

UPF holds an afternoon tea for recipients of the Young Achievers Award

Robin Marsh
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London, United Kingdom -- UPF-UK held an afternoon tea for recipients of the Young Achievers Award.

The event, held on January 14, 2023, at UPF-UK headquarters, was a follow-up to the awards ceremony held in the House of Commons on November 22, 2022.

UPF's Young Achievers Award recognizes young people who have shown excellence in the service of others.



Many of the awardees from last year attended the afternoon tea at UPF headquarters, as well as some from previous years. (Program video [here](#).)

UPF-UK Director **Margaret Ali**, acting as the emcee of the program, introduced UPF-UK Secretary General **Robin Marsh**, who offered welcoming remarks.

The first main speaker was **Dean Russell**, a member of Parliament (video [here](#)), who gave an inspiring talk, urging the Young Achievers to have a 10-year plan and fulfill it step by step. He stressed the importance of "the three Cs": certainty, community, and creativity.

Certainty: Find what you are best at by doing many things, even learning from failures.

Community: Find a friendship group that is supportive of your personal goals.

Creativity: Try to solve the world's problems in ways that may not have been tried before.

Mr. Russell encouraged the Young Achievers to research their heroes and role models in order to understand that they are also flawed people who overcame many problems and failures.

The next speaker was one of the 2022 Young Achiever awardees, **Dana Alarnab**, who arrived in the U.K. as a refugee from Syria with limited English-language skills but who now works to help other refugees.



Alexandra Russell, a 16-year-old, spoke of her goal of encouraging more young people to study the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

Farhan Zaman, who has experienced slavery and homelessness, started a charity to help homeless people.

Krishna Viday spoke about starting a website to raise awareness about mental illness.

The second main speaker was **Dr. Michael Balcomb** (video [here](#)), the Europe and Middle East president of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an organization that is affiliated with UPF.

Dr. Balcomb spoke about UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, who as a 10-year-old boy, living in Korea when it was occupied by Japan, witnessed his uncle appearing at the family home with a dozen members of the resistance to escape from the secret police. It was this incident that stirred something within the boy's soul, motivating him to want to do something to end Korea's oppression.

The reigning Miss International UK, **Evanjelin Elchmanar**, a community development worker, described her charity work.

Software developer **Keldon Alleyne**, one of the first people to receive a Young Achiever Award, spoke about his interests in designing games and in psychology.

At this point in the program, the participants met in small groups for an hour of discussion while enjoying refreshments.

The third main speaker was **Nathaniel Peat** (video [here](#)), a former Young Achiever and a UPF Ambassador for Peace. In an inspirational talk he spoke of overcoming poverty, racial discrimination, and low expectations from teachers and others while keeping alive his ambition to be a pilot.

He described his path of learning and then teaching martial arts to finance his progress through A-Levels and university and obtaining his pilot's license while some of his contemporaries died young. His engineering degree prepared him for establishing a series of companies, including Gennex, which seeks to empower others to become entrepreneurs. He has developed, among other products, solar panels that provide energy for poor households in different African nations. Working with fellow martial artists, his project Safety Box has reduced violence and reoffending in prisons.

Following Mr. Peat's talk, a spokesperson from each of the six small groups reported on the group's discussion.

One of these spokespersons, neuro-linguistic programming practitioner **Lee Keogh** ([video here](#)) spoke very inspiringly about his desire to educate others to include people with disabilities.

Elliot Yamamoto, the UK leader for Youth and Students for Peace, another organization that is affiliated with UPF, briefly introduced YSP.

Finally, UPF-UK Secretary General **Robin Marsh** offered closing comments and announced future events.

Some very good suggestions for future activities were made by the Young Achievers. In the exchange of ideas, two future projects were identified.

The first project targets the rising levels of mental health issues in young people. The second project is educating young refugees, so that they can stand on their own feet and eventually help society besides helping themselves.



UPF-UK will support these two projects, with each project being guided by three Young Achiever awardees.

At the House of Commons on November 22, 2022, the Universal Peace Federation presented its Young Achiever Awards in a ceremony hosted by Shaun Bailey MP.

The 22 awardees each spoke about their life's journey before receiving their award from a member of Parliament.

The first person to give a testimony was 19-year-old **Sabrina Daniel**. Imagine coming to the UK as an asylum seeker at the age of 4 and going into foster care from age 6. Even though her start was difficult and she didn't know the English language well, she achieved excellence in school and university, all while creating and supporting numerous successful projects for the benefit of those around her.

Some of her notable projects include: teaching new asylum seekers English grammar to support their integration into UK society; creating a mentorship program that links young people in foster care and foster care leavers with mentors, in partnership with the city council; giving primary school assemblies to educate children about asylum seeking and refugee children to make them feel welcome; fundraising to support her local asylum center; and much more.

Reigning Miss International UK **Evanjelin Elchmanar**, 21, a champion of single mothers and victims of domestic violence, has raised thousands of British pounds for numerous charities. Through her own charity, Climate Exchange Ltd., she educates young people about climate change.

A self-described idealist, **Mohammed Noor**, a 25-year-old from Birmingham, has provided mentoring to boys aged 10 to 15 years. He aims to inspire in them a determination that we all can achieve whatever we set our minds to. He also has supported low-income families in his community with financial

administrative work.

The 18-year-old activist and public speaker **Anita Okunde** is the founder and president of Girl Up Manchester, which provides education on sexual health. She also promotes climate justice and has been listed as one of the Top 100 environmentalists, according to *Forbes* business magazine.



Junior Doctor Batool Hussain Wali was on the front line during the COVID-19 pandemic here in the UK. She not only provided medical care but also raised awareness about vaccination programs within ethnic communities.

Laiba Waseem, who experienced depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sexual assault at a young age, only to be ignored by the relevant authorities and social support organizations, decided to help the very organizations and authorities that turned her away. Working with the police, mental health services, and social care organizations, she has raised awareness of the needs of those who are recovering from trauma.



From being a Syrian refugee who arrived in the UK not knowing English, **Dana Alarnab** became an avid supporter of other refugees.

Three leaders of Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) in the UK -- **Elliot Yamamoto**, **Viola Dirnhofer** and **Alma Gaina** -- were presented with Young Achiever Awards by Shaun Bailey MP and Dean Russell MP.

YSP-UK has been doing service projects as well as designing peace courses and projects to inspire young people and provide them with the skills to implement their vision.