

MMUN 2011

Submitted by Daniel Bloomberg

The students at Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN) 2011 did an amazing job demonstrating the knowledge and skill they had acquired during the school year. Students of all ages maintained a professional and business-like manner as they presented their position papers, participated in debates, and wrestled with tough questions. Representing countries from around the world, the students' knowledge was impressive. Topics ranging from food and water security to the Palestine-Israel conflict captured the attention of young people ages 10 – 15 for four days in New York City.

After a moving introductory session, students worked together in committee sessions before moving to the United Nations. Each individual filled a different role and took part in the debate, as position papers became working papers, and finally draft resolutions. From taking notes and drafting a resolution paper, to debating in moderated and regular caucuses, everyone contributed to the process.

Dressed in business attire, the young students looked as mature as they sounded. Their seriousness was obvious throughout their sessions and when the pressure of intense debate mounted, but also with outside distractions. When the fire alarm blared across the halls, and thankfully it was a false alarm, the students remained calm and then quickly resumed debate.

Each student came from his/her respective school with different goals in mind; some wished to learn about other countries and cultures, some were interested in current events, and many wished to demonstrate the knowledge that they had gained from the many months of preparation.

In spite of the wide range of personal goals, everybody had one objective in common: to have fun. Samir Vaidya and Giuliana Lee, two students on the Security Council B who had both participated in many other Model UN programs together, were incredibly enthused about the fun atmosphere that lay behind and beyond the intense debates and the obvious interest the Dias and their fellow delegates showed in the preceding.

After the initial feelings of nervousness, the students' enthusiasm quickly grew along with their confidence. Klayton Dawson of the delegation of Zambia was worried that he was unprepared as he entered the UNEP (environmental program) committee on the first day. By the second day he comfortably stood up in front of almost forty of his peers and was able to defend the working paper he and the rest of his delegations had drafted, in spite of the incredibly difficult questions the other committee members posed. This resolution, as well as another one from his delegation, proceeded to the General Assembly and passed.

All the students visibly became more confident because of their participation in MMUN. With an increased awareness of the world, improved public speaking skills and newly gained confidence, students returned home different people. They could now propose an idea and defend it, as well as "sell" it to others. Hopefully, many of these students will return in years to come either as delegates or to work as members of the Dias. Some may even go on to join Model UN programs in high school or college. Most importantly, all will have a different connection to the United Nations. Is it possible to sit on the floor of the General Assembly and not recognize the importance of the world's greatest peacekeeping institution?

MMUN changes lives and MMUN 2011 changed the lives of many young people just as the UN is slowly changing the world.