



Voices from the Prairie

Winter 2023

Voices from the Prairie Contents

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Humanities Iowa Mission Statement

The mission of Humanities Iowa is to promote understanding and appreciation of the people, communities, cultures, and stories of importance to Iowa and the nation.

Join other Iowans and support Humanities Iowa. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Humanities Iowa also accepts gifts of stock or securities. To make a donation or receive more information please contact our office at 319-335-4149 or info@humanitiesiowa.org or visit our website: www.humanitiesiowa.org.

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Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Supporters of Humanities Iowa,

It's with great pleasure that I write to you as president of the Humanities Iowa Board of Directors to introduce this issue of *Voices from the Prairie*. The annual publication has been a cherished tradition for the past 20+ years, and this issue reflects the creative and collaborative spirit that I cherish about the humanities. This year has been extraordinary, and, in the pages that follow, we share with you poetry by Iowa's 2022 Poet Student Ambassador, Iowa's Honorary Poet Laureate, and a farmer from Southwest Iowa. We share a songwriting program for youth; a multi-generational storytelling project; a partnership between the Des Moines Public Library and the Latinx Immigrants of Iowa to celebrate Día de los Muertos; and a program that provides dinner, books, and an interactive story-time for young readers and their families.

And the richness of this year continues! Through your efforts, Humanities Iowa has been able to support programming that spans the state—from the Harlan Community Library to the Heartland Museum in Clarion—from the Pottawattamie Conservation in Honey Creek to River Action in Davenport—in addition to 77 Speakers Bureau events that over 2,500 folks attended across Iowa.


As you will notice, this issue comes to you in a different form this year—electronically rather than by mail. I admit that I am particularly fond of holding the paper copy in my hand, and my printed copy of last year's *Voices from the Prairie* is displayed in my home: I see Tashina Azure's cover image of the cattail-mat covered wikiup and think of Mary Young Bear's accompanying article that describes how she and her fellow weavers brought the tradition of cattail and bulrush weaving back "home" to the Meskwaki Settlement.

But this year, we as the Board of Directors made the decision that our current budget no longer could support the \$10,000 it costs to print and mail the printed issue. Over the past three years, HI has supported and helped create robust programming and new partnerships, often helping launch projects that are just getting started. We do not have funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities as we had previously, and our funds are now, frankly, running low. We are, nonetheless, proud and energized by the work that we, like the NEH, believe is so important in engaging a broad community, elevating a diversity of voices, and exploring the complexities of our world. As we celebrate this annual publication, we also look to the future and our continued commitment to expanding our reach and impact, especially among Iowa's youth.

In our current financial situation, we—as a Board—have recently made decisions to maximize the range of programming and have made the hard decision to put our major grants program on hiatus. To offer as large a range of programming as possible, we will continue to offer mini-grants and our Speakers Bureau events. Our commitment to promoting and preserving the humanities in Iowa remains unwavering.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt appreciation for all you have done to make these programs possible—as members, contributors, program attendees, and supporters. Your time, expertise, and resources make these programs and this publication of *Voices from the Prairie* possible. Your continued support is instrumental in propelling us forward, allowing us to pursue our shared mission for the humanities in Iowa.

Warm regards,



Linda Shenk

Board President, Humanities Iowa

2022-2023 Board Involvement

We are also proud to have an active board who takes pride in their community involvement, both through Humanities Iowa and their own work. The list of activities and projects below is but a sample of the work undertaken by our board members.

