

World Food Prize Hall of Laureates

Check out dozens of historical photos and get a sneak peek at the building as it is today at DesMoinesRegister.com/worldfoodprize.

Teamwork plays an integral role

The creation of the Norman E. Borlaug Hall of Laureates resulted from the collaborative work of donors, designers, builders, historians and many others. Here are just a few of the key players:

THE CHIEF

KENNETH QUINN

As president of the World Food Prize Foundation since 2000, Kenneth Quinn has overseen every aspect of the renovation. He was the team's cheerleader and history wonk.

"People were so taken with what a place this is, and the vision of how beautiful and marvelous it could be only made them more interested," the former U.S. ambassador to Cambodia said.

It would have been easier and less expensive to stay in the foundation's old offices at the Ruan Center, but Quinn jumped at the chance to move to a more visible site. He dug into research about agricultural heroes, like WFP founder Norman Borlaug, and persuaded fund-raisers that the new headquarters should both educate and inspire.

"The prize is becoming the Nobel Prize for food and agriculture, and the laureates are the all-star team from the single greatest period of food production in its 10,000- to 12,000-year history," he said.

Quinn was surprised to learn how little has been written on the subject — "The History of Agriculture for Dum-mies" doesn't exist," he joked — and he wanted to honor those who have been overlooked. He wanted visitors to know, for example, "who might have won the World Food Prize had it existed in 150 A.D."

But his vision is ultimately focused on the future. Someday, he hopes, the building will become a monument to celebrate the elimination of hunger from the face of the earth.



Kenneth Quinn, president of the World Food Prize Foundation, oversaw the renovation of the former Des Moines Public Library into the Norman E. Borlaug Hall of Laureates.

THE FINANCIAL CHIEF MASHAL HUSAIN



Mashal Husain is the World Food Prize Foundation's director of development and finance, which means she usually handles the budget.

But during the renovation she wore a few more hats, including a hard one. Instead of hiring a separate project manager, she and Quinn worked side by side, coordinating the efforts of the designers, architects and contractors.

"There were so many different aspects of this project, from LEED efficiency to the educational exhibits to the storytelling elements and the artwork, all under the umbrella of historic preservation," she said. "Bringing all of that together on time has been a challenge and yet a tremendous source of pride."

It was also a reminder every time she opened the fridge. "You definitely contemplate more about the origin of meals and all the effort that goes into them," she said.



THE CURATOR TJ MOBERG

Moberg Gallery co-owner Tj Moberg helped find Iowa artists to create new paintings and sculptures that celebrate the state's unique role in feeding the world. The results of their work are in the Iowa Gallery on the second floor, with artistic tributes to President Herbert Hoover, George Washington Carver, Jessie Shambaugh and others.

"This whole project is going to be quite a treasure for Iowa," he said. "It's like you've got a little piece of Washington, D.C., right in the middle of Des Moines. It's going to be a fun place to just walk around."

The artists who received commissions for the Iowa Gallery are Gary Kelley,



THE STORYTELLERS DEBORAH BECKETT AND CARLOS MARTINEZ

Deborah Beckett and Carlos Martinez were part of the team from Gensler, the Chicago design firm that was in charge of the renovation's big-picture conceptual plan. Like sculptors with a chunk of stone, it was their job to figure out how to use the building to tell the stories of Norman Borlaug, the role of Iowa in food production and the overall sweep of agricultural history.

To do that, they chose a wide range of media: paintings, statues, tapestries and architectural elements in the building itself. "It makes a richer and more interesting environment if there is a variety of materials," Beckett said. "But there has to be consistency, too, so it doesn't become a hodgepodge."

She learned a lot in the process. "I was just amazed that (Borlaug) was such an incredible person and I'd never heard of him," she said. "That was a complete eye-opener for me. I'm glad I found all that out."

The World Food Prize Foundation is "an amazing organization. Really, what they do is unbelievable," Martinez added. "Every now and then something huge comes along in your career, and this was one of those projects."



THE ARCHITECTS SCOTT ALLEN AND GABRIEL GALLAHER

Scott Allen and Gabriel Gallaher led the team from RDG Planning and Design, the local architects of record for the project. It was their idea to design the Hall of Laureates in such a way that it could qualify for LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), which ties in with the World Food Prize's emphasis on sustainability and conservation.

So as they figured out all of the regular logistics for the renovation, they scoured the plans for opportunities to make the whole thing more eco-friendly. They installed solar panels on the roof and an underground cistern to collect water. They carved out space for a new shower to encourage employees to bike-commute. The extra features added to the cost, but the architects are pleased with the final results.

"It's amazing," Gallaher said. "We've seen the building's transformation from its run-down state to something that's probably even better than when it was originally built."



THE HISTORY GURU

THE SITE SUPERVISOR