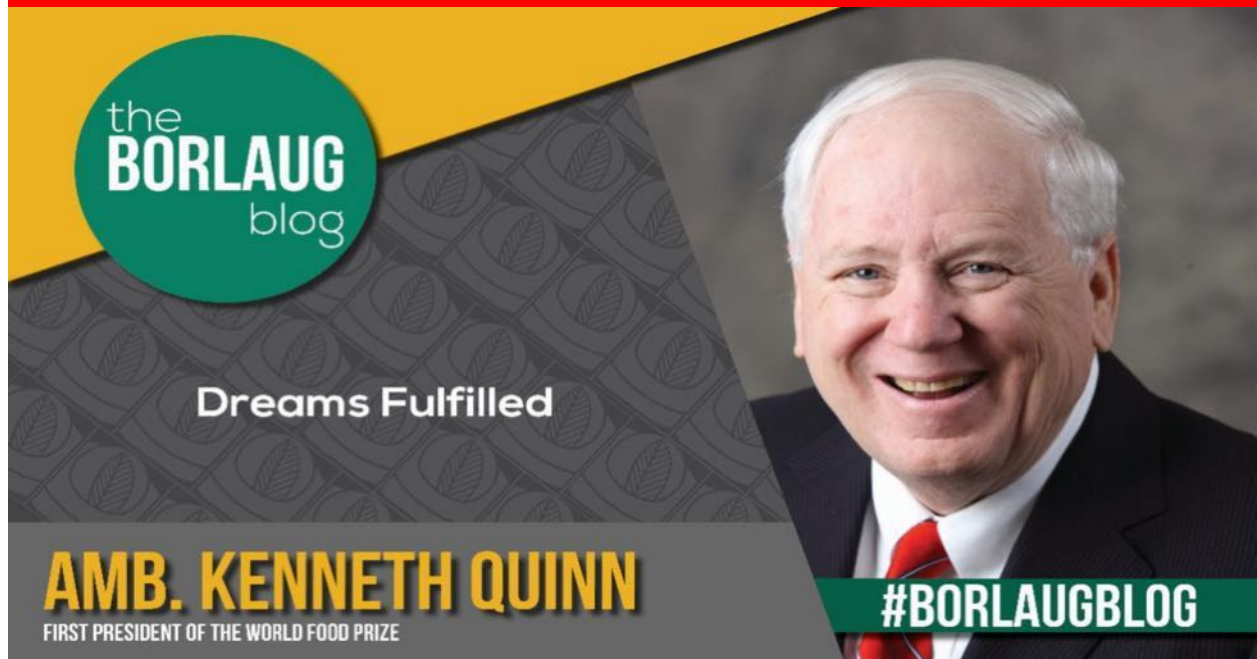


AMBASSADOR KENNETH QUINN  
NACAA SERVICE TO AMERICAN/WORLD AGRICULTURE AWARD WINNER  
2023



## INTRODUCTION FOR KENNETH QUINN

Good morning and welcome to Iowa. I'm George Cummins and it my pleasure to introduce Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, the 2023 recipient of the prestigious NACAA Service to American/ World Agriculture Award. In your program you have his award nomination and I'd like to expand on it just a bit. His nomination was supported by John Lawrence who you met earlier this morning and Brooke Blessington, the Iowa NACAA president.

We have all been indirectly or directly involved in historic events and have shared some of Ambassador Quinn's involvement and experiences. He has made history. The first paragraph summarizes his 52 years of public service, first with the American Foreign Service and then as Chair of the World Food Prize Foundation. He is recognized internationally as a diplomat and his successes in confronting hunger, enhancing rural development and thwarting terrorism by promoting "Peace through Agriculture." He is welcomed in countries that shun most Americans today.

His first assignment was in village pacification during the Vietnam War (1967-1974). We have some military veterans in the audience who shared some of these experiences and can possibly relate. Quinn worked with ag extension to improve food security by introducing IR-8, the miracle rice credited to Dr

Borlaug who would strongly influence Quinn's life and second career. Dr Borlaug won the NACAA Service to American/ World Agriculture Award in Omaha in 1999 as Father of the Green Revolution which is credited with saving a billion lives. Quinn worked to improve roads and infrastructure and provide access to ag inputs, markets, medical services and educational opportunities... Quinn is quoted as saying, "Where the road ends, the insurgency begins."

As the Vietnam War was winding down, there was a flood of refugees looking to escape. Iowa Governor Robert Ray led an effort to bring the Tai Dam from Laos and Vietnamese boat people to Iowa. He also established the Iowa SHARES program which worked with Cambodian refugees in Thailand. The Foreign Service assigned Quinn to help with these successful humanitarian projects. Learn more of the details of these projects which are applicable to our immigration crisis today in the book "The Good Governor" by Mathew Walsh. Just like today, not everyone supported the efforts to bring foreigners to Iowa.

Quinn was first to report the flood of refugees from Cambodia and the genocidal civil war that claimed almost 30% of the population. This horrific war is documented in several books and the 1984 movie, *The Killing Fields*. Quinn served as the US Ambassador to Cambodia (1996-1999). He introduced development projects which improved infrastructure and ag productivity which contributed to the war ending in March, 1999.

