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CHANGE DIRECTION

A Suicide Awareness Campaign

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Giving up and giving in to the hustle and bustle of this stressful city seems more alarming than ever. With the recent news of attempted suicides filling the air (and also, many being successful in the attempts taken), Corporate Trainer and Life Coach G. Sumdany Don and his good friend, Tawsif Alam, Managing Director of Vertical Horizon, knew that a step must be taken to raise awareness against such actions.

Don and Tawsif reached out to Nazmul Haque, Chairman of Prottoy Medical Clinic. They expressed their wish to conduct a session with the motto of allowing the participants to access information about depression and various other aspects regarding mental health. As a result, 'ChangeDIRECTION - A Suicide Awareness Campaign', powered by Rangpur Riders, came into being on August 24, 2017. This half-a-day session took place at University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, where the many root causes for the on-going suicide cases in this country were addressed. Out of the 300 participants, almost 250 of them were teenagers and the rest were comprised of parents.



Among the many speakers were Brig. General (Retd) Prof. Dr. Md. Nazrul Haque, Chief Consultant and Psychiatrist, and Tamima Tanjin, Senior Psychologist, of Prottoy Medical Clinic. Also, Mr. Safwan Sobhan, Managing

Director Rangpur Riders and Vice Chairman of Basundhara Group, took part as a panelist.

Ms. Tanjin urged the participants to work together and face the stigma behind mental health issues and

come forward for proper solutions. G. Sumdany Don asked the participants to focus on taking responsibility and unleashing individual compatibility with self-development and learning. On the other hand, Tawsif

Alam pointed out that, there are many youths who are facing such issues. However, each and every one of them holds the capacity to do wonders and come out of the clutch of depression.

Abu Jaed, one of the participants, comments, "Thanks to the organisers and the team for such a fruitful event. What it did, more than anything else, is that, it helped us connect with people going through similar struggles and I pray that more platforms such as these get created so that the connection stays strong."

On asking Nazmul Haque why youngsters are prone towards ending their lives, he replies, "We need to teach our children how to be more tolerant towards handling frustrations. Whenever one faces uncertainty, it should be taken as a challenge and not as the reason to quit on life. Family and peers play significant roles while dealing with a person who is going through mental health issues. Also, a simple 'No' to drugs will not do, rather, drug addiction should be seen as same as cancer."

The organisers were approached to conduct similar sessions by several other institutes. G. Sumdany Don says to Star Youth, "Speak up if you are scared. We will be on our way."

American Center Open House: A One Stop Shop of Services

FAYSAL WAHAB SIDDIQUI

Unlike the other days, the American Center premises were a bit different on August 17. When I arrived there at 10:30 in the morning I could see that there were queues made outside the main entrance and most of the visitors were high-school, college and university students of different institutions. It was the Open House Day of The American Center.

At sharp 11:30 am, American Center Director Mr. Rex Moser gave his welcome speech in the auditorium. Mr. Moser shared the key features of The American Center in brief while introducing the 'Charge D' Affairs who is also the Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Reifman who talked about all American Spaces which is 700 worldwide and just in last year about 44 million people visited all these spaces. He further mentioned about all American Spaces in Bangladesh including American Center in Dhaka and other spaces situated in Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Chittagong and The EMK Center in Dhaka. Mr. Reifman also mentioned about EducationUSA programme which will 'assist Bangladeshi students, interested in studying in the U.S., navigate the university application processes'. He also formally declared the Open House open.

There were 20 different sessions which took place simultaneously at Library, Education USA Room and Auditorium. In the auditorium programs such as 'Introducing U.S Embassy Dhaka Website and Facebook Page, Alumni Engagement and Experience Sharing, Grant Cycle and Opportunities, Information about the EMK Center, English Practice Session, English Club, Girls Club etc. Director of the EMK Center Mr. M K Aaref informed the audiences about the Center, its facilities, EMK Maker Lab and the newly inaugurated 'SPONDON' music/audio recording and editing studio. 'Chat with a Diplomat' was quite inspiring where Ms. Susie Pratt shared her experience being an actress and then shifting to becoming a diplomat later in her life. She mentioned about how her diplomatic career is helping her to serve her country and getting to know different culture and people. She didn't forget to mention that during the independence war of Bangladesh in 1971 how she saw her university in Beirut celebrating the victory

of Bangladesh.

