

UVU Rotaract Contributes to a Parallel Event at CSW65



VIRTUAL NGO CSW FORUM65

Utah Valley University (UVU) Rotaract club members, under the umbrella of Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, hosted a parallel event at the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) on Monday March 22nd, 2021. The event was co-sponsored by the UVU Office of Global Engagement, the Orem Rotary Club, as well as the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (RANS), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

UIMF advocates for mountain women, girls, and families, who are among the poorest and most neglected on national and international levels. UIMF does so through a student Engaged Learning (SEL) approach that propels students to gain professional skills through addressing real-world issues on local and international levels. In this endeavor, UVU faculty mentor the students, and support their success. We focused on these two distinguishing ideas in our parallel event which was entitled, “Mountain Women Empowerment Through the Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model.”

In order to accomplish this event, we implemented SEL in all phases of preparation. Planning, protocol, and all related processes were headed up by the UIMF student members, both traditional and non-traditional. Our delegation was led by Dallas Karren, UIMF Vice President. As president of UVU Rotaract, I held specific responsibilities in preparation for the event. I led efforts among UVU Rotaractors to contribute to Orem Rotary’s orange fundraiser, to raise money for local service projects as well as in preparation for our event at CSW65. Together, we raised

almost \$1000 of the \$5000 total raised. Our thanks to Orem Rotary for allowing us to participate in that fundraiser.



UVU Rotaractors Collect Oranges to Deliver for Fundraiser

UVU Rotaract is composed of almost all non-traditional students. Because of this, I worked with non-traditional students participating in the event, to coordinate with them how they could engage in the work of UIMF despite full-time work and school. Rotaract held weekly meetings to check on the progress of member's efforts. Being in this position taught me the specific value of the contributions that non-traditional students bring to the success of any goal.



Hosting UVU's Rotary International World Polio Day Event

As part of my contributions to the support of mountain women through UIMF, I focus on the promotion of the Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) agenda of the United Nations within the state of Utah and North America. I research and implement the Rotary International model in Utah's mountainous region to support neglected female populations. Since 2020, I have served as President of UVU Rotaract, which is a student club of Rotary International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). UVU Rotaract is also a member of the UIMF coalition. An important aspect of our efforts is that we are now working in close partnership with Orem Rotary club and on a monthly basis Rotaractors together with Rotarians jointly working together to serve local communities and fulfill Rotary International goals. Our club hosted a Rotary International World Polio Day at UVU on October 21, 2020. This event raised awareness among students and the local community about the ongoing work of eradicating Polio and additional pathways for civic

engagement. During the fall semester of 2020, Rotaract under my leadership contributed to the efforts of UIMF members to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations by hosting a special event at UVU on March 2, 2020, as well as the eleventh United Nations International Mountain Day observation at UVU on December 2, 2020. Raising awareness of the issues mountain women face, as well as providing service to those female populations in need is extremely meaningful work to me. It also provides concrete evidence of the increased effectiveness of student work through SEL.



UVU Rotaract President Yana AndersEn speaking at the event

During my turn to present at the event, I was able to share some of those experiences UVU Rotaract has had in this advocacy work. Many other Rotaractors were able to speak at the event, including members Jeff Hibbard, UVU Foreign Affairs club Vice President, UIMF Vice President Dallas Karren, Cody Conklin, Liam Dowling, and recent UVU graduate Sarah Michaelis. We were also able to hear from UVU's Chief International Officer Dr. Lago, the representative of Russian Academy of Natural Sciences Dr. Butler. Other speakers included UIMF President Sam Elzinga, and international students Abdulrahman Alghanmi and Byan Alghanmi. For the first time our delegation was joined by Past President of the Orem Rotary Clark Merkley, as an important step in strengthening a partnership between Orem Rotary and both the UVU Office for Global Engagement and UVU Rotaractors.



Past Orem Rotary President Clark Merkley Speaks at Parallel Event

Hearing the others speak about their experiences, either personally living in mountainous areas such as Utah, or supporting those who do, was extremely meaningful for me. They discussed different issues related to mountain families and women's lives from Saudi Arabia, to Colombia, the Appalachians, research on poverty in Georgia, Nepal, and other places. Each student highlighted how the SEL model has helped them gain skills which enable them to be more successful in this advocacy work, as well as in other professional endeavors.

After the initial presentations were completed, listeners could submit inquiries for a Q&A for the panelists. I was asked what impact UVU Rotaract has had on the community as well as for me personally. I was able to mention the empowering example of female leadership of Utah District Rotary, specifically Utah District Rotary Governor Linda Sappington. I'm grateful to have female role models who support mountain women and families through service that supports their immediate needs, as well as encourages them to engage in service themselves.

UVU Rotaract expresses deep gratitude to Orem Rotary and Utah District Rotary for their support as UVU Rotaract engages in real-world issues, both locally and internationally. This help was vital in UVU Rotaract's success in our activities over the past year as well as at CSW65.

Yana Andersen, UVU Rotaract President