The UNITED NATIONS
ASSOCIATION of the United States of America
Southern Illinois Chapter

SI Connections

Local roads to global goals

Newsletter/December 2017

Message from the President



Chapter President Cindy Buys

It has been my distinct privilege to serve as the President of the Southern Illinois Chapter of the United Nations Association (UNA) during the past two years. I had some very big shoes to fill when I took over after Olga Weidner's many years of service. However, I am proud of our chapter's many accomplishments.

Our biggest event was hosting former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in December 2016. Southern Illinois was honored to be the place he chose to give his last public speech before stepping down from his position. And we were gratified by the response of the Southern Illinois community, turning out in droves (over 1,400 people!) to hear his message on short notice during the holiday season.

I am also proud of our chapter's efforts to help refugees. We have been actively participating in the Adopt-a-Future campaign, raising over $1,000 for a school for refugee children. We have distributed backpacks with school supplies to refugee children in Southern Illinois, hosted educational events on the refugee crisis, and purchased books for local schools to help our children learn about the plight of refugee children around the world.

As president, I had the opportunity to attend the annual UNA Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C. last June with a team of five from our chapter. There, we learned more about the work of the United Nations and its affiliated organizations and participated in a lobbying day on Capitol Hill, meeting with Congresspersons and their staffs to urge them to support the vital work of the United Nations around the world.

Locally, we have hosted some fantastic speakers and programs, including the annual Human Rights Day Dinner and Awards program, as well as presentations on global health issues like the Zika virus and the challenges faced by the LGBTQI community worldwide. We have updated our bylaws, created a new website and Facebook page (and this newsletter), supported the development of a new UNA Registered Student Organization (RSO) at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, provided financial support to the SIUC Model UN students, and much more.

There are so many ways for you to be involved. We hope to see you at an upcoming event.

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COVER STORIES

Weidner leads UNA-SI chapter for 23 years



Former UNA-SI Chapter President Olga Weidner

Olga Weidner is an advocate, activist, and highly respected leader of the United Nations Association, Southern Illinois (UNA-SI) chapter. She served as chapter president for 23 years, and her presidency brought countless opportunities to the chapter both regionally and nationally. Her participation in activism has been international in scope, and the chapter is fortunate to have this caliber of leadership. According to Weidner, she was thrilled to become chapter president in December 1992. She says, "I've been an internationalist - a global citizen - all my life. It was very exciting to be an advocate for the United Nations!"

One of Weidner's highest achievements as chapter president includes attending the Washington D.C. UNA Leadership Summit every year. During this time, she has worked with delegates from her own and other chapters to make the mission of the United Nations (UN) recognized and pertinent, and engaged in advocacy for various issues. During her presidency, delegates to the summit have included well-known local figures such as the late Senator Paul Simon of southern Illinois.

Weidner explains that the best way to work on advocacy is to start with grassroots organizations and then relay their messages to the Senators who have influence in the UN. She says it is important to "Never give up. Diplomacy has to be the avenue that is explored to the greatest degree." She emphasizes that being consistent and persistent in a diplomatic way, and learning how to negotiate and resolve differences peacefully is the key to achieving peace.

Peace is Weidner's main passion. Engaging young people, working on the sustainable developmental goals created by the UN, and helping develop world peace projects are some of Weidner's main endeavors. She believes that we need to focus on critical thinking rather than criticism in the world and create a better world using the guidelines provided by the UN, specifically the sustainable development goals.

Cindy Buys, professor at the Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) School of Law, succeeded Weidner as chapter president in January 2016. Weidner continues to serve on the UNA-SI board.

Presidential history

The late Dr. Frank Klingberg, a former political science professor at SIUC, was the first president of the UNA-SI Chapter which he helped to found in1947). Klingberg was extremely involved in the community and an active sponsor of SIUC's Model United Nations. He was the president of Youth World, a member of the American Political Science Association, International Studies Association, the American Society of International Law, the Academy of Political Science, and Rotary International. Klingberg passed away in 2008 at the age of 99, but he lives on through the legacy that he created. We remember and thank Klingberg, and all past presidents, for setting a strong foundation for our Chapter.