Presentation on Student and Professional Exchange Program where all the Exchange programs and fellowships such as Fulbright, Hubert Humphrey, Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES), Global U-GRAD, Community College Initiative (CCI), Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI) etc. were discussed in details for students and some teachers exchange program were also discussed like International Leaders in Education Program (ILEP) and Teaching Excellence and achievement Program (TEA).

EducationUSA had a vast array of programmes to help understand



PHOTO: THE AMERICAN CENTER

Bangladeshi students about the education life in US and how to step on to the right platform before going to US for higher studies. Programs like U.S University Requirement and EducationUSA Services, All You want to know about Standardized Test, Learn from Alumni, Visa Session, F1 Student Visa and Writing Effective Statement of purpose. Visa Officers from the consular section came over and helped students to know their exact requirements and how to apply for a visa while EducationUSA helped explain about the standardized tests, university requirements. Dr. Kevin Adkin shared how to write an effective Statement of Purpose to the universities.

The Library section was more like an entertainment centre of that day. The sessions started by explaining the visitors about the Membership Procedures and Benefits, Presentation on Library programs, Music for English Learning, Maker Space Orientation, Tech Tuesday, and Music Buzz. Different English music were played and then paused to ask the visitors questions where they were able to find the answers in the music itself on 'Music for English Learning'. 3D printers and other facilities were shown on 'Maker Space Orientation' and live music was performed on 'Music Buzz'.

In reply to a few questions Mr. Kelly R. Ryan, Cultural Affairs Officer of the

people. This particular program is just for Dhaka but when we have the opportunity to go to Khulna, Chittagong, Sylhet or Rajshahi or even out to EMK we try to do our best to make sure when we are in those areas traveling or doing other events like Chat with a Diplomat or Education USA or English conversation club at all of those spaces in Bangladesh.'

While talking with some of the attendees in the event, everyone expressed their heartfelt gratitude towards The American Center for hosting an event like 'The American Center Open House'. They never thought of getting to know about all the facilities altogether in a single day. Especially the high school students who

American Center said, The Open House is an opportunity for us to highlight all of the activities that we have every week, every month, throughout the year. So we want to have one day devoted just to let people know what we do. It's a one stop shop that will show what the American Center offers or do throughout the year.' He further mentioned, 'We have done large fairs for Education USA where we bring in University representatives from USA. We do other large events a lot of times to celebrate a specific worldwide event like Indigenous people's Day or focusing on conservation and depending on how this goes - which is going well so far - I think it's a great opportunity for

might be thinking of going to USA for higher studies in a few years time found the Education USA sessions very helpful while some professionals found the Exchange Program Presentations fruitful. Young attendees were seen lively at the sessions held in the Library where they could sing along and learn English through music and take pleasure from listening to some good music. Overall The American Center Open house came very handy for all the visitors and everyone could be benefited from the sessions.

The writer is a volunteer at VBD Change Makers, Member at SBYA- Global and freelance writer.



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Youth Opportunities

1. British Chevening Scholarship for International Student 2017, UK



Applications are now open for 2018/2019 Chevening Scholarships and some Chevening Fellowships.

Chevening offers a unique opportunity for future leaders, influencers, and decision-makers from all over the world. Chevening Scholarships are the UK Government's global scholarship programme, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and partner organisations.

Deadline: November 7, 2017 | Full Scholarship

2. Reuters Journalism Internship 2018



The Reuters Journalism Internship offers talented students and graduates with a strong interest in journalism an opportunity to learn at the world's largest independent, international, multimedia news agency, working alongside our most seasoned journalists and editors.

Deadline: November 7, 2017 | Paid Internship

3. Women Deliver Young Leaders Program 2018



Applications for the 2018 class of Women Deliver Young Leaders are now open. Women Deliver will be accepting 300 young advocates for the next class of Young Leaders.

Deadline: October 13, 2017

4. Millennium Campus Conference 2017, Morocco



Apply for the Millennium Campus Conference 2017 which is the ninth annual conference, which has previously been hosted at the United Nations, Harvard, and MIT.

Deadline: October 15, 2017 | Partially Funded

5. Internship Opportunities at Rolls Royce in UK



An internship with Rolls Royce is an amazing chance to gain invaluable experience. Whether you choose an engineering, operations or business programme, you'll make a real impact on live projects as you immerse yourself in Rolls Royce business.

Deadline: Ongoing | Paid Internship (Salary: £17,850 paid [pro rata])