

Gaining Experience and Promoting United Nations Issues in Utah

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The United Nations last year achieved a very important milestone in its activities and agenda when it adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of new indicators to measure a human progress for the next 15 years and the efforts of the nations around the world to improve living conditions for their citizens in numerous areas. Implementation of SDGs will require contribution from many people around the world, including from the young adults like me.

Utah Valley University involves its students and alumni in different ways with the United Nations(UN) activities. Our students, for example, are active with Model UN programs. Another great opportunity for our students is engagement in advocacy of the initiatives of the UN in sustainability for mountain communities, which UVU has been a part of since 2006. As far as I know, our students and alumni have been active during the discussions of the SDGs by the United Nations since 2013.

I was thrilled to be invited to participate in the International Women of the Mountains Conference (WOMC) under the auspice of the United Nations Mountain Partnership the fall of 2015. The conference was hosted by the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) October 7-9, 2015. UIMF is a coalition of student clubs advocating mountain sustainability and promoting Utah as a model for that. UVU has hosted WOMCs since 2007, however, 2015 was the first year the conference was organized by a students only. This was considered a historical victory for the WOMC, allowing the students to recognize the struggles and everyday heartache the woman in mountainous areas face on a daily basis.

I recently graduated from UVU with my degree in History. Having grown up in the home of Rotarians, I have been able to see first hand how much people are struggling all over the world. My father, Past District Governor of District 5420, Dean Jackson, has been heavily involved in numerous Humanitarian Projects that have highlighted the need for clean drinking water, healthy food, medical supplies, education, micro-credit lending and much more to people whom would likely die without their assistance. My father has had a huge influence in my life and has helped shaped me to be the woman I am today. My mother, Marlys Jackson has also served on multiple Humanitarian projects, making sure that I accompanied her on many of those projects. Those experiences inspired me to reach beyond my small scope of understanding of the world to a greater good, knowledge and compassion for those in need. Both of my parents have such sweet hearts. They give so much to others and honestly I think they give more time and resources to others than they keep for themselves. Because of their example to me, I always felt a deep commitment to humanitarian efforts around the world. Over the years I have been afforded numerous opportunities to work with Rotary International on both youth and humanitarian projects

locally and worldwide. As a result of those opportunities, I was given the privilege of serving as Rotary Liaison for the 2015 Women of the Mountains Conference.

In addition to strengthening relationships with the Rotarians in Utah on behalf of the Conference, I was invited to be a part of a group of people that identified and invited prominent women as keynote speakers. During our search I was able to contact and secure the participation of such a prominent woman, Susan Griffith. Ms. Griffith is the wife of Thomas B. Griffith, a federal judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. In 1995 he served as Senate legal Counsel, the chief legal officer of the United States Senate.

To be sure I followed protocol, I armed myself with all the pertinent information I needed regarding logistics, and invitations befitting a spouse of the United States Federal Courts. As one may surmise, there were other necessary details to sort out in order to make sure that Ms. Griffith's visit to UVU and participation at the WOMC would be a success. While students were given a major role in hosting this prestigious conference, faculty and other senior colleagues were available for advice and assistance as needed.

Ms. Griffith graciously accepted the invitation and I had the honor of hosting not only her but also her husband during the Women of the Mountains 2015 Conference. Judge Griffith remarked that this international event might have been the first time he was an attendee with the role of supportive spouse, and not a keynote speaker. It was imperative the conference highlight the unique role of women in mountainous regions and their challenges. Ms. Griffith's role in her husband's career as well as her own, was an important addition to the discussion of the conference. Ms. Griffith is an amazing woman who has brilliantly managed to juggle her own education, career and role as a wife and mother while being in the spotlight with her husband Judge Griffith. Her poise and decorum was inspiring! While being such an accomplished woman she still maintained a down to earth and approachable attitude. In addition to expertly motivating those in attendance, she also accompanied her husband at another event I was able to arrange [together with Thomas Hone, another member of the organizing committee of WOMC](#), prior to her keynote with the UVU Center for Constitutional Studies.



(L to R): Angie Jackson, Judge Thomas Griffith, Irene Marr, Senior Adviser, State Department, Susan Griffith, Yankila Sherpa, President, Snow Leopard company from Nepal and Candra Day, President, Vista 360, from Wyoming after the keynote presentation.

Susan Griffith's Keynote was truly a highlight for me. It was awe inspiring for me to see so such an international community coming together in unity of goal, to bring awareness of the hardship the woman in mountainous areas face daily. I cannot express how eye opening this conference has been for me and I am so honored to have been apart of it!

I am delighted to have contributed to the WOMC and I am passionate about doing even more to advocate for women and especially the promotion of women's rights among mountain communities around the world. One of the key goals SDGs adopted by the United Nations and gatherings like WOMC engage students and youth in successful implementations of SDGs and post-2015 agenda of the U.N.

Angie Jackson, member of the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at UVU.