Deb Marquart

- Events with Iowa Public Radio
- Events with Belin Blank Center, University of Iowa
- Events related to the selection and inauguration of Iowa State Poetry Ambassador (ISPA)
- Events related to Poetry Out Loud
- Events related to Art on the Prairie (a fall poetry conference in Perry, IA)
- Events related to Poetry Palooza (a spring poetry conference in Des Moines)

Treylla Lee

- Siouxland Community Health Center
- Youth for Christ
- Goodwill Industries
- Boys and Girls Club of Siouxland
- First Tee Siouxland
- Delta Epsilon Omega Graduate Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc
- Telco Community Credit Union Board Member
- Siouxland Chamber of Commerce Ambassador

David Eckert

- Waterloo chapter of the Kiwanis, VP/President elect.
- Volunteering at the Van G. Miller Adult Learning Center as a conversation partner for the students.
- Vice-chair for the Iowa Library Association's Library Leadership and Administration Management Association (LLAMA).
- Member of IUPLA (Iowa Urban Public Library Association).
- Meets on a quarterly basis with all of the library directors from Black Hawk County.
- Belongs to the Cedar Valley Stamp Club.

Tina Bakehouse

- East Mills Jr/Sr High School, supporting the junior high music department and 8th and 9th grade DC trip in 2024.

Karen Mitchell

- Elder at Cedar Heights Community Presbyterian Church where I also sing in the choir
- Traveling Tales reader for two preschools, through Waterloo Public Library
- Director for "The Book Club Play" at Cedar Falls Community Playhouse.
- Participant in "A Timeless Journey," a program for seniors experiencing dementia, based on the Time Slips model developed by Cathy Hastings.
- Curriculum Development and creation of "Prime Time, Too," a reading program for children and parents, at Waterloo Public Library.

Elizabeth Hoover de Galvez

- Neighborhood ambassador for the City of North Liberty
- Co-Chair of the Communications Committee with the Iowa Library Association (ILA)
- Union Steward and Trustee with the International Association of Machinists (IAM) local lodge 254
- Volunteer at Latino Fest Iowa City

Linda Shenk

- Collaborative storytelling and project leadership on a new NOAA Central Midwest Climate Adaptation Partnerships team that brings together tribal communities, women landowners, and researchers across Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri to collaborate for climate resilience.
- Member, Board of Curricular Advisors, The Greenhouse Venture (a center for sustainability programming for under-served youth)
- External Advisory Board member, A Pan-African and Transdisciplinary Lens in the Margins: Tackling the Risks of Extreme Events (PALM-TREES)—a project located in and directed by African researchers in partnership with vulnerable populations to support climate resilience

“Hoarfrost”

by Nancy Hayes

White glow
through hairy
frost lines
on panes,
like spikes
of prairie grass
beyond the window.
Cloud shimmer
settles on
cold prairie.
Radiance startles.

We dress fast,
throw on coats,
boots, march
north through
jagged
ice field—
a trillion
shining



IMAGE: Hoarfrost on the prairie, 1. (Photo credit Nancy Hayes)

fur-lined stems,
a billion
crystal shards
eyelash-thin,
a million white
miniature thorns
on each blade.

Our path rounds east—
sudden sun
breaks through,
studs stems
with endless
diamonds
five breathless
minutes

before Brightness
melts
the dazzle.

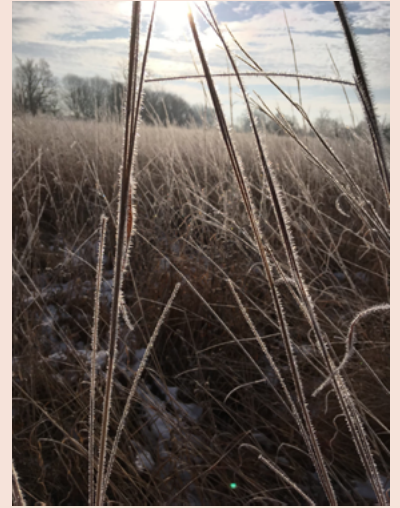


IMAGE: Hoarfrost on the prairie, 2. (Photo credit Nancy Hayes)

“For the Beauty”

by Nancy Hayes

*of the prairie, of the ox-eye’s yellow
rays trained on the haze-rimmed rising sun;
of the sparse pink sprays of showy tick
whose leaves Japanese beetles nibbled
down to lace beneath a blush-rose glimmer;*

