

Quinn's efforts reaping harvest for World Food Prize

BY JOE GARDYASZ

Each year, the World Food Prize Foundation invites the president of the United States to its laureate ceremony in Des Moines.

Though no president has yet attended, it's just a matter of time before one does, said Kenneth Quinn, the foundation's president.

In his past three years with the Des Moines-based organization, the former U.S. ambassador to Cambodia has been on a continual crusade to increase the stature of the prize to the point where it is considered "the Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture."

"It's to recognize and inspire," Quinn said of the prize, which was founded in 1986 by Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug. Carrying a \$250,000 cash award, the prize honors each year an individual who has significantly contributed to the quality, quantity or availability of the world's food supply. In the early 1990s the foundation's financial future was secured with a \$15 million endowment by Des Moines businessman John Ruan.

Awarded each October to celebrate World Food Day, "it's to encourage people to transcend what is now now available,

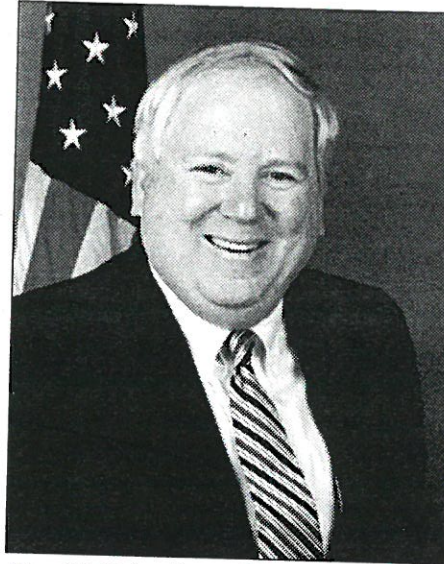
and achieve breakthrough discoveries," Quinn said. Through its Global Youth Institute, the foundation also encourages students to step up to lead the next "green revolution."

At the same time the organization is gearing up to transform the building that now houses the central branch of the Des Moines Public Library into a new headquarters and hall of laureates, Quinn is working to add cultural events throughout Iowa.

One of the changes Quinn made in 2000 was to move the venue for the laureate ceremony to the state Capitol, in an effort to have the World Food Prize "presented in a way that equals or surpasses the way the Nobel Prize is presented in Europe," he said.

The celebration is "clearly a signature event for the city and the state," said Steven Zumbach, outgoing chairman of the Greater Des Moines Partnership. "It's only a question of how much bigger it becomes. With the generosity of John Ruan and the Ruan family, and the leadership of Ken Quinn, I think the stature of the prize will continue to grow."

The Partnership showcased the foundation to members of Congress during its annual lobbying trip to Washington, D.C.,



Kenneth Quinn is president of the World Food Prize Foundation.

last year.

"It certainly had a very positive impact, because it was an opportunity for members of the United States Congress to see firsthand the scope and influence of the organization and its impact worldwide, Zumbach said. "That's a message that's becoming bet-


ter understood, but it's not well understood."

Last year, more than 200 Iowa communities hosted cultural events tied to the World Food Prize Symposium. This year, Quinn hopes an even wider array of events will be held.

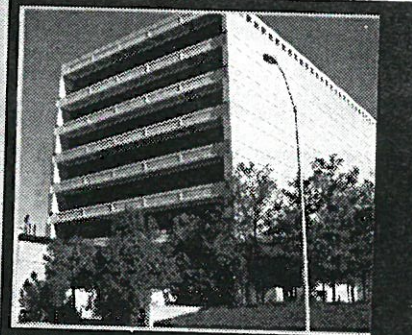
"Our goal is to have the symposium be the most significant observance of World Food Day," he said. "We're competing against events being done in Rome and New York, but last October we had more (persons representing) lifesaving achievement gathered here than anywhere in the world, without a doubt."

The events also help Iowa send a message to the rest of the world about the state's commitment to food production technology and the biosciences, said Mary Lawyer, chief of staff for the Iowa Department of Economic Development. State funding to the foundation has increased from \$250,000 in fiscal years 2000 and 2001 to \$285,000 during the past two fiscal years.

"It's been an ever-increasing commitment, which I think shows how serious we are about the World Food Prize and what a benefit it is to the state," she said. "It's a great celebration of feeding the world." □



Real Estate Advisory & Management



PROPERTY CONDITION
ASSESSMENTS
& RESERVE
STUDIES

**WHITE
ENGINEERS**