

DDG kicks off a new year of dialogue

On Wednesday, September 2nd, the Dialogue Development Group (DDG) hosted their annual dialogue kickoff event. The event was informational and experiential, including announcements about dialogue opportunities on campus as well as allowing participants to engage in a mini-dialogue.

“We thought this event would be a great community builder,” said Ryan Jaco, DDG vice-president and organizer of the event. “We also wanted to provide people who are unfamiliar with or unsure of what dialogue is to really have an opportunity to experience it first hand.”

DDG is a student organization that offers dialogue opportunities that focus on issues that are important and relevant to the AU community. Topics range from race and ethnicity to Muslim-Jewish relations to military and civilian perceptions of peacemaking.

The organization defines dialogue as a sustained collaboratively structured conversation where participants from speak from their personal experience and explore both the differences and the common ground that exist among them.

“Our intent is to create a space to have often difficult conversations, but conversations that matter,” said Elli Nagai-Rothe, President of DDG, at the event.

“We are not trying to convince someone of our point of view,” she told the participants. “The point is not to win. The purpose of dialogue is learning, collaboration, and understanding.”

Approximately 35 people attended the event. Those who participated in the mini-dialogue broke off into small groups in which they engaged in a forty-five minute discussion on diversity led by DDG’s trained facilitators.

“It was great to hear different perspectives and a good forum for understanding ideas and meanings,” said Trace Main, a first year IPCR student, who came to the event to learn more about DDG and possibly becoming a facilitator.

DDG was formed in 2006 by students in Professor Muhammed Abu-Nimer’s class *Dialogue: Approaches and Applications*. They hoped to create a group that would allow students to hone their dialogue facilitation skills as well as offer other AU community members the experience of dialogue.

Most of the facilitators have taken dialogue course and have participated in a weekend-long training on dialogue facilitation. They have also experience the process of participation.

While one of the main activities of DDG is to organize a series of seven week dialogue groups focused on challenging topics, the groups also promotes other opportunities for dialogue offered on campus.

International Student and Scholar Services is hosting the “Taking Action to Learn About ‘Kulture’” Program (TALK), an eight week series brings international and American students together to dissect difference and bridge cultures.

For more information visit: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/iss/TALK.cfm>.

The Kay Spiritual Life Center is once again offering the Table Talk Lunch Series, discussions bringing the AU community together with practitioners and policy makers to discuss a wide array of domestic and international issues. Upcoming discussions include *Extractive Industries: Trade Justice and Human Rights* on Wednesday, Oct. 14th and *International Financial System: What New Rules are Needed?* on Wednesday, Oct. 28th.

For more information visit: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/kay/Table-Talk-Lunch-Series.cfm>.

The Ramadan Film Festival, hosted by the Intercultural Management Institute, is offering a unique three week series that uses film to facilitate intercultural dialogue as a part of the 20,000 Dialogues Project. The discussions will included the filmmakers included Luby Ismail, president of Connecting Cultures, and current EPGA student Daniel Tutt of Unity Productions.

For more information visit: <http://www.imi.american.edu/>.