

TechNews

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Our mission is to promote student discussion and bolster the IIT community by providing a newspaper that is highly accessible, a stalwart of journalistic integrity, and a student forum. TechNews is a dedicated to the belief that a strong campus newspaper is essential to a strong campus community.

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SUBMISSIONS

TechNews is published on the Tuesday of each week of the academic year. Deadline for all submissions and announcements is 11:59 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. Articles, photos, and illustrations must be submitted electronically to the TechNews website at technewsiit.com.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The editors reserve the right to determine if submitted material meets TechNews' policy and standards. For more information about our editorial standards, please email assteditor@technewsiit.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor may be submitted by anyone, but are subject to review by the Editor-in-Chief. All letters-to-the-editor become the property of TechNews upon submission. TechNews does not accept or publish anonymous letters or stories.

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A moving experience @ UNICEF national conference

Bhav Bhalla

TECHNEWS WRITER

Last weekend, UNICEF at Illinois Tech attended the annual UNICEF Summit 2016 in Washington, D.C. The summit boasted over 300 UNICEF club members, leaders and activists in an effort to share best practices, participate in skill and knowledge building workshops, and bring the most recent UNICEF resources back to our respective schools. The theme for the summit this year was advocacy and how participants can advocate for children in their communities and through various tools such as social media.

We were fortunate enough to visit the White House, Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial before checking-in for the summit. As we headed back to the conference center, we were greeted with warm and welcoming smiles from other UNICEF chapters along with "swag" bearing the UNICEF logo. After checking in, we were given key cards to our rooms and time to settle in before the student mixers. In order to encourage collaborative discussions over lunch and dinner, each member had a different team color on their ID badge which would represent their group for the entire conference. Meeting UNICEF clubs from various school such as UCLA and Penn State was an exhilarating experience. Listening to other clubs describe their experience educating, advocating and fundraising on their campus and in their community was truly captivating. With the ice breakers out of the way, we were split into further subgroups to discuss what successful events we had implemented so far and how we went about it. We not only learned about the successes and failures of each club, but also formed new bonds with each other. Later that night, we played air hockey, foosball and shared popcorn with fellow UNICEFers. We

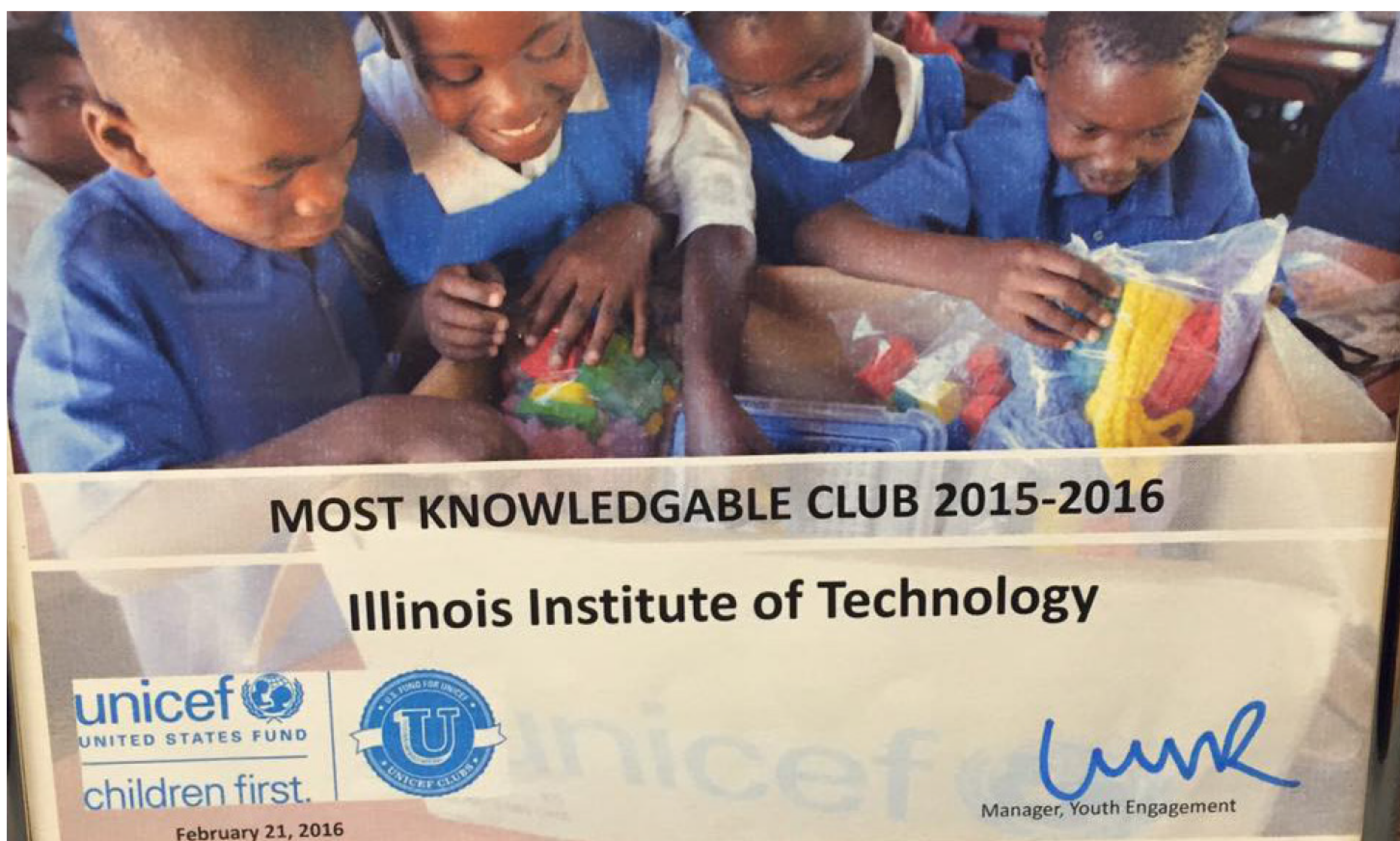
were exhausted by the end of the night and headed to our comfortable beds.

