

## **Celebrating International Mountain Day Through Student Engaged Learning at UVU**



*Samuel Elzinga, UIMF president presenting the speakers*

On Monday, December 2nd, 2019, Utah Valley University (UVU) and Utah International Mountain Forum (UMIF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, celebrated the 10th Annual International Mountain Day. The theme of this celebration was “Mountains Matter for Youth.” It was hosted through student engaged learning, when students as a group address certain issues with faculty assisting them as mentors. UVU Rotaract is a part of the coalition and my fellow Rotaractors with me also contributed to the event by implementing certain assignments. We helped by spreading the word of the event by making and handing out flyers. I was able to go to

different classes and present this celebration to my peers. As a result, we were able to see how our group effort paid off, when UIMF leaders very smoothly and effectively coordinated our activities and organized the entire event.



*Dr. Baldomero Lago giving his presentation*

The event began with Dr. Baldomero Lago, the CIO and Vice-Rector for Global Engagement at UVU. He talked about the progress that UMIF had made on a global scale, including influencing The United Nations view and discussion on sustainable mountain development. We then heard from Dr. Rusty Butler, who spoke about why we need to talk about mountain communities, including the increased violence, inequality, and lack of resources that mountain communities face. After Mr. Butler, Ms. Wendy Jyang and Uday Teki spoke to us

about their first hand experiences with mountainous communities. Mr. Teki, the founder and CEO of Project Work Groups, spoke to us about his experiences growing up in Eastern India. Teki told us that sustainability in mountainous communities is imperative, as he has first hand knowledge on the issue.



*Mr. Teki talking about why mountain communities' matter*



*Lacey Meyer, speaking on the issues of rural Utah*

Lacey Meyer then spoke about her experiences growing up in rural Utah. She talked about how urban Utah could help- through education, empowerment, and economic opportunities. She emphasized that educating rural Utah through STEM and technology programs to move them away from a natural resource-based economy. This would allow them to diversify their economy while still living in rural communities. Ultimately, helping rural Utah came down to urban Utah educating themselves on the issues going on in rural Utah.

Michael Hinatsu was the next speaker to talk at the celebration. He emphasized the importance of bringing a youth perspective into mountainous communities. He talked a lot about how protecting and advocating for mountainous communities is the only way to also protect our



future. This responsibility is in our hands, to stop climate change, and one way of doing that would be advocating for mountainous communities because, in a sense, they are our lifeline.

Samuel Elzinga, UIMF president presented special certificates from the FAO-UN to everyone who contributed during 2019 to the promotion of the cause of the mountain people and I was among students who received such an award.



*Samuel Elzinga presents FAO-UN certificate to me*

I think that the entire event went very smoothly. We were able to learn about the importance of advocating for mountainous communities and at the same time contribute our own knowledge and experiences. The more important was the fact that we added our voices in support of the mountain families, communities, who, although they are less represented and face higher rates of inequality and injustice, are our lifeline.

***Albeny Singh, Rotaract Secretary***