

International Women's Day Celebration at UC San Diego Helps Impoverished Women Build a Better Future

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The University of California, San Diego invites the community to celebrate 100 years of women's economic, political and social achievements for International Women's Day from 2 to 4 p.m., March 6 at the Great Hall on the university campus. UC San Diego is partnering with local community service organizations to present the celebration, free and open to the public. The event will benefit impoverished women from around the world who live in San Diego. The celebration will raise funds for microfinance loans-small loans that extend credit to females, improving their economic and social lives.

"San Diego is home to a diverse group of refugees from many nations," said Leigh Fenly, co-president of Women Empowerment International. "Before being legally resettled here, many witnessed civil war, faced persecution and were forced to leave family members behind. They are eager to rebuild their lives and not afraid to work hard. Many need only a small hand up, and events like this help them become more self-sufficient to build a better future for themselves and their children."

A partnership between UC San Diego and community nonprofits, the International Women's Day celebration will feature local women, many of whom have received small microfinance loans and other support that has helped them start successful businesses.

Guest speakers at the March 6 event include UC San Diego Chancellor Marye Anne Fox and Winifred Cox, co-founder and co-president of Women Empowerment International, one of the sponsoring organizations.

Attendees will be able to learn about the benefits of microfinance at the event and will have the opportunity to meet microfinance loan recipients from many countries, as well as learn how to cook some of their delicious recipes.

Clients of the WE STAR Center, a business incubator for refugee women in City Heights, will sell imported jewelry, fashion and decorative home ornaments. Additional items for purchase range from fresh flowers to organic baby clothes with sales going directly to each vendor.

Sponsoring organizations of the event include Women's Empowerment International, UC San Diego's Women's Center, the UC San Diego International House, EPTEAM (Eliminate Poverty Through Education and Microfinance) at UC San Diego and the Women's Equity Council of the United Nations Association of San Diego.

International Women's Day was first celebrated 100 years ago and since then, it has grown in importance and impact. Today countries such as China, Russia, Vietnam and Bulgaria recognize International Women's Day as a national holiday. For more information about the International Women's Day Celebration in San Diego, go to: <http://womenempowerment.org/> and <http://ucsdepteam.webs.com/>

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