

Iowan Ken Quinn receives Rotary International Honor

October 8, 2020

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn of Des Moines was awarded Rotary International's Excellence in Service to Humanity honor at the Rotary Club of Des Moines meeting on Thursday, Oct. 8 by former Rotary District 6000 Governors Erna Morain and Jacque Andrew of Jefferson. Quinn was one of only 25 in the world to receive the award for the 2019-20 Rotary year, with fewer than 100 ever to be so honored.

From his Dubuque, Iowa roots, Ken Quinn went on to a distinguished 32 year career in the US Foreign Service with the State Department in Washington, DC, Vienna, the Philippines, and in various southeast Asian countries during the Vietnam War era. Quinn was the U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia from 1995-1999.

Instrumental in the permanent relocation and settlement of thousands of Tai Dam and other refugee to Iowa in the late '70s, Quinn played a central role in one of the greatest humanitarian efforts in the state's history. 'Throughout Quinn's diplomatic career, he emphasized game changing and grassroots work that impacted and changed lives over traditional diplomatic proceedings.' said Ms. Andrew.

Following his diplomatic career, Ambassador Quinn was chosen to serve as president of the World Food Prize in 1999. The World Food Prize was founded by 1970 Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug, who is credited with saving a billion lives globally through plant research and development.

After assuming leadership of the World Food Prize, Ken led a \$30 million renovation of the former Des Moines library into the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, which recognizes those whose breakthrough achievements ensure global food security for all. He worked with the Rotary Club of Des Moines on a major donation of \$150,000 to the Food Prize building as its 2011 centennial club project gift. Ambassador Quinn is an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Des Moines.

During his 20 years leading World Food Prize events, Amb. Quinn raised interest in feeding our world from a few dozen award attendees to over 2,000 annually, including 300 high school and college students from 20+ states for international food research fellowships and internships.

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