

STATEMENT
Nikki Smith

Utah Valley University Rotaractor
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Parallel Event
“Inclusive Student Engaged Learning Model to Empower Mountain Women Globally”
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Good afternoon. My name is Nikki Smith. I am currently studying Biology at UVU and I am a member of the Rotaract club.

Bolivia has the second highest maternal mortality rate for its region and 68.3% of those deaths come from rural indigenous women. Lack of education on the warning signs of maternal and fetal distress is a significant barrier to achieving zero preventable maternal deaths. Utilizing the student-engaged learning model to expand education through technology is key to addressing this issue.

Bolivia has recently signed on with CATL to mine lithium. Although lithium is used for clean energy, mining lithium still produces heavy metals and acid pollution, which increases risk of breast and endometrial cancer, preterm labor, stillbirth, and spontaneous abortion.

Solutions to mining pollution are necessary but expensive. However, the inclusive, co-curricular SEL model, provides local mountain communities opportunities to improve their livelihoods through simple, inexpensive educational tools, like student clubs, that are available in any academic institution. Through the model, student clubs can work jointly to educate rural communities on topics such as sepsis, basic life support, and signs of maternal and fetal distress.

As a teaching assistant during the COVID-19 pandemic, I understand the challenges of moving classwork online. Additionally, rural, mountain communities may lack reliable internet connection so multiple approaches are needed. Students and faculty can utilize both online and radio broadcasts to share educational segments regarding maternal and reproductive health. When possible, students can travel to rural communities and teach skills like CPR in a group setting and ensure that communities are equipped with as much life-saving knowledge as possible.

As lithium becomes more important in sustainable energy sources, we must remember the cost to rural families. The impact of mining on my family has been profound. My great-grandfather worked in the coal mines of Kentucky and died of lung cancer and heart failure. As a result, my great grandmother sent her children away so they wouldn't go into the same industry. My hope is that we can prevent more stories like this from becoming reality.

Thank you.