

No Lost Generation holds Refugee Simulation event

BY ALEXIS COLLINS ON NOVEMBER 3, 2017

The No Lost Generation hosted a refugee simulation event on Thursday at the HUB-Robeson Center.

The event took place on the HUB-Robeson Center lawn on Thursday, Nov. 2 from 11 a.m to 2 p.m, where members of the organization set up a makeshift tent in front of the building's entrance to represent refugee life.

Hannah Magoveny, who is the NLG Events Executive, admitted that the tent wasn't an exact representation of a refugee's living conditions, but that it still served a purpose in teaching people the daily struggles refugees face.

"We want to highlight to people that this is still an issue. I know the refugee crisis got a lot of attention in previous years and people are starting to forget about it," she said. "So we want to still make it known to people that this is still a crisis that is happening and people need help."

The refugee simulation consisted of a tent complete with makeshift beds, metal cookware, a candle, and boxed foods. According to Magoveny, the setup was supposed to resemble a UNHCR or a U.N refugee camp abroad. These organizations, along with Serve State of Penn State's campus, helped sponsor the event. In addition, NLG included a virtual reality segment, where participants using virtual goggles would be able to walk through a camp and experience what refugee life is like.

Magoveny said that the mock refugee experience was important because it helps in spreading awareness.

"People live in these conditions year-round and that's why we need to help and have fundraisers," Magoveny said. "This is why No Lost Generation is here."

No Lost Generation is a national grassroots movement that was created in 2013 by the U.S Department of State. The organization was moved to college campuses, starting with George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The movement currently has almost 40 chapters on college campuses nationwide, according to Magoveny.

NLG's Penn State chapter started in 2016 and has five executive board members and 10-15 regularly attending chapter members.

Magoveny said that the NLG aims to assist children who were personally affected by the refugee crisis. It started in reaction to the Syrian crisis but became broader once refugee crises increased.

“We do everything we can to help the children.” The junior said.

The organization raises money on a national scale by organizing awareness events and hosting fundraisers. However, the Penn State chapter will have fundraising events and pick which refugee organization it wants to donate the money to specifically unless members choose to keep the donations for club funds. These funds will then be used to finance one of the group’s own awareness events. For instance, last year, the club held a “March of the Malala Fund” in honor of Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education.

Magoveny stated that the club sets a fundraising goal each year. Since NLG was relatively new to Penn State in 2016, it’s fundraising goal was \$1,000, this year it’s up to \$2,000.

MaGoveny believes that it’s important to provide assistance to refugees who are facing hardship and embrace them.

“These people don’t want to be refugees. They had no other options, they were torn from their homes,” she said. “It’s not like they want to come to different countries, it’s just because they have to because there’s no other safe place to be, so I think we should be accepting of them.”

The refugee crisis is persisting due to wars and territory occupation by ISIS. The latest group to join the list of refugees are the Rohingya Muslims. According to Vox, 400,000 have fled Myanmar’s northern Rakhine state to Bangladesh in September, with a little over half being children. This was after Myanmar’s military launched a campaign of violence against the country’s Muslim population, with critics condemning the brutality as a form of ethnic cleansing.

Ruby Alfawares, a member of the NLG, volunteered at a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan last year. She said that the conditions there were actually worse than the on-campus simulation, which is even more of a reason to help.

“Sometimes you feel guilty because you’re living a better life than they are,” the freshman said. “You shouldn’t. Instead, you have to help them as much as you can. They’re just people like us, with dreams and goals, and we should try to help them live the life they want.”