Dr. Frank Klingberg

Buys succeeds Weidner as Chapter president

Cindy Buys, professor at SIUC's School of Law, is the current president of the UNA-SI chapter. She began her leadership role in January 2016. Buys has been involved in the UNA since she was a student studying international law in Syracuse, N.Y., about 28 years ago. Before becoming chapter president, she was a board member of UNA-SI from 2002-2015. She decided to get involved with the chapter when she joined the SIUC School of Law as an assistant professor. In her career as an international lawyer, Buys has regularly provided pro bono legal services to persons seeking asylum.



UNA-SI Chapter President Cindy Buys (left, in blue) greets former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon during his December 2016 SIUC visit

Buys says her main purpose as president is to "educate the public about the work of the United Nations and provide support for the UN." She experiences overlap in her career as a lawyer and her position in the UNA. Both positions include encouraging the United States to be a part of international treaties, and be active in human rights, asylum and refugee work. She believes in the importance of giving back to the community, especially in this time of increased globalization, and says it is "important for young people to be educated about events that are going on outside of the United States."

Buys is an avid traveler and she has been to almost 30 countries doing law work, teaching and taking students on study abroad trips. Recently, she started taking SIUC students on a study abroad trip to Cuba every other year, where she is involved, through a grant she received, in helping citizens develop small businesses.

Something that Buys is especially proud of in the UNA-SI chapter is one of the recent past signature events, when immediate past Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, visited the SIUC campus in December 2016. She is also proud of the Chapter's Annual Human Rights Award, which recognizes people locally who are promoting and defending human rights issues. She wants the Chapter to enrich the community not only with knowledge but with activism too, and strives to organize at least one program per month for members to be involved in.

Buys will be completing her role as president in January 2018 and will continue to serve on the board. She looks forward to seeing the Chapter grow and continue to inspire activism and outreach.

Advocacy on the Hill – D.C. Leadership Summit

Five members of our Chapter attended the UNA Leadership Summit in Washington D.C. this past summer (June 2017): They were then UNA RSO (Registered Student Organization) President Mary McGee of SIUC, Chapter President Cindy Buys, Education Chair Melinda Yeomans, UNA RSO Treasurer Darcy Hemphill and Advocacy Chair Olga Weidner. Delegates from the Chapter have attended the Summit almost every year since it was founded in. 1947. Being present at the Summit connects the regional chapter to work at the national level. Delegates are able to speak to Congressmen and women and Senators about what the regional chapters consider to be pressing UN related issues, and also to participate in sessions that focus on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Some of the topics that were highlighted at the Summit this year were related to refugees, the environment, and gender equality. The Summit also focused on the national chapter's new campaign, that urges for daily action towards one of the sustainable development goals. The campaign is called *Stand Up for Human Rights*. McGee spoke at the Summit about chapter leadership and different ways to advocate. She mentioned that leadership, collaborating with others, and giving youth power to create by speaking up will advance the mission to create change.

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(L – R): Mary McGree, Cindy Buys, Melinda Yeomans, Darcy Hemphill and Olga Weidner

This year was recorded as the largest UN Advocacy Day ever, with 600 UNA members meeting with over half the members of Congress. Our delegates were proud to represent our Chapter, and grateful for the opportunity to make their voices heard in Washington D.C., and witness change being advocated at the national level.

NATIONAL NEWS

National headlines include several issues that UNA-USA reports we need to focus on "now more than ever". These include: *Tell Congress to Reject the President's UN Budget Cuts, Support Bold U.S. Leadership on Climate Change, Stand #WithRefugees*, and *Protect Women's Rights and Health Worldwide.*

The President of the United States is proposing budget cuts to foreign affairs, directly affecting the UN. These cuts demonstrate reduced importance and care about the UN. The UN strives to help the U.S. play an important part in achieving several goals such as the global sustainable development and peace keeping goals and operations. Reducing the UN budget will not only halt progress on global solutions, but will also hinder national and regional chapter UNA progress as well.

With the U.S. withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017, immediate action has to be taken to establish climate change as a priority, something that the UN has the responsibility of bringing to public light. The withdrawal is in direct conflict with many of the 17 sustainable development goals (especially goal 13) that over 150 world leaders adopted and pledged to support at the September 2015 UN Sustainable Development Summit. To many, the U.S. not participating in the Paris Climate Agreement signals that the President does not take these goals seriously, and this directly affects the UN - regionally, nationally and internationally.