Following his Foreign Service retirement, Quinn became President of the World

Food Prize Foundation. The nomination form in your packet includes an update on many of the programs established at the WFP during Quinn's 20 year career there. Go to the website which is listed on the nomination. Learn more of past laureates and 2023 laureate Heidi Kuhn, who has spent 25 years demining farmland in former combat areas. Consider attending the Borlaug Symposium in October here in Des Moines. See if your home state hosts a Global Youth Institute, and has local students selected as Borlaug- Ruan Scholarship or USDA Fellowship recipients. The 15 students selected for the Borlaug-Ruan International Internships includes 7 students from Iowa. The other 8 are from other states and countries. This is a life altering experience for young people.



*Heidi Kuhn 2023 World Food Prize Laureate*

Plan to visit the Hall of Laureates while you are in Des Moines. Plan on at least half a day for the full experience.



*Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony - 2007*

Ambassador Quinn initiated the successful campaign for Dr Borlaug to receive the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007. Borlaug received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bush in 1979. To date only 6 other people have received these 3 awards – Martin Luther King, Elie Wiesel, Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela, Mohammed Yunus and Aung San Suu Kyi.

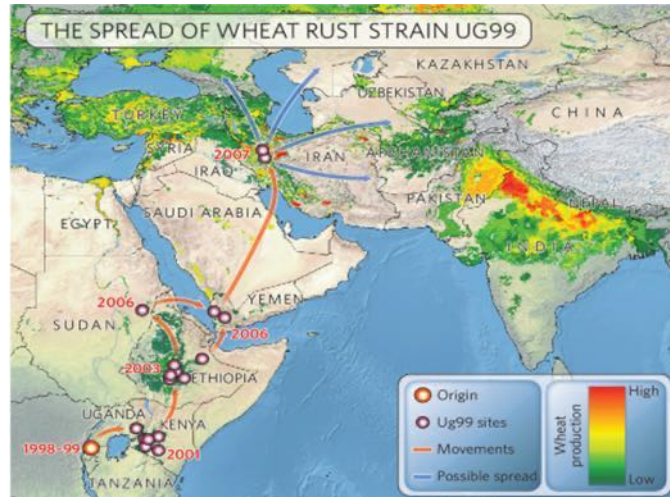
In the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. each state is represented by two statues of famous citizens. For over 100 years, Iowa was represented by Judge James Hardin and Governor Samuel Kirkwood. Ambassador Quinn initiated a successful campaign to replace the Kirkwood statue with one of Dr. Borlaug. On March 14, 2014, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Borlaug's birth, his statue was placed in the US Capitol.

A virulent strain of wheat rust (UG 99) was discovered in Uganda in 1999. It was spreading quickly towards the major wheat growing countries in the Middle East and Europe. Dr Borlaug was asked to form an international task force to develop productive wheat varieties resistant to UG 99. He organized the task force in 2007 and directed its programs till his death in September, 2009.



*Borlaug Statue - US Capitol - 2014*





*Rapid spread of UG 99 wheat rust*



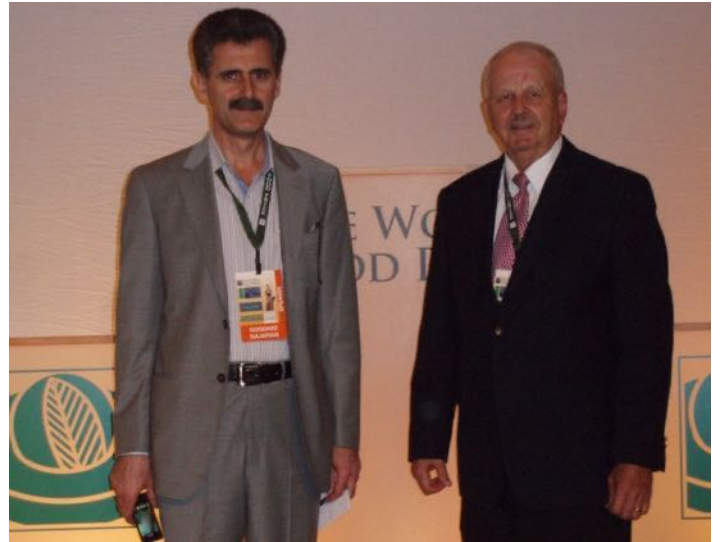
*Borlaug UG 99 International Task Force - 2007*



*Ambassador Quinn addressing the Iranian Parliament - 2014*

Like Borlaug, Ambassador Quinn is welcomed in countries like Iran that shun most Americans. Ambassador Quinn was invited to address the Iranian parliament in 2014, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr Borlaug's birth.

