

## My contributions to the Hope for Orem Fundraising by UVU Rotaractors

UVU Rotaract's on January 25 & 26, 2023 held a tabling event fundraising for Hope for Orem. As per the Inclusive, Co-Curricular Student-engaged Learning Model (SEL), President Tristin Juárez-Smith sent out a tasklist and scheduling form two weeks earlier. I had time between classes and signed up to help. SEL is where students work together to address real-world issues, with faculty serving as a mentor.



**(R to L Cathy Ambrose, Executive Director, McKay Brooks, Alitha Thompson, Tristin Juárez-Smith) Students advocate for Hope for Orem with Hope for Orem Executive Director**

The event was dedicated to raising funds for the high school scholarship program, which provides \$500 for high school seniors within Utah Valley. During my scheduled times, I was able to talk to Cathy Ambrose, who is the Executive Director of Hope for Orem. I hadn't heard about the program before and spent my time speaking to students and learning about the program. Cathy explained that Hope for Orem was originally started by the woman who created Doterra, who needed to give back to the community. Cathy met her later and noticed the program forgot

Autistic kids who often struggle with depression due to their challenges in communication and following social cues. As a mom of two autistic children, I had seen the same need. Hope for Orem is dedicated to creating a support system within schools for students who feel isolated.

Once I had understood the purpose, it made advocating for their programs easier. We learned to be more aggressive to those who walked by, handing out flyers attached to treats to everyone who walked by, rather than waiting for students to come up to us. In addition to raising funds for the scholarships, we were able to reach high school students who were visiting UVU and advised university students with younger siblings to bring the flyers home. I talked to Cathy about coming to my hometown in Gunnison to talk at the National Honor Society induction ceremony. As my parents are the advisors, my connections through UIMF help provide speakers who can address the need to stand up and fight for our community and the needs of others. Cathy's work with Hope for Orem and Rotary has inspired many, and I hope can inspire many of these high school students who do not feel they are more than forgotten, rural children.

While I volunteered, I was able to talk to many students about the opportunities Hope for Orem and Rotaract provides. Those who were not able to provide funds signed up to volunteer their time to future Rotaract projects or passed information to other students. One of our Rotarians, Cholpon Akmatalieva, came with our mentor to help support our efforts. She encouraged those volunteering and donated her part. As SEL requires students to contribute their own time and resources, we also donated what we could to help support the program. Personally, I also brought home resources on suicide prevention to talk to my husband and community about.

It was a great opportunity to learn how to proactively fundraise and advocate for my community both in my hometown and in my home now.

**Alitha Thompson, UIMF President**