*of the prairie blazing star’s pink-purple
fuzzy column, flaming cattail, sparkler
in mid-sizzle, drama queen on spiky stalk;
of the yellow coneflower’s evolution
from gray seed-head circled by pale points to
dark brown cone with drooping golden petals
ruffled languidly by summer breeze;*

*of the Culver’s root’s small candelabras
lighting rabbits’ leafy banquet tables;
of the white wild indigo’s tall spires,
full round blooms that broadcast brightness
over late June evening’s dusky green;
of big bluestem’s bolt in hot July
past ox-eye, showy tick, past blazing
star and yellow coneflower, Culver’s root,
to bob above proud white wild indigo,
tickling wings of darting swifts,
stirring souls to sing this song.
This our hymn of grateful praise.*

Prime Time Reading

Lori Petersen, Waterloo Public Library

IN THE HEART OF WATERLOO, Iowa, a free program is making a profound impact on youth and families. The Prime Time Reading program helps foster youth literacy and community engagement through a unique blend of dinners, reading sessions and discussions, and the opportunity for children to take home a free book.

Prime Time's journey began in Waterloo in the summer of 2021.

Lori Petersen, Youth & Teen Services Manager at the Waterloo Public Library, remembers when Humanities Iowa reached out to the library with the idea. "It had been something that we have been trying to get in this community for a really long time, but I just hadn't connected with the people that were able to make the curriculum portion happen," Petersen said.

The collaboration with Humanities Iowa was a crucial turning point, allowing the library to develop a curriculum tailored to its specific community — and to the varying ages of its young patrons.

"Between the people at Humanities Iowa and our library there was a lot to take in with Prime Time, how they (Humanities Iowa) wanted it put together, and just figuring out everybody's roles," Petersen said. "It was a collaborative effort there, and they really provided everything we needed to get this started." Even as the Prime Time program comes with many existing options for curricula, Petersen appreciates how Humanities Iowa Board Members Gretta Berghammer and Karen Mitchell were "so gracious in writing our own curriculum, more tailored to our library."



IMAGE: Prime Time Reading Family participate in an activity.

A typical Prime Time session begins with families gathering for a community dinner, which Petersen deems invaluable to the program's success. Sitting down to dinner gives families extra time to spend together. Petersen said, "Many parents are just so busy that they can't do it."

After dinner, the children are divided into age-specific groups. The younger ones, aged three to five, embark on a tailored story time suited for their comprehension level, while the older ones delve into readings, activities, and discussions.

These discussions encourage early youth participation in the humanities because they urge the youth involved to "put the ideas that they learned to use," according to Petersen.

"It really does speak to the humanities, the deep questions that they're asking and the activities they provide," Petersen said.

The magic of Prime Time lies in group discussions and shared exploration, according to Petersen. After the small group sessions, everyone comes back together and discusses what they came up with in the small groups. As they leave, children get to take home the book that was discussed. Book ownership is important for fostering a love for reading and the humanities, especially for a community like Waterloo where many children do not have the opportunity to own books.

Prime Time's appeal extends to various age groups, with the program's curriculum carefully tailored to accommodate different developmental stages. However, Petersen acknowledges that space issues and current renovations at the library have caused them to limit their offerings at this time. Petersen said that they "really tried to focus on first through third grade for this year, just to try to get them reading because you really want them reading well

by the time they're in third grade."

The community response to Prime Time at the Waterloo Public Library has been overwhelmingly positive. Program sessions average around 25 participants, according to Petersen, a number they would like to see double in future years as the library's capacity increases. She said parents have mentioned that "it's a quality program, and they enjoy getting together and some of the activities that we've done."



IMAGE: Participant poses with his creation.

The activities encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the youth involved. At one session, youth were asked to brainstorm ideas for a homework machine and the processes needed to create one, encouraging creative and strategic thinking from a young age.

"They really love it. Just having the free programming out there, where children can come in and experience the social setting...it's someplace where they're welcome, and you don't have to worry about funding," Petersen said.

