

TEDxSMU Live Blog

TEDxSMU partnered with CoHabitat, a startup community and coworking space in Uptown Dallas, to live blog the inaugural TEDx event at SMU on October 10. The following is the aggregate postings from one of the CoHabitat bloggers.

October 10, 2009
By Frankie De Soto

TEDxSMU before the event

This morning I had a chance to attend the TEDxSMU over at SMU campus and interview some of the people there. So far, there has been a lot of socializing and it is a pretty big group that's here to listen to some very notable speakers. I actually had a chance to interview a of the people here. I actually saw one of my university professors here so I hope I have a chance to talk to him. One person I had a chance to do a quick interview with was Dustin Currie, a web developer at LevelTen Interactive in Dallas. I pretty much asked him what got him interested in coming to this big event. "I'm looking forward to hearing William Kamkwamba speak" Dustin said. "At 14 years old, he was able to build a windmill to provide electricity for his small village." William is just one of the guest speakers here today, I'm sure the other speakers got some great stories to tell.

Tiffany Vega, who works at SMU and is currently helping out with the event. "This is all very exciting," she said. "We had a chance to bring TEDxSMU over here to SMU and a lot people here that I met are all very excited about it."

I still have more to do, so I'll keep everybody posted.

My interview with Dr. David Parry: Emerging Media and Communications professor at UT Dallas

Wow! I just happened to bump into my University of Texas at Dallas professor, Dr. David Parry. He helped develop and manage the Emergent Media and Communication program at UT Dallas, where he emphasizes the changing technology in how we communicate, particularly in the subjects of social media, network knowledge and social intelligence. He's really into the TEDxSMU seminars and since he is here, I figure I interview him about his visit to the TEDxSMU presentations. I asked him what was his favorite presentation so far. "I really liked Joshua Prince-Ramus' presentation on his architectural development of the performing arts center that is opening soon in Dallas." he said. "I liked it because it dealt with a lot of what I'm teaching my undergrads, which is network theory. Joshua is designing for the process and not the product; there's a paradigm shift of what and how he communicates and that he treats inanimate objects as organisms in his architectural design and development."

I asked David of what he thought of TEDxSMU and the TED program altogether. "I think it's a great educational tool that I recommend my undergraduates watch." What's great about TED is that all the videos are available online to watch from the comfort of your own home. Check them and see which ones inspire you.

My interview with William Kamkwamba, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*

I was very impressed with one of the speakers that presented at TEDxSMU, and that's William Kamkwamba. Why, you ask? Well, at age 12, he actually taught himself how to repair radios and understand the functionality of a generator. He was inspired by a picture of a windmill in a 8th grade science book to build his own to help generate electricity for his village during a very serious drought. With just scrap parts he built a wind mobile that produced enough volts to power four light bulbs and charge mobile phones and even a second windmill that pumped water.

After buying his book, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, I managed to do a quick interview with him while he was signing my book. At first, I just wanted to ask him if he succeeded the first time. "Not the first time." William said. "It gets frustrating and I failed a couple of times, but it's ok to fail." I agree, failing is part of the process of succeeding in anything that you do. William never gave up on his windmill and after a few trials and errors, he got it to work. Now, if William can build a windmill at

14, then anybody can achieve what they dream of doing. Like William says, "It's ok to fail." If you'd like to order his book and make a donation to his village in Malawi, check out his website (<http://williamkamkwamba.typepad.com/>).

My interview with Bryan Mealer, the author of *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*

My interview with Bryan Mealer was also brief but I liked the fact that he is like a modern day adventurer. He is actually the author of *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, the actual inspirational story of William Kamkwamba, the boy who built the windmill at age 14. Bryan is a former Associated Press staff writer based in the Congo and he reported across Africa. I was very impressed when I asked him why he moved to the Congo. "I wanted adventure," he said with a grin. I was like, wow, I would never make a move like that, to be away from my friends and family, but for Bryan it was also a calling. In the Congo and even throughout Africa, war breaks out and effects the people. "No one was covering that war." Bryan said. Bryan also mentioned that living in Africa is totally different than living in the United States and even Africa itself has diversity in each of the countries residing in the continent.

Bryan travels with William to promote his book that actually came out last week and I asked him about his participation with TED. "I enjoy speaking to the people," he said. "They are really inspired by our stories, especially William's." Bryan was really great to talk to and there's a real lesson here, if you feel like you have a calling to do something, go do it. Bryan did and he made the world aware of what's happening in Africa and to it's people.

TEDxSMU was a great experience

Overall, I had a really great experience attending the TEDxSMU event. I had a chance to blog interviews that I gave to some of the guests and speakers as well as tweet some of the presentations. I also had a chance to meet and socialize with a lot of great people from all professions. Two of my favorite speakers at the TEDxSMU were Tanya Pinto, founder of the charity group Baal Dan, and former army general and now the Chair of the Department of Environmental and Civil Engineering and Bobby B. Lyle Professor of Leadership and Global Entrepreneurship at SMU, Jeffrey Talley. These two individuals took the time to help those who are in need of help and I commend them both for their courageous and generous efforts and I hope those who attended the TEDxSMU and listened to these two were inspired to do the same.

Tanya Pinto went to India to volunteer to help the children living in orphanages and Jeffrey Talley served in the U.S. Army and with over 4,000 engineers and soldiers under his command, rebuilt Sadr City in Baghdad from a war torn area to a community with a working sewage system, waste collection, schools and medical hospitals.

Before, TED was a conference about technology, entertainment and design, but now it's more than that now. It is a conference of very innovative and notable individuals who inspire humanity to do great and positive things for themselves and the lives of others.

I really would like to thank both Jennifer Conley and Blake Burris, founder of CoHabitat, for inviting me to be a guest blogger for this great event.

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