

Taking Action SDG15: Life on Land Event



On April 21, 2021, Utah Valley University's Office of Global Engagement hosted a virtual panel event on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15: Life on Land. This presentation coincided with Earth Day. The panel consisted of two Utah Orem Rotary members, the current president of the UVU Rotaract club, and a UVU professor, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev. This presentation primarily focused on Earth Day, while secondarily focusing on the work of Rotary International, Orem Rotary, and the UVU Rotaract club. Additionally, the concept of engaged learning was also talked about.

Dean Robinson, president of the Orem Rotary club presented first. Robinson discussed some of the history behind Rotary, both touching on its founding in Chicago as well as the movement it has become internationally. Locally, Robinson spent time discussing a recent service project that took place in Provo Canyon. This project involved collaboration between the Orem Rotary club, UVU's Office of Global Engagement, the UVU Rotaract club, and BYU students. This demonstrated the success of a local joint service project.



Clark Merkley, a former president of the Orem Rotary club speaking

Clark Merkley, a former president of the Orem Rotary club and currently in Rotary Utah district leadership centered his presentation on Earth day, environmental progress in Utah, and the Orem Rotary’s partnership with UVU. When talking about Earth day, Merkley commented on how he remembered the inaugural earth day, providing a personal and relatively unique perspective. When talking about environmental progress in Utah, Merkley noted how Utah has made strides in clean air and water efforts. Regarding the Orem Rotary’s partnership with UVU, Merkley explained how UVU athletics played an important role in that partnership. An example of that was provided in discussing how UVU athletics has supported fundraising for the Orem Rotary club and the Orem Rotary club in turn has supported scholarships. Additionally, Merkley noted that the Orem Rotary club assisted UVU with the 68th UN Civil Society Conference that was held in Salt Lake City, Utah in 2019. It was mentioned that this was the first time this conference had been held in a U.S. city outside of New York City. Lastly, examples of Rotary service were given, such as supporting a worldwide Polio awareness day. At the end of his remarks, Merkley observed that environmental efforts are often the result of small actions.

Dr. Abdrisaev focused his presentation on student engaged learning (SEL), which is a learning component of UVU. Dr. Abdrisaev explained how SEL helps further student learning by giving them learning opportunities beyond the classroom. As he put it, it gives students the

opportunity to come together beyond the classroom. In addition to discussing SEL, Dr. Abdrisaev also discussed how the economic model of Utah is a valuable model for other mountain communities.



Yana Anderson, president of the UVU Rotaract club during the event

Lastly, Yana Anderson, president of the UVU Rotaract club discussed different efforts that UVU Rotaract has been involved in recently. Discussion of participation in the world polio day, a joint Orem Rotary lunch with Representative John Curtis, participation in the local coats for kids service initiative, and participation in a virtual parallel event on the 65th Commission on the Status of Women conference were all mentioned. Anderson emphasized how taking action describes the UVU Rotaract club. This demonstrates ways in which Anderson and presumably other UVU students were able to engage in extracurricular professional development activities.

As one who is not familiar with either Rotary or UVU's Rotaract club it was informative to hear about what both are and how they both strive to be of service. This event was able to simultaneously show work done by Orem Rotary and UVU, specifically through the UVU Rotaract club. Overall, this event gave the opportunity to present and educate on earth day, sustainable development, SEL, Rotary, the Orem Rotary, and the UVU Rotaract club.

Mark Driggs, UIMF member