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THS grad delivers UN speech on arms

By AMY GITTELSON The Trinity Journal Nov 1, 2017



Rose Welsch at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

Contributed

Rose Welsch spent a year in South Africa after graduating from Trinity High School in 1990. It's where she became aware of the devastating impacts of small arms such as AK-47s on Africa.

“There were so many deaths in the country from them while I was there,” Welsch said.

Welsch, who grew up in Lewiston, is now working for the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) as its United Nations liaison officer in New York City. IANSA is a network of nongovernmental organizations, women’s groups, faith-based organizations, human rights organizations and other institutions around the world working on the issue of proliferation and misuse of small arms. It’s headquartered in Ghana.

On Oct. 11, Welsch delivered a speech to the First Committee of the 72nd General Assembly of the United Nations on the topic of combatting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Dealing primarily with a framework called the UN Programme on Small Arms, Welsch advocated for including ammunition in the framework, greater inclusion of women in the small arms process, and more attention to armed violence in the context of crime, not just conflict.

The framework was adopted by UN member states in 2001 after the end of the Cold War, Welsch said, “when a glut of weapons began to be trafficked from the former Soviet Union into Africa and other regions, where they were used to fuel various conflicts.”

All the arms in circulation fueled violence that was destabilizing countries, undermining development, exacerbating poverty and leading to forced migrations, Welsch said.

“A lot more needs to be done,” she added. “There are about 1 billion guns in circulation worldwide today, and millions more are added

annually.”

Welsch also works part-time for the nonprofit organization Peace Boat. It is on the steering committee of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the coalition that was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for work to achieve a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

“I’m committed to both fields of disarmament,” Welsch said, meaning conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

Welsch is still thankful for the Weaverville Rotary Club sponsorship years ago that allowed her to make that exchange visit to South Africa — “something my family never could have afforded, and that helped me start my international journey.”