In return, Quinn extended an invitation to send an Iranian to the World Food Prize Borlaug Symposium in Des Moines. Dr Goddarz Najafian, an Iranian wheat breeder who had worked closely with Dr Borlaug was selected. The World Food Prize assigns a local to host foreign guests and I was assigned to Dr Najafian. During the Borlaug Symposium that fall, I introduced Dr Najafian, an Iranian to an Israeli, Dr Daniel Hillel, the 2012 World Food Prize Laureate, recognized for his work in introducing micro-irrigation across the Middle East and beyond. The Borlaug Symposium provides a neutral venue for people from adversarial countries to meet and work together to solve common problems.



*Dr. Najafian and Dr. Hillel - Borlaug Symposium, 2014*

Some parts of the world are becoming uninhabitable due to climate extremes and to economic, ethnic, personal safety and political issues. Desperate people are moving to provide a safe environment and opportunities for themselves and their families. Because of his experience, Ambassador Quinn has written articles and spoken at international conferences addressing these immigration issues.

In a Des Moines Register article, he wrote, “The ultimate solution to solve the immigration problem is to create conditions in their home countries where people feel safe, have access to food, potable water, essential services like education and medical assistance and opportunities for themselves and their families to prosper.” He admits that this is not a quick fix and will take time and political will to accomplish.

This Quinn quote sums up his life’s work. “When you confront human beings who are suffering, even though the color of their skin, the language they speak, the God that they worship and the culture they’re from are totally different from mine, from ours, because they are human beings I feel I should do something to help alleviate their suffering, protect them and to bring them aid.” This quote is Ambassador Quinn’s legacy. Please welcome Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, the 2023 NACAA Service to American/ World Agriculture Award winner. Wife Le Son, sons Davin and Shandon and daughter Kelly

# QUINN RECOGNIZED FOR SERVICE TO AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

This year's NACAA Service to American Agriculture Award was presented to Kenneth M. Quinn, special consultant to the World Food Prize Foundation and a lifetime supporter of agriculture and public service.

He is recognized internationally for his success in confronting hunger, enhancing rural development and thwarting terrorism by promoting "Peace through Agriculture."



The award recognize a U.S. Citizen who has made a major contribution to American/World Agriculture and is recognized by peers and the general public.

Quinn was born in the Bronx, New York, and grew up in Dubuque, Iowa. Following college graduation, he was inspired to begin a 32-year career (1967-1999) with the American Foreign Service dominated by anti-terrorism and humanitarian assignments. His first assignment was village pacification in Vietnam (1967-74). With the war raging, he worked to improve rural roads and infrastructure while ag extension agents were introducing IR-8, the miracle rice varieties developed in the Philippines using breeding techniques credited to Dr. Norman Borlaug. The improved roads and extension assistance resulted in increased ag production and access to ag inputs, markets, medical services and

educational opportunities.

As the rural economy improved, the appeal of the Viet Cong was reduced. Quinn addressed similar situations throughout his career and successfully applied the important strategies that he learned early in his career to improve lives and livelihoods elsewhere.

## **Life and death decisions**

Serving along the Cambodian border, Quinn was also involved in life and death decisions earning the Army Air Medal for accompanying helicopter operations in combat situations. He also was first to report the flood of refugees into Vietnam fleeing the Khmer Rouge and the Killing Fields of Cambodia.

Because of his Vietnamese language skills and his knowledge of the war torn area, Quinn served as interpreter for President Gerald Ford in meetings with Senior South

Vietnamese officials. He was instrumental in rescuing thousands of Vietnamese refugees in the days immediately before South Vietnam collapsed.

Quinn assisted Iowa Gov. Robert Ray from 1975 till the early 1980s, welcoming the Tai Dam from Laos, rescuing the Vietnamese “boat people,” and serving as the executive director of the Iowa SHARES program which sent lifesaving food and medicine along with volunteer doctors and nurses to sustain those escaping the Cambodian civil war in refugee camps in Thailand.

In the fall of 1980, Quinn hosted a delegation of Chinese Governors that came to Iowa to learn about productive agriculture. The Chinese group was led by Gov. Xi Zhongxun, the father of Xi Jinping, the current president of China. Gov. Xi became the chief architect of agriculture transformation and the Chinese economic development which followed. In 2012 Quinn hosted a U.S.-China High Level Ag Symposium with then Chinese VP Xi Jinping as keynote speaker.

In the early 1990s, Quinn served as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asia Bureau for the State Department where he oversaw development projects emphasizing infrastructure improvement and increased ag productivity in the Philippines, the Middle East and Cambodia. Quinn served as the U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia (1996-1999). As a result of these programs, the Khmer Rouge surrendered in March, 1999, ending the genocidal war which had claimed over 2 million victims out of an original population of 7 million.

Borlaug and businessman John Ruan, Sr. founded the World Food Prize in 1986 hoping it would become the “Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture” and that Central Iowa would be seen as the Hunger Fighting Capital of America and the World. Ambassador Quinn served as World Food Prize President (2000-2020). Using his international contacts and exceptional communication and organizational skills, the visions of Borlaug and Ruan have been realized.

In retirement, Quinn continues his work in service to US and world agriculture as a Foot Soldier in the Green Revolution promoting food for peace.