"Without Humanities Iowa, we just wouldn't have been able to do this. With COVID and everything like that, reading scores have fallen, and it was a tough time for kids. So if we can help mitigate that a little bit, I'll be thrilled. If you want to be a successful member of this society, I really think reading is important. So I hope we're able to continue to foster that."

The Prime Time Reading program, under the dedicated leadership of Petersen, is an example of how a shared commitment to education and literature can change lives and communities. Petersen sees how the Prime Time program is part of achieving her goals for these young people and their families — goals of youth literacy and family engagement that help make the city of Waterloo a "city of readers."



IMAGE: Families and Participants enjoy a story time.

Iowa Student Poet Ambassador

Johnnie Each and Lola Nakashima-Brooke

FOR JOHNNIE EACH, POETRY IS A form of connection. Over this past year, Each's experience as Iowa Student Poet Ambassador has profoundly reinforced this idea.

"I remember reading at a poetry event in Iowa City, and some of these older gentlemen came up to me to say, 'I've had that exact same experience, and you put it so beautifully,'" Each said. "I'm an 18-year-old girl, and you wouldn't think that I would have that much in common with a 60-year-old man. But because I write about my roots and where I come from, it just really breaks down generational hurdles, which is really neat to see."

According to Each, her work often centers on "ordinary" things, such as growing up in a small town and shucking corn with her aunts. These "ordinary" experiences have allowed her to connect with more people than she ever expected. What she finds powerful about the people of Iowa is a contentment and appreciation of those ordinary things. "I think a lot of Iowans are just really content people. They don't want to go change the world, they're content with just changing their family and being a good influence on their kids and their community," Each said. "And they're like, 'Why would I need to go anywhere else? I have everything I need right here.' And I think my work speaks to that."

Each, the outgoing Iowa Student Poet Ambassador, was inaugurated at the Iowa State Capitol in April 2022, the second person to hold the title after the program began in 2021. Candidates are chosen from a select group of students who participated in either the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, Iowa Poetry Association, or Iowa City Poetry. Those nominated face a rigorous two-round selection process,

including a blind reading and evaluation by a committee comprising members of partner organizations.

In 2022, the top three Iowa winners of the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards qualified for evaluation by the selection committee. Each was chosen after submitting her work to the Iowa Poetry Association and the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, where she won multiple gold medals at the national level.

The Iowa Student Poet Ambassador is the highest award given to a young writer in the state, according to the University of Iowa Office of Community Engagement. The program recognizes and celebrates talented student poets who will support the voices of young people in Iowa and raise awareness of the literary arts for youth.



IMAGE: Johnnie Each

And Each is doing precisely that, introducing youth across the state to a type of poetry often new to this generation. "A lot of the poetry that kids

are exposed to is like Shakespeare, like some older forms of poetry with super severe structure and meter. And I think the new generation of poets is kind of falling away from that," Each said. "You can write a poem like you would text something, and you can make it unique and use language that people use every day in their life. And I think it's really important for young people to understand that poetry is not a dead person's activity. It can really inspire social change."

While Each was especially "honored to get to talk to young people," she used her platform as Iowa Student Poet Ambassador to reach a wide swath of Iowans — from events with the Iowa Poetry Association to the Iowa City Book Festival.

In her travels around the state, Each exuded a generosity of enthusiasm — an enthusiasm that remains palpable in the way she talks about the power of poetry.

"I think it's art, and poetry especially that creates connections between different people in such a beautiful way that an argument or debate could never do," Each said. "Even in my creative writing classes now, when we share poetry, I could completely disagree with what your poem is saying, but wow, I love the way you wrote it. And that makes me really appreciate you as a person and as a poet. I just am such an advocate for poetry as a way to break down barriers and connect with people who have different experiences and beliefs."

The Iowa Student Poet Ambassador program opened a new world of possibilities for Each. As a young writer from a small town, she thought "there aren't a lot of writers in Iowa" until her

year spent as an ambassador of literary arts. She explains that there are “so many people here that love poetry, too. There are people here that I’ll have connections with the rest of my life, being able to meet other writers in the community,” Each said.

