

Observing International Mountain Day at UVU

This year I had the pleasure of attending a portion of International Mountain Day held at Utah Valley University on December 2, 2019. The theme of this year's conference was "Mountains Matter for Youth", thus many of the speakers' presentations revolved around this subject. This was chosen as the theme of the event because today's youth will be responsible for implementing sustainable development and have the most to gain and the most to lose in the future. Of the people who presented at this event, I was able to hear presentations by Ms. Lacey Meyer and Mr. Michael Hinatsu, two leaders of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU). I was also able to receive a certificate for contributing in the International Mountain Day 2019 campaign, which was presented to me by Samuel Elzinga, President of UIMF.



Ms. Lacey Meyer focused on rural Utah in her presentation. One of the problems is that when people think of rural Utah, they often view it negatively. They think of it as drug infested areas that are falling behind the rest of the state. However, things don't have to stay like this. Urban Utah can help these small, rural areas to change for the better.

Currently much of rural Utah's economy is energy focused while urban Utah's economy focuses on other sectors. She said that urban Utah can help rural Utah to grow by helping to change the economy, education, partnering, and empowerment. First, urban Utah can help rural Utah to move out of energy-based economies into other sectors. Next, urban Utah can help to



educate people in these areas and get more working professionals. Third, urban Utah can act as a partner to help rural areas. In the past, urban Utah acted more of an overseer rather than an equal partner and this needs to change. Finally, many people in rural areas feel like they aren't capable of creating change. Urban Utah can help to change this by empowering people that live in these areas to change their lives.

One way that people outside of these areas can help to create change is by small actions. They can better educate themselves by reading articles and attending events. Ms. Lacey Meyer once organized a roundtable to cover these issues, but the turn out for the event wasn't high. If more people start attending these kinds of events more change can be made.

Mr. Michael Hinatsu's presentation focused on Utah International Mountain Forum's relationship with the United Nations. In March 2020 this group will go to New York to attend the 64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. They will come together with other universities like the University of Utah and Brigham Young University to create a larger community. Aside from this, he also talked about the 68th UN Civil Society Conference which was held in Salt Lake for the first time in August 2019. Here workshops were held on student engaged learning and sustainable mountain development.

I thought that this conference was interesting to attend, especially the presentation on rural Utah. Although I am not from rural Utah, I have a lot of family that currently lives in or is from rural Utah. Because of this I have seen or heard about many of the problems discussed by Ms. Lacey Meyer. My Aunt taught school in rural Utah for a long time and she noticed many of

the problems that are occurring such as the above-mentioned drug use issue. Furthermore, every time my family travels to these areas I notice that they are underdeveloped compared to much of Northern-urban Utah.

I agree that one of the first steps to help these areas is to bring more awareness. I haven't done much research on my own nor have I attended any conferences. I think if greater publicity is given to these events more people will come, especially if they are given reasons as to why it is important. Events like International Mountain Day do exactly this. They not only act as a platform where people can come to share ideas but also bring awareness to many issues that are happening in Utah and other mountain regions.

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