Due to the U.S. Refugee Program suspension in January 2017, an estimated 20,000 refugees in "precarious circumstances" were resettled in the U.S. during the 120 days covered but the suspension. UNA-USA is urging its members to stand #WithRefugees. Another main mission of the National Chapter is to push for action for women's health and rights, especially since the U.S. government is threatening to deplete certain programs and rights. Finally, the National Chapter is also focusing on international treaties, an issue that directly connects with the work our Chapter President Cindy Buys is involved in.

(Source: UNA-USA website)

Global goals

The national and regional chapters of the UNA are connected by common ideals and goals. The UN promotes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), that the National Chapter's specific goals align with. Every year UNA chapters, community programs and individuals pick goals to specifically focus on and raise awareness about. These goals build on the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs).

In 2000, 189 nations put together the Millennium Development Goals. In 2015, the SGDs were adopted. The overall goal of the SGDs is to end poverty, hunger and promote a range of social issues including education, health, environmental protection and economic prosperity for more people on the planet. While the SGDs are not legally binding, all countries committed to them are expected to act on them.

Currently, the UNA-SI Chapter is focusing on the goal of Good Health and Well-Being (SGD #3). It is supporting and raising awareness about the Nothing But Nets campaign/program, which provides mosquito nets to children and families that live in areas with high risk of malaria (more details on this campaign and how our Chapter is supporting it is in the "UNA-SI Chapter News and Events" section below).



(Source: UNA-USA website)

National events - 2017

The United Nations declared 2017 as The International Year for Sustainable Tourism

February 20, 2017— World Day of Social Justice

May 8-11, 2017— Expert Group Meeting on Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to achieve Sustainable Development for All

May 11, 2017—National Model UN Conference

June 11-13, 2017—UNA Leadership Summit

September 21, 2014— International Day of Peace

October 19, 2017—20th United Nations Association Festival

October 20, 2017—Gender Justice Project Conference

November 16, 2017—Global Classrooms DC Fall Model UN Training Conference

December 7, 2017—Human Rights Awards Reception

December 10, 2017— Human Rights Day

December 20, 2017— International Human Solidarity Day

LOCAL CHAPTER NEWS & EVENTS

Past and current Chapter missions

Some of the missions and campaigns that our Chapter has focused on in the past include Adopt-A-Future, Girl-Up, and Adopt-A-Minefield. The first one is a campaign that is dedicated to helping refugee children receive an education. The Girl Up campaign engages in projects that empower young girls around the world. Adopt-A-Minefield engages American civil society in taking mine action which includes clearing mines, assisting survivors and educating people about the world mine crisis. The current focus of the Chapter is on Nothing But Nets, a campaign that aligns with Sustainable Development Goal #3 (Good Health and Well-Being).

Nothing But Nets

This fall, the UNA-SI Chapter's is working with Nothing But Nets. Nothing But Nets is a global campaign dedicated to providing high risk communities with malaria nets. The nets are insecticide-treated and when used, protect from mosquitos that carry malaria. The Nothing But Nets website states that every two minutes a child dies from malaria. It is proven that providing nets to communities and families drastically reduces instances of malaria, and nearly seven million lives have been saved because of the nets.

According to the website, while populations in Sub-Saharan Africa are most at risk to contract malaria, nearly half the world's population is also at risk. This is a less recognized fact. About 300 million people in Africa lack access to these insecticide-treated beds and at only $10 a net, and with global outreach, it is possible to end malaria once and for all. The website states that since 2006, the campaign, "with the help of our partners and supporters, we have raised over $65 million to help deliver 12 million bed nets to families in need, along with other crucial malaria interventions like diagnostics, treatment, and training of healthcare workers." Our Chapter is proud to support and contribute to this global grassroots mission. Through fundraising and by spreading awareness, we hope to help and do our part in making malaria a thing of the past.

We will continue supporting this campaign in 2018.

(For more information on the campaign, see: https://nothingbutnets.net/)

New faces

New UNA RSO president

Emma Johns, a physiology and pre-med student at Southern Illinois University, became the president of the student UNA RSO in August 2017. This RSO works closely with the UNA-SI chapter. She has been a member of the RSO for two years, and served on the executive board for a year before becoming president. Some of her goals include getting people excited to be a part of the RSO and getting more people involved in grassroots movements that are becoming increasingly influential in current times.