“It’s been an incredible experience,” Each said. “I think being able to share my poetry with so many people has really shown me that I have something to say — that my work impacts people.”

Each, now a first-year student at the University of Iowa, credits the Iowa Student Poet Ambassador program with motivating her to double major in creative writing and journalism. Though she has a lifetime of possibilities ahead of her, Each knows that “whatever I do, I’m going to bring poetry with me.”

“I just remember a few times over Zoom, speaking at some different events, and people crying after I read a poem about my mom or my grandma, and that is truly the biggest compliment I’ve ever received, just to see people cry over my poetry. That and laughter, it fills my bucket so much,” Each said. “Seeing how ordinary people can appreciate poetry, it makes me really want to incorporate it in some more

aspects of my life.”

Now as Each has finished her time in this leadership role, a new Iowa Student Poet Ambassador stands ready to take up the mantle. Lola Nakashima-Brooke, a junior from Davenport, was selected as the 2023-24 ambassador this spring.



IMAGE: Nakashima-Brook reading at an event.

“After I learned I was being considered for the ISPA position, I worked hard because I really wanted an opportunity to spread poetry and just do the best I could. I hope to get poetry more into schools, particularly elementary and junior high,” Nakashima-Brooke said. “As the third ambassador, I wanted to continue to strengthen the previous engagements they (former ambassadors Johnnie Each and Shreya Khullar) had done in Iowa, to help create tradition with the position.”

Each’s advice for her successor is “just to keep consuming poetry.”

“What you read is going to influence your work so much. So just be a constant learner and constantly reading other people’s work, and also just saying ‘yes’ to events,” Each said. “It’s senior year, it can get busy, but the experience is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It was one of my favorite parts about my senior year, and I’m so thankful for every event that I was able to do.”

“With My Soul”

by Johnnie Each

With my Soul

We took Grandma away from
the cicada skins of their farmhouse—

but she too was already just insect shell.
Memory rubbed away,
spilt over cellar stairs
in cacophony and discord.

Gone,
it's all gone.

I wonder often how
Jesus could let
his devoted servant forget even Him.
But there is one thing that still clings
to her with all the fervor of heaven.

Furling over at piano bench,
thumping socked heel onto bronzed pedal
she is a worshiper again.
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
How Great Thou Art
I Surrender All
spring forth
from her knobby fingers on ivory keys.

No hymn book propped open, only a miraculous habit,
a realizing found in the depths below knowing,
from wells of eighty years standing in same wooden pew.
Neurons concave,
fall
left and
right;
Alzheimer's spurns and spoils,

ruins and raves
but the music is safe.
The black notes,
the black lyrics,
they are yet curled to her breast.

She doesn't know me,
but she knows it is well with her soul

far into obscurity.

An Honorary Poet Laureate for Iowa:

Lucille Morgan Wilson (1925-2021)

HUMANITIES IOWA WISHES TO name Lucille Morgan Wilson (1925-2021) as an Honorary Poet Laureate. A fitting candidate for this first-of-its-kind recognition, Lucille was a distinguished figure in Iowa's — and the world's — cultural landscape through her poetry and humanitarian commitment.



IMAGE: Lucille Morgan Wilson, 1925-2021

Lucille's impact on the poetic realm is exemplified through her poetry and leadership in Iowa's poetic community. For nearly three decades, she was a central figure in the Iowa Poetry Association (IPA; <https://iowapoetry.com/index.htm>), serving not only in leadership roles but also as the editor of IPA's Lyrical Iowa, the organization's annual collection of work by Iowa poets. As a prominent poet herself, Lucille artfully crafted heartfelt verses, and her poignant poem "In Any Language" gained particular prominence in Iowa history. An excerpt from this piece (provided below) is recited annually at the international World Food Prize Laureate Award Ceremony, emphasizing the universal language of compassion and hunger awareness. This event also underscores her commitment to raising

community consciousness about local and global hunger, a cause she championed passionately.

