

ny dream job'

A talented group of young Iowans help the World Food Prize work towards its most important mission, laid out by Norman Borlaug 24 years ago: End world hunger.

BRIANNE SANCHEZ
brianne@dmJuice.com

The guy responsible for bringing Bill Gates to speak in Des Moines last October is Frank Swoboda, who is 29 years old and one of four people under 35 working on the nine person staff of the World Food Prize Foundation.

The foundation brings politicians, like Bob Dole and George McGovern, along with little-known researchers — like 2009 World Food Prize Laureate Dr. Gebisa Ejeta of Ethiopia, whose work developing hybrid grasses increased the availability of one of the world's main grains — to Des Moines for the symposium, a laureate award ceremony with lectures and dialogues on topics surrounding world hunger.

With a guest list of more than 600 ambassadors, research scientists and dignitaries from across the globe, this could be Iowa's most influential annual event. (Behind the scenes, making sure every second of the ceremony — from performers to keynote speakers — goes as planned is another under-35 staffer, 32-year-old Justin Cremer.)

For the past decade, the work of the World Food Prize Foundation was somewhat out of sight and out of mind for people in Des Moines. The construction of a new riverfront World Food Prize headquarters (on track to open in the old downtown library building in the spring of 2012) should change that. Maura Walsh, 24, is tasked with researching the history of agricultural achievement so the foundation can commission world-class art highlighting key moments for the new facility.

Working to further the influence of the foundation beyond those five days in the fall is Keegan Kautzky, 28, whose work linking high school students with international internships could pave the way for careers in groundbreaking research to help alleviate world hunger.

Though the paths that led them to work for the foundation cross different terrain on continents across the globe, all share a common thread: These four young professionals never saw themselves moving back to work in Des Moines.

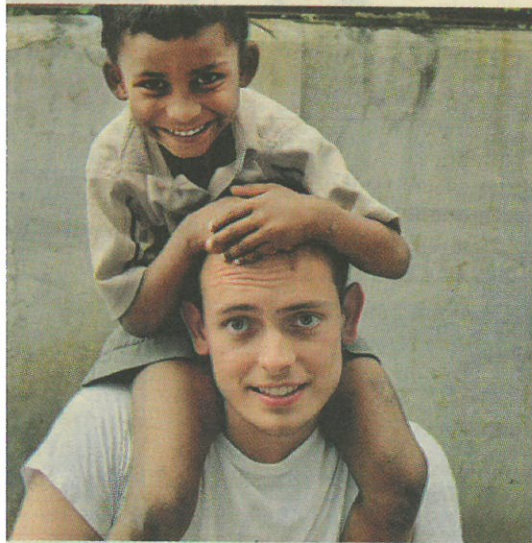
It's working for the World Food Prize, a job that's more D.C. than D.M., that keeps them in Iowa. Turns out, what might one of the coolest, most influential jobs in Des Moines is all about agriculture.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

dmJuice.com



Justin Cremer in the Nyhavn district in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he lived for a year in 2004.



Adi during Kautzky's tenure at the Nav Jeevan Nivas, India, in 2003. Kautzky helped run the orphanage while he was in Kadapa.

Carrying on a legacy

In a World Food Prize boardroom on the 17th floor of the Ruan Center, Cremer, Kautzky, Swoboda and Walsh describe their backgrounds by telling stories that involve everything from cleaning toilets at a preschool in Denmark to caring for llamas in Kentucky.

All are from Iowa, and all have traveled and worked around the world. Among them, they speak many languages: Afrikaans, Czech, Danish, French, Russian, Uzbek, Wolof and some Spanish and introductory Arabic.

The next World Food Prize symposium is more than 250 days

away (Oct. 12), so the winter months are a relative lull for an office that pulls 16- or 18-hour days during the weeks surrounding the event. But there's still work to be done.

Swoboda, for instance, is planning a last-minute trip to Kenya and Uganda to meet with farmers.

The four YPs and the rest of the World Food Prize staff carry on the mission of Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug, and have Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, one of the country's most decorated civilians, as their boss.

"There's a really high standard because of Dr. Borlaug's legacy," Swoboda said. They all admit: They're so busy, they don't really

have time to stop and reflect on the magnitude of their work.

Certain moments, though, stand out as exceptional opportunities. Like Cremer's chance to sit in on a private conversation between Borlaug and Iowa Sen. Charles Grassley after Borlaug was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal (making him one of six humans ever to walk the earth to earn that, the Nobel Prize, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom).

The staff is aware that in Des Moines and abroad, they represent Borlaug's legacy.

"As a 28 year old, I'm trusted to

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

The World Food Prize, in a nutshell

Created by Norman Borlaug in 1986 and endowed by recently deceased businessman and philanthropist John Ruan, each year the \$250,000 prize recognizes the achievements of individuals who have "advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world."

Each October, hundreds of global dignitaries gather in Des Moines for the international symposium, laureate award ceremony and lectures and dialogues on topics surrounding world hunger.

Why you should know the name Norman Borlaug

The staff at the World Food Prize affectionately refer to him as "Norm," but to millions of people in developing nations, Borlaug is known as "the father of the Green Revolution."

Born in Iowa in 1914, Borlaug was sent to study a fungus that attacked wheat and endangered the food supply. He developed a disease-resistant wheat in Mexico and brought his techniques to India, Pakistan and southeast Asia, an advancement that rescued one billion people from starvation.

Dr. Borlaug is one of six people to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. The others: Nelson Mandela, Elie Wiesel, Mother Theresa, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and



World Food Prize president, Ambassador Kenneth Quinn at the dedication of the new World Food Prize headquarters in honor of Norman Borlaug last October. Quinn stands in front of a portrait of Borlaug. Register file photo

Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma.

About Kenneth Quinn

The young staff members at the World Food Prize say working for foundation president Kenneth Quinn, former U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia, is like earning an advanced degree.

Quinn is known as a master negotiator. He personally negotiated the first entry by U.S. personnel into a Vietnamese prison to search for prisoners of war and was also a member of the first U.S. - Russian Commission team to gain entry to a former Soviet prison.

For Quinn, trust in the capabilities of his staff, about half under the age of 35, is crucial.

"We have a big age difference and a big experience difference, but I try very, very hard to make everyone feel their ideas are

worthwhile," Quinn said. "I want to hear them. I want to consider them and very often, I go along with them."

Dedication. A broad view of the world. Language skills. Attention to detail. All are qualities Quinn looks for in a new intern, volunteer or staff member.

Quinn said the foundation is effective because the small staff is able to strive for a common goal: How can we make (the World Food Prize) the Nobel Prize of agriculture?

"The question is how do we get there and let's talk about it," he said. "What I always try to tell the staff is we come closer to those goals than anybody may have imagined. They get the credit. People have said to us, 'This is the best-run event I've ever been to.' I've had people from the United Nations say 'You should have your staff run all the UN events.'"

COVER STORY

HUGH'S JUNGLE ROOM

HAPPY HOUR
3PM to 7PM • Monday - Friday

DAILY DRINK SPECIALS

Sunday - Wednesday
\$5 Domestic Pitchers
\$2.25 Domestic
Draws and Wells

5715 Douglas
515.254.3080
www.hughsjungleroom.com

DMJ-900223957 INDD

NEW LOCATION COMING SOON!