Johns wants to promote diversity and awareness throughout campus, while expanding on the UN's sustainable development goals. Some events that she is particularly excited about include Earth Day. In April 22, 2018, the RSO will plant trees and plants that are native to this area - this is something that is in line with the sustainability goals. Johns and the UNA RSO hope to peak students' interest by holding events that many people would be interested in attending, sending out e-mails that include different activities that the group is interested in, and by striving for variety when it comes to the meetings and activities the RSO holds. She says that the RSO is "really open to all ideas that fit within its goals." We wish her all the best in her role as president.



UNA RSO President Emma Johns (R) with Chapter Vice President Pam Umlauf-Brown at our UN Day event on Oct.24,2017

New board member



Board member and Communications Chair Nilanjana Bardhan

Nilanjana Bardhan, a professor of Communication Studies at Southern Illinois University, joined he chapter and its board in March 2017. She is also serving as its Communications Chair. Bardhan's research and teaching interests include intercultural/international communication, public relations, critical media, and cultural studies. She strongly believes in the mission of the UN, and its place in the world as an organization that attempts to promote peace and intercultural understanding. She grew up in New Delhi, India, and immigrated to the U.S. in 1992. She has been a resident of Carbondale since 1998.

The chapter is happy to have her on board

Student intern

Kate Hughes, a senior at Southern Illinois University studying intercultural communication, became the Chapter's first communications intern this fall. She is thrilled to be in this position, and has been enjoying the opportunity to learn from and work with strong leaders who are dedicated to making the world a better place. Hughes is passionate about intercultural communication and wishes to pursue a career in intercultural training. She would like to work with people traveling to different countries for business or social matters, and help enhance their intercultural sensitivity and communication skills.

Welcome Kate!



Student intern Kate Hughes

Chapter event

December 21, 2016 -- The UNA-USA Southern Illinois Chapter had the honor of hosting Ban Ki Moon, the then current UN Secretary General. He spoke to an overflowing audience of university and local//regional community members at SIU's Carbondale campus.



Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon speaks to an overflowing audience at SIU

January 29, 2017—Chapter annual meeting and potluck dinner at Epiphany Lutheran Church of All Saints. Annual business meeting, approval of new officers, and interactive discussion of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

February 27, 2017—"How the United Nations Helps Boots-on-the-Ground NGOs." Presentation by Tom Mulhearn. This presentation focused on Mulhearn's experience in Peace Corps Bolivia, Catholic Relief Services in Latin America and Africa, and then World Vision in East Africa. Mulhearn has worked with many UN agencies throughout his NGO career. Our chapter members had the pleasure of learning from his experience.

March 22, 2017—Model UN student presentations at the SIU School of Law.

April 5, 2017—Dr. Raymond Narag, an Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at SIU, held an open forum and discussion titled "Drugs And Extra Judicial Killings in the Philippines."



The chapter hosts students from India

July 17, 2017—A potluck-style gathering was held at the First Presbyterian Church in Carbondale to welcome students visiting SIU from India. This program was in association with the Center for English as a Second Language. Chapter members welcomed undergraduate students from Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University in Gujarat, India. The 20 students who attended shared their culture, experiences at SIU, and engaged in intercultural dialogue with members.

October 2, 2017— Staff Attorney with the National Immigration and Justice Center LGBT Immigrant Rights Initiative and SIU alumna Tania Linares Garcia presented: :"Intersectionality in immigration: the experience of LGBTQ asylum seekers and Latinx immigrants in the United States." This event was co-sponsored with the School of Law and SIU's Hispanic/Latino Resource Center.



Tania Linares Garcia

October 8, 2017— The Chapter had the honor of hosting Mphatso (Mary) Nguluwe, a Malawi peacekeeper, who spoke at the First Presbyterian Church of Carbondale. Nguluwe is a recognized international peacekeeper, healthcare professional, trained midwife, and community speaker. Attendees were invited to enjoy tea while learning from Nguluwe.

October 24, 2017 – United Nations Day in Carbondale. A celebration was held on the SIU campus, and it started with an NGO fair that was followed by two guest speakers (see next page for full story)

November 3, 2017—The chapter co-sponsored the International Coffee Hour at the Center for International Education/SIU. Members enjoyed refreshments and engaged in conversations with SIU international students. The Chapter sponsored a Coffee Hour in the spring semester as well.

December 10, 2017—Annual Human Rights' Day Dinner and Award Presentation (see next page for full story).

