

International Mountain Day Engaging Rural Utah



International Mountain Day celebration at Utah Valley University.

On December 2, 2019, I attended the International Mountain Day celebration at Utah Valley University (UVU). Lacey Meyer, UVU student was the first person to speak and she had the presentation that stood out to me. Meyer is from Price, Utah, a very rural community just through Spanish Fork canyon. Her presentation was focused on engaging rural Utah, which she would understand better than most since she is from a very rural community.

Rural communities rely a lot on natural resources for work. Since this industry continues to get smaller, rural Utah is in an economic downturn. These communities need help from urban areas and people to grow their towns. Meyer mentioned four ways that we can help: Economy, Education, Partnering and Empowering.

The economy is failing because they are losing access to natural resources which provides a majority of the jobs for the people in the small towns. We can help by creating more jobs for them which will further expand the diversity in their community.



Lacey Meyer, UVU student speaks about rural development in Utah

Education is an important part of any person's life. But people in rural communities don't have access to education like we do. This creates a cycle in which nobody ever leaves the town because they rely on the family farm or some other family business, they have grown up in. This means that when things get hard economically due to unforeseen circumstances, it is going to be harder to fix only because of the lack of education and possible growth within the town.

Urban cities have the chance to partner with rural communities to help give them access to resources they didn't have before; this is a big step in helping them grow. Partnering goes along with empowering. The small towns cannot grow alone, we need to be a part of creating a better system between us and the rural communities.

These are all big things that we definitely cannot do on our own. But we can start by showing our support through going to events or reading an article on rural Utah. The most important thing is that we are educated on what's going on and what needs to happen to help it.

I am from Spanish Fork which is not a rural community anymore. Growing up in Spanish Fork we were surrounded by farms and understood the importance of them. But in 2012, the city made the decision to plow over many acres of baseball fields and farms to build a Costco. This was a big step for us economically and the city continues to grow. But we have lost that small-town field that we once had. We often drive through Price and it brings us back to when we had the dozens of fields filled with crop. We are grateful for the economic growth the incoming businesses bring. But I have witnessed the change of what the partnerships bring. It is really important for a city to be economically stable, but what seems best on the outside may not be the best for the people.

Meg Haroldsen, UVU student