

UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

Adam Norton, Student Ambassador and LBRL Student Representative, was selected to represent the Division of Business at the University Scholars Leadership Symposium held in Melaka, Malaysia in August 2010. Over 300 delegates from all over the world gathered to network and discuss how to develop sustainable humanitarian aid programs. Division representatives were:



- Adam Norton – Business;
- Tessa Henwood-Mitchell – Education, Arts & Social Sciences;
- Holly Cook – Global Experience;
- Penny Evans – Health Sciences; and
- James Edwards – Information Technology, Engineering & the Environment.

The majority of the Symposium was conducted at the Mahtoka Hotel in the historical city of Melaka, Malaysia. After the ice breaking pool games on the first night they shared their experiences, exchanged ideas and discussed how to improve the quality of life for others less fortunate.

Vince Lam (Humanitarian Affairs, United Kingdom) organized the Symposium. Vince has 15 years experience working at the United Nations directing humanitarian relief efforts in areas of the world affected by war and extreme poverty. Vince secured many integral international speakers to enhance the awareness of delegates. Guests included:

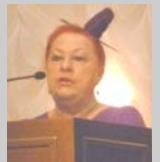


Mr Singh, founder of SOLS 24/7 - a school for the under-privileged in Cambodia teaching students vital hard and soft skills, competency with computer programs and simple book-keeping skills. It is the dream of Mr. Singh that he will be able to reduce the socio-economic gap between the affluent and under-privileged.



Zahariah Ibrahim, a life coach and women's rights advocate, who urged delegates to step up and take action, get informed, get involved and leave a lasting positive impact. Delegates then formed groups and proved that you could develop a humanitarian program in less than 15 minutes.

Geraldine Cox, founder of Sunrise Children Villages, a refuge for children who have been abused, orphaned or abandoned in Cambodia. Geraldine gave a heart-filled account of her experiences that led her to do her work and she did not hold back from sharing both the good and dark sides of giving your life to a worthy cause. At the end of Geraldine's speech she received a lengthy standing ovation for her in-depth account.



Chief Minister of Malaka invited delegates to seize the opportunity to learn and share while being outside our comfort zone allows for us to test our strengths and weaknesses. He explained how this experience is a great opportunity to develop ourselves and make new networks to work together in the interests of humanitarian aid around the globe.



Jose Luis Oquinena from Gawad Kalinga explained how his organisation helps build communities in areas of the Philippines renowned for having millions of people living in slums. After a bushfire destroyed thousands of shanties, Gawad Kalinga was formed to rebuild parts of the country that had long been living under the poverty line. Delegates were walked through the structure of the business and how to maintain sustainable non-for-profit organisations.



Sudarat Sereewat, founder of FACE (Fight Against Child Exploitation), who explained how she is working to stop human trafficking around the world and help recovered victims to try to get back to their families. Her work sees her dealing with governments, police, lawyers, doctors, immigration officials, social workers and the victims of trafficking. She says that the organisation can be tiring but rewarding at the same time because she knows that she is making a difference.



Tim Peters, an American-born Christian who provides refuge for North Korean refugees, has in the past been known as an outspoken activist. However, in 2007, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with humanitarian issues.

Dr. Zainal Abas Ramlan is a life and career coach who works with drug addicts and prisoners, but also in women's rights groups. He encouraged delegates to work together and follow their passion to lead a good productive life.



Diplomats from Timor-Leste were in Malaysia talking with their government about issues surrounding independence, security and infrastructure.

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During the Symposium the 300 delegates were divided into 10 groups with allocated group leaders (including James Edwards from UniSA). One of the highlights of the Symposium was Show Buzz, when each group was required to rehearse and produce a 10 minute performance to be shown in the local Mahkota Shopping Mall about what we learnt during the Symposium. Each group was also allocated an Experiential Learning Journey, which saw delegates having hands-on experience aiding those who may be less fortunate. This Learning Journey saw groups participating in the following activities:



- Taking orphans to Wonderland Theme Park;
- Playing football with the Indian boys by the beach;
- Cheering up the children at the Salvation Army house with arts and dancing;
- Taking the autistic children to the Melaka Zoo and Party at McDonalds;
- Help the disabled children in the Happiness centre paint a mural;
- Assisting orphans at the Science and Life Systems Exhibition; and
- Flying kites with orphan children at the beach.



Delegates attended formal events including the State dinner at the Botanic Ballroom, alfresco dinner at the Melaka Quayside Restaurant and an extravagant feast at the prestigious Villa Estana and took part in a historical tour of Melaka, visiting historical sites where they were encouraged to consider the humanitarian need or impact of each historic site, including Freedom Park, the Maritime Museum, and a burnout Fort. (Transport was by bus accompanied by a police escort.)



On the final day, delegates with significant experience in humanitarian work were invited to speak to the Symposium. Included in these speakers was UniSA's Tessa Henwood-Mitchell who has formed an NGO called TIA International Aid to help underprivileged children in Bolivia. The insights given by fellow delegates were amongst the most practical and inspiring of the entire Symposium and encouraged all delegates to realise that they can start making a difference by taking action today. Even if we don't know exactly how, starting is always the first step: the rest you will often learn on the way.

This is an abbreviated version of Adam's experience. If you wish to view Adam's original article, please email Tricia.Huffa@unisa.edu.au.

... and for a last word (and invitation) from Adam: "The greatest takeaways that I personally had from attending the Leadership Symposium in Melaka was that I learnt that to make a difference you must have integrity, take ethical actions and be responsible for those actions. It is great to have ideas but if those thoughts are not coincided to decisive actions then nothing will change for the better. Therefore, I propose that we form a committee within the group of sport and recreation students to organise events to raise funds and awareness for humanitarian projects. I already have some ideas but I really need a team of dedicated people to assist in development of these plans and make this a reality. If anyone is interested in learning more and wants to experience what it feels like to make a difference then please be in contact with me. My email is norad002@students.unisa.edu.au."