives of people in mountain communities, women, and girls, both in the State of Utah and globally through student engaged learning. This was a very

challenging experience, when we were in need to learn theories and best practices of sustainable mountain development while at the same time to raising funds to finance our travel and accommodations expenses, write memos, create drafts of official documents and statements for presentations, and arrange the agenda of meetings among other activities. I was able to establish my personal ties with many members of the Utah Rotary as well as Rotary International. And finally on March 19, 2019 we presented results of our efforts to participants of CSW63. Michael Hinatsu, one of the Vice Presidents of UIMF moderated the event.

Beginning with introductions from UVU's Office of Global Engagement, Dr. Baldomero Lago and UVU's newly elected Student Body President, Taylor Bell, the event was off to a strong start, as Dr Lago and Taylor Bell presented on UVU, the progress made by UVU's Office of Global Engagement, the upcoming UN civil society conference that will take place in Salt Lake City, Utah, in August this year, and the Student Engaged Learning model created by Utah Valley University. My fellow presenters during the parallel event also spoke on issues such as how the UIMF helped them do research about gender issues, how they and others were able to publish research in our student journal, Youth of the Mountains, how local Utah businesses and civil society groups help women, and issues facing indigenous Utah women, rural women, and women in Utah affected by opioid usage.



Dr. Abdrisaev giving the thumbs up with UIMF panelists in the background

As one of the speakers, I had the honor of representing Rotaract as well as the UIMF by speaking on the projects and accomplishments of both clubs. I highlighted some of the projects Rotaractors throughout Utah have been accomplishing within the state and globally. Some local projects include “The Burrito Project” where Rotaractors help feed homeless and needy families in Salt Lake City, “Operation Santa” an annual project where Rotaractors work with local law enforcement and fire departments to provide presents for children for Christmas, volunteering at old folks homes, and hosting 5k’s to raise money for a number of causes. Some global projects I mentioned included “The Colombian Peace Project” where Rotaractors travel to Columbia with Rotarians to teach conflict resolution to teenagers and young adults, a project in Uganda where Rotaractors and Rotarians traveled to a village to educate the local population to create a fish farm in a nearby river as well as education on how to farm, and last but definitely not least, last summer when Rotaractors and Rotarians traveled to Puerto Penasco, Mexico to donate supplies and musical instruments and completed seven

service projects to improve the lives of polio survivors, educate children on ways to improve hygiene, and donate supplies for a hemodialysis center. During my presentation, I also had the unique opportunity to share my recently published book titled *Lives, Fortunes and Sacred Honor: The Making of an American* because of its relevance to the struggles associated to mountain cultures as it details my grandparents lives, of escaping oppression and meeting on a ship in a New York harbor, and my heritage which stems from mountainous Armenia and Germany.



After the event, I was able also to meet and talk to Jason Gonzalez. Jason came to support Rotary International and hear how Rotaractors in Utah are impacting local and global communities. We discussed my goal of creating opportunities for more Rotaractors to speak at the United Nations in the future about the projects they themselves have worked on. It was a great experience for me to meet a Representative of the Rotary International in New York, to communicate and brainstorm future ideas for young people to get involved with Rotary International and continue the legacy . I hope to continue cooperation with him and other representatives of Rotary International at

the UN in New York as preparations for our next year visit to the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The positive response to the Utah International Mountain Forum and me as a Rotaractor presenting at the UN has made such an incredible impression on me that my goal now is focused on helping as many Rotaractors and Interactors, beginning with Utah, to obtain the same opportunities as me. Overall, the experience I had traveling to New York and presenting at the United Nations 63rd Commission on the Status of Women provided a unique cultural opportunity to engage with incredible people from across the globe as we shared our experiences and ideas on what we can do to help make the world a better place, beginning with mountain communities.



(L to R) Megan Davis, Hannah Bieker and Taylor Bell during the event

Hannah Bieker, UVU student, member of UIMF and UVU Rotaract Club