

TEDxSMU Fosters Creativity, Thought

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By John Coleman
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Eager “TEDsters” await the opening presentation at TEDxSMU on Saturday in Owens Fine Arts Center.

The question was posed: What will change everything?

The TEDxSMU event organized by the Lyle School of Engineering brought over 400 students, faculty, staff, community members and anyone else drawn by their curiosity into Caruth Auditorium Saturday to see experts in all fields answer this broad question.

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design, and brings together leaders in these fields to bring to the surface current problems and solutions that could potentially “change everything.” The “x” indicates the event was independently organized.

The first speaker of the day, Bobby Haas, an aerial photographer, said he has seen through his craft what will change everything.

“Climate change is occurring at a frightening pace,” Haas said. “The problem cannot be vanquished by individuals. Individuals can act nobly, however rarely do nations.”

He called the problem “man’s Gettysburg,” the civil war being waged between man and his planet. He said everything has already changed. What will change it back is the “chance for man to prove we deserve the planet’s blessings, that will change everything.”

Haas was followed by Dean of the Lyle School of Engineering Geoffrey Orsak, who brought to the audience’s attention a podium with a seal of the president of the United States.

“From that very podium, one man in one moment launched the greatest journey in history,” he said.

The podium was the one in which President John F. Kennedy gave his famed speech promising a U.S. moon landing within the decade. It has never been loaned out before but was able to be on display at TEDxSMU because of the message that went along with it.

Speakers that followed included Anousheh Ansari, the fourth private space explorer, and first astronaut of Iranian decent who said the thing that would change everything was “you.”

The first step is imagining. “Sitting and dreaming doesn’t make things happen,” she noted, so she tries to inspire people to make the change happen by acting on their dreams.

Another notable speaker was William Kamkwamba, known simply from the title of his book, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. The Polyphonic Spree also performed.

Videos from the day’s sessions and speakers can be found at www.TEDxSMU.org.

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