

## ***Our Year, Our Voice: Our Social Media***

*By Danica Rockney*

*“Youth should be given a chance to take an active part in the decision-making [at] local, national and global levels.”* United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

In an effort to promote the involvement of youth within the United Nations, the General Assembly adopted a resolution stating that the International Year of Youth (IYY) started on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010. As the official slogan of the IYY, *Our Year, Our Voice*, suggests the United Nations is looking for a way to capitalize on the spirit and enthusiasm of today’s youth and to find a way for their voices to be heard. It seems that they have to look no further than the social media obsession that has captivated the lives of youth.

As a current college student and a child of the technology generation, I admit that I have spent too many hours on Facebook. It seems to be my favorite distraction, especially when it comes to finals week. However, whether it is being used as a distraction or a way to stay in contact with acquaintances around the world, Facebook, along with the other social media services such as Twitter, You Tube, and blogs, offer fast and easy ways of communication, organization, and discussion for youth around the globe.



Currently, Facebook has more than 600 million users worldwide and Twitter over 200 million and many people are starting to recognize both the potential of such powerful tools as well as their importance to connect on a global scale. As part of the United Nations Department of Public Information Briefing that took place on June 9 for representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations about building partnerships and promoting dialogue among youth, the impressive capability of social media to engage youth was recognized not only by the younger members of the audience, but

also by the older generation.

It is undeniable the significant role social media has already played in both social and political movements; one has only to think of the recent Arab Spring. Now, many businesses and organizations are using social media in hopes of attracting the younger generation and making them active participants. *Newsweek* called the recent political protest in Cairo “Egypt’s Facebook Revolt” where much of the movement was planned, discussed, organized, and shared through Facebook.

Social media has become and will continue to be a platform used to engage the interest and utilize the valuable resources that young people have to offer their communities. Although, undoubtedly, I will continue to use Facebook as a common distraction from studying, I may not only be simply wasting time, but rather engaging myself in debates, communicating with people across the world, and pursuing my passions as an active participant in the global society. After all, what better justification for taking a break from studying when I know that I am taking an active part in my future and the future of the world?