Early Saturday morning, we joined everyone in the auditorium for a keynote presentation by Monique Coleman. Coleman is best known for her co-starring role in Disney's High School Musical movies, in which she plays Taylor McKessie. She is also an entrepreneur and passionate philanthropist who has journeyed to over 20 countries to help children around the world. She asked us extremely thought provoking questions: What do you do when you have finally reached your goal? What is the next step? She spoke of the experiences she went through dealing with insecurities of failing and perseverance. With the keynote coming to an end, we were given the opportunity to attend student led workshops to help improve upon our UNICEF organization. The fact that most of these workshops were hosted by a majority of older UNICEF organizations from other schools astonished us. One of the workshops that I attended was about how to attract new members and retain membership. I was able to give a brief explanation about our own point system which was commended by many of the other campus clubs.

After lunch, a panel discussion was held about UNICEF's Millennium Development Goals, which are 8 goals for the betterment of children all over the world. These included eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women to name a few. There was also an open panel about how UNICEF would plan to do all this as a non-profit organization. Shortly after, Jumana Haj-Ahmad, an advocate for children all over the Middle East, showed an extremely powerful video about how adolescents are thought of as incapable of bringing change to our world.

With her motivational words, we went on to the next guest speaker, Laura Ulloa. Ulloa was kidnapped at the age of 11 and held captive for seven months in Colombia. She talked about her time in captivity in a shockingly positive tone. She believes that portraying her story in a negative way only shares grief and misery. Her experience gave her the drive to help kids and give them opportunities they otherwise would not have.

Catching breakfast for the second time at 8 a.m. on Sunday was harder than imaginable as we enjoyed our last meal at the summit as one giant UNICEF family. We were then introduced to UNICEF NextGen which allows students who are interested in still being a part of UNICEF's mission by helping on a larger scale than their college campuses. In my opinion, the most intriguing part of the conference followed after. Caryl Stern, President and CEO of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, was on stage right in front of us. She brought us to tears with stories of her experiences through poverty stricken communities where basic medication was unavailable. Never had I felt more grateful for the basic necessities I had at my disposal than when Stern told us about a baby who passed away in front of her eyes because he had not been given a one dollar vaccination against tetanus. Her presentation was followed by an award ceremony recognizing individuals and clubs for their efforts and hard work. As they announced, "Most Knowledgeable Club" followed by the words, "Illinois Institute of Technology", we were all ecstatic, shocked, confused and proud, all at the same time. Having one last photo of us taken with the award in front of all of the UNICEF chapters was definitely a proud moment for us at the summit that we'll never forget.



Photos courtesy of UNICEF @ IIT