

Community-Engagement Challenge Report
Event: Gala of Dreams -- MAC Academy Benefit Dinner
Student Organization: Refugee Student Alliance



On behalf of the Refugee Student Alliance Executive Board of 2018-2019, I would like to express our sincerest gratitude and appreciation of the Rochester Community Center for Leadership in awarding our student organization \$500 to help support the first ever Gala of Dreams event on April 4th, 2019. Without the support of RCCL, we would not have been able to hold such a successful and wonderful event.

We are truly excited to share the successes of the Gala of Dreams with you all. To begin, we had approximately 170 attendees at the event; about half of these attendees were community members who were not associated with the University of Rochester. This was especially exciting to us as it helped us achieve our mission of reaching a wide and diverse audience of students and community members alike. We raised about \$1,500 total by selling tickets and collecting donations on the night of the event. These proceeds will help support the students of the MAC Academy. These funds will help the MAC Academy continue to provide driving lessons, English language lessons, and field trips for the refugee students at the academy.

Apart from organizing a fundraiser event, we set out to create the Gala of Dreams as an awareness event and we believe we fulfilled that mission. The performances and panel featured students from the MAC Academy and helped connect Rochester students, faculty and community members to the lives of those who must overcome the many barriers that come with being a refugee, such as learning a second language,

continuing with education, living on your own, etc. We also showed a documentary screening about the MAC Academy which many attendees found to be very informative and eye-opening. All in all, this event was truly an amazing culmination of the work that Refugee Student Alliance has dedicated to connecting the University of Rochester student body and faculty with the refugee and immigrant population of Rochester.

Also, we were glad to have the support and sponsorship of many student organizations and university departments, such as: University of Rochester Habitat for Humanity, SADACA, the Sea and Anchor Detail, Kappa Alpha Theta, the Muslim Student Association, the Modern Languages and Cultures Department, and the Study Abroad Office. We had student volunteers who helped us run the event and many dedicated executive board members who worked all day to set-up and take down the event. We received countless positive remarks and great feedback about the event. Here is an example of an email that a faculty member shared with us after the event:

Congratulations on organizing such a successful and enjoyable dinner and program! It was extremely well planned. My guests and I all enjoyed it very much and we appreciated learning about the MAC academy, which looks like a worthwhile initiative by the RCSD.

To conclude, we are proud of the relationship we developed with the MAC Academy and the greater Rochester community in organizing this event. We look forward to organizing this event in the future and hope to continue to kindle a close relationship between the U of R community and the Rochester refugee community.

Thank you again for your generous support, RCCL!

Sincerely,

Refugee Student Alliance Executive Board, 2018-2019





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