



THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

The Borlaug Blog

A Legacy Bestowed

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As all readers of the Borlaug Blog and friends to the World Food Prize know, this year marks the close to an astonishing era in the history of the World Food Prize Foundation. 2019 is the final year of Ambassador Kenneth Quinn's exceptional, twenty-year tenure as President of the World Food Prize.

For two decades, Ambassador Quinn has led the foundation established by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug with a vision and humanitarianism that have taken the organization and its profound mission to a level even Dr. Borlaug himself might not have imagined.

The impact of Ambassador Quinn's leadership is extraordinary. With an unyielding commitment to fulfilling Dr. Borlaug's vision that the World Food Prize be recognized globally as the "Nobel Prize for food and agriculture," he closes his Presidency having: built the Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium into the "Davos of global food security," annually convening the world's foremost leaders in food security; developed the World Food Prize Laureate Ceremony into an inspiring recognition of life-saving achievement that Dr. Borlaug himself said "exceeds the [ceremony] where I received the Nobel Prize in Oslo"; and envisioned and brought into being the magnificent World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, a center of learning which preserves for the future the stories of Dr. Borlaug, the World Food Prize Laureates, and Iowa's rich agricultural and humanitarian

legacy. Under his leadership, a dazzling list of global leaders have spoken at World Food Prize events, including: Chinese President Xi Jinping; U.N. Secretaries-General Ban Ki-moon and Kofi Annan; Princess Haya bint Al Hussein the U.N. Messenger of Peace; former Prime Minister Tony Blair and business leader and philanthropist Bill Gates.

These achievements are staggering, most immediately and deservedly associated with Ambassador Quinn's legacy at the World Food Prize. However, if I or any other young adult whose life has been touched by the World Food Prize over the last two decades were asked, the most important impact of Ambassador Quinn's leadership will be more simply and directly expressed: the World Food Prize education programs changed my life.

I write this as one of the countless students and young people – from across Iowa, across the nation and across the globe – whose lives and careers have been changed by Ken Quinn and his remarkable imprint on the World Food Prize.

When Ambassador Quinn assumed leadership of the Foundation, its youth program involved about 25 students for a one-day event. Tireless in his dedication to confronting hunger and advancing the legacy of Dr. Borlaug, under Ambassador Quinn's leadership the World Food Prize has built unparalleled educational programs to inspire the next generation of leaders in food security. Today, the Foundation's youth programs reach over 10,000 students annually from 30 U.S. states and 10 foreign countries through edifying youth institutes, the Borlaug-Ruan International Internship and the Wallace-Carver Fellowship. The difference these programs make is stunning: 96% of the students who participate in all of the World Food Prize education programs pursue agriculture and STEM careers. The reach of these programs is particularly notable: Two-thirds of the education program participants are women and two-thirds do not come from agricultural backgrounds.

I understand these impressive figures in a personal way; I myself am included in them: I am a woman from a non-agricultural background who chose to pursue a career in agriculture and STEM after my experience participating in the World Food Prize education programs. My life's trajectory was changed in high school when I attended the World Food Prize Global Youth Institute, became a Borlaug-Ruan International Intern in Brazil and was in the first class of Wallace-Carver Fellows at the USDA. Because of these opportunities, I discovered I wanted to commit my education and career to food security. I earned degrees in agronomy at Iowa State University and am now an assistant teaching professor in Global Resource Systems in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences there, devoting

myself to education programs that inspire the next generation of leaders in food security.

My story is not unique. Countless students have their own stories of how the World Food Prize education programs shaped their lives, orienting them toward the work of ending hunger. This is the legacy of Ambassador Quinn. In his vision and in his actions, one can see he wants nothing to end with him. As is the way of great leaders, it is not about him. It is about passing forward the vision, inspiration, knowledge and opportunity so that generations to come may benefit and prosper.

As 2019 comes to a close, and with it, Ambassador Quinn's two decades of leadership at the World Food Prize, we can be certain of one thing: this will not be the end of an era. Ambassador Quinn's work, vision and legacy will not only endure, but will expand and grow through the countless young people who have been inspired and touched by his leadership. This is a new generation of youth and professionals who have dedicated their educations and careers to food security and humanitarianism because of Ambassador Quinn.

And to Ambassador Quinn, on behalf of the thousands of youth whose lives you have touched and who you have inspired to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Borlaug, THANK YOU for all you have done to inspire the next generation. We will carry forth the legacy of Dr. Borlaug and Ambassador Quinn to end hunger and malnutrition in all its forms.

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Comments

What a tribute to Amb. Quinn, the World Food Prize, and to the future individuals touched by the message. God a bless, Jody

Jody Beimer | beimerbeimers@gmail.com | 01/04/2020 2:01 PM

Great job Catherine! As always, your words are eloquent and heartfelt. Your deep appreciation and passion shine.

Meredith McHone-Pierce | meredithpierce@iowatelecom.net | 12/24/2019 1:41 PM

Well said Catherine! A wonderful and well deserved tribute to Ambassador Quinn!!

Ken Allen | kallen@radiks.net | 12/24/2019 6:48 AM