United Nations Day

On October 24, 2017, the UNA-USA Southern Illinois Chapter celebrated United Nations Day in Carbondale. The celebration started with an NGO fair that featured local area non-profits spreading awareness of their causes, along with SIU student organizations working on causes related to the United Nations' missions and goals.



UN Day NGO Fair featured local NGOs and SIU student organizations

The NGO fair was followed by two guest speakers, Melissa Kilby and Georgy Kurtzhals, living examples of the United Nations Day theme "Global Goals, Local Leaders." Kilby is the Director of Girl Up, an organization that is a part of the United Nations Foundation. This organization has given young girls around the world opportunities to be advocates, leaders, and helped them make a difference in their own and others' lives. Melissa has met with leaders such as Michelle Obama, has advocated in Washington D.C., and has helped two bills get passed that press for gender equality. Kurtzhals is a Sustainability Officer at SIU who helps schools, communities, and individuals become environmentally aware. Her position at SIU puts her in charge of establishing practices that help increase sustainability.

Both speakers inspired the audience with information and examples of their work. The Chapter made a donation of $200 to Girl Up.

Race Unity Group of Carbondale is recipient of 2017 Human Rights Award



Race Unity members receive award from Chapter President Cindy Buys. (L-R) Dora Weaver, Julieta Leitner, Al Crim, Fern Chappell, Scott Martin, Cindy Buys.

Each year, Human Rights Day is celebrated on December 10. This day commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. To honor this day, the UNA-USA Southern Illinois Chapter has been presenting a human rights award to a local organization or group since 2010. The 2017 award recipient was the Race Unity Group of Carbondale. Member of the group attended a potluck and awards ceremony hosted by the Chapter on December 10.

The Race Unity Group of Carbondale, a local grassroots group, was selected for its efforts to promote interracial and interethnic dialogue and understanding in the southern Illinois region. "One of the primary goals of the United Nations is fostering peace. The Race Unity Group engages in peacemaking efforts in our local community by facilitating dialogue and better understanding among diverse groups in the Southern Illinois community," says Cindy Buys, President of the UNA Southern Illinois Chapter.

Race Unity is a volunteer, freelance "organization" which had its inaugural meeting in January 2016. Formation of the group was stimulated by a community viewing of the film *Racial Taboo* at the Varsity Theater in Carbondale. Race Unity operates as a "continuing conversation"

(Continued on next page)

moderated by a facilitator; a group of 20 to 40 people meet for a two-hour period on a weekly basis with clear, but minimal rules that are shaped by courtesy and respect for all, as well as a common sense of "right and wrong." Membership is based on meeting attendance with no dues or other expressions of allegiance. Group bonding has prompted the group to represent itself on local and area issues such as the Cairo housing crisis. Members of the group spoke with Chapter members about the group and its work in the southern Illinois region.

Additionally, at the event, Southern Illinois University Carbondale law student Mariam Mansaray, recipient of the Human Rights Fellowship at the School of Law this past summer, spoke about her summer experience of working in Ethiopia for the African Union.

The event was well attended and well received.

Past Human Rights Award Recipients

2016: The Good Samaritan Ministries, under the direction of Mr. Mike Heath, for their tireless efforts to alleviate hunger and homelessness in Southern Illinois.

2015: Mr. James Chapman for his work securing civil rights for prisoners.

2014: Mrs. Lois Hayward for her prison ministries work at Tamms supermax women's prison. She co-founded New Day Prison Ministries, and to provide outreach and support for Illinois prison populations and their families.

2013: Mr. Tom Logan and the Marion Medical Mission for their work in providing access to clean water in Africa.

2012: The attorneys and staff at the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation in Carbondale, Illinois.

2011: Preston Ewing Jr., author of the landmark book entitled "Let my People Go" and President of the NAACP in Cairo, IL from 1967-75.

2010: John Erbes and Rebecca O'Neill for their work defending the human rights of the elderly in Southern Illinois through their work with the Southern Illinois University School of Law Civil Practice Clinic.

Writing/Design: Kate Hughes

Editing/Design: Nilanjana Bardhan

Thank you for reading this inaugural issues of our newsletter. We hope you will join us at our various events and programs next year as we travel "local roads to global goals." Our Chapter Annual Meeting will be held in January 2018. Join us in making decisions for next year.

Happy Holidays