Beyond the realm of poetry, Lucille's dedication to addressing hunger issues in the Des Moines area and beyond was truly remarkable. She played a pivotal role in organizing the Des Moines Area Hunger Hike, an annual event that has rallied thousands of people in the fight against hunger for the past 22 years.

Lucille Morgan Wilson's life and work are a testament to her unwavering commitment to both her poetic craft and humanitarian endeavors. Her poetry touched the hearts of many, and her tireless efforts in the battle against hunger have made a tangible, lasting impact on her community. Posthumously designating her as Honorary Poet Laureate is a fitting tribute to her legacy and her remarkable contributions to Iowa's cultural and humanitarian landscape.

AN EXCERPT FROM MORGAN'S POEM, "IN ANY LANGUAGE" READ EACH YEAR AT THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE LAUREATE AWARD CEREMONY:

In any language hunger is an ugly word

There is no music in hunger

The rumble of empty stomachs

The monotonous whine of a child waste with disease

The moan of the mother whose baby lies bloated and still in her arms

Hunger is the listless den of apathy

Bred of weakness

The faded brown and grey of dead leaves after autumn has ebbed.

- LUCILLE MORGAN WILSON, 1925-2021

Timeless Journeys Uses Storytelling for Cross-Generational Connection

Gretta Berghammer

AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM THAT brings together seniors and university students is set to launch in spring 2024. This project, called Timeless Journeys, has been created through the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). It aims to create a bridge between generations and promote a form of visual literacy based on storytelling that employs visual objects as a way to enrich lives and preserve stories old and new.

Gretta Berghammer, the project's founder and former UNI theater professor, explains that Timeless Journeys grew out of a simple "what if" conversation between her and Humanities Iowa leadership. Whereas writing, reading, and speaking are traditionally what people think of when discussing literacy, Berghammer said this project "seeks to link the development of speaking and listening skills with visual literacy through oral storytelling.

"You and I could look at the same image and be drawn to two very different things," Berghammer said. "Timeless Journeys is a storytelling-based program that uses visual images to engage seniors in a storytelling process that may or may not be based on real-life experiences and events."

Though similar programs have been piloted in other communities, what sets Timeless Journeys apart is the blend of storytelling and artistic expression to improve visual literacy in learners of all

ages. The project's foundation lies in the use of historical photos, some from the Fortepan Iowa collection, which was funded in part by Humanities Iowa.

"It's the historical elements of those photos that we think are going to be really exciting for generating stories among our focus population," Berghammer said.

Through these visual images, participants will craft stories based on a variety of local themes.

"An image is presented, something is shared, but the information about the image is coming from the viewer, not the expert who chose the image," Berghammer explains.

The heart of Timeless Journeys lies in the interactions between seniors from the Western Home Communities and UNI students with majors ranging from theater to social work. For half a semester, the students will explore oral storytelling techniques, especially those tailored to working with seniors with dementia and other cognitive delays. The cross-generational conversations that follow are expected to enrich the story development process for all. Toward the end of the semester, theater students will create a performance piece showcasing the stories developed during the project. This piece will be shared with invited audiences and, potentially, tour communities throughout Iowa.

"It is about connections, friendships, and shared stories," Berghammer said.

"We believe that this program will help university students discover a different way in which the power of theater and storytelling makes connections to other humans. Story is at the foundation of everything that is shared through the collective humanities — art, music, literature, theatre. In order to be intelligent consumers of the world around us, we have to be able to discern the images that are being shared with us. And (we must) use those images to the degree possible, to help make sure that we don't lose our ability to be empathetic and compassionate."

With a solid foundation in place, Timeless Journeys is poised to connect generations, foster visual literacy, and enhance the human experience through storytelling. It is designed for sustainability beyond the initial launch and aims to make its training materials and experiences available as a template for other communities to adapt.

Berghammer's dream is that the project gets "replicated in other places and that it's sustained beyond just this one-time deal, and that we learned enough from it to be able to expand to other communities and to work with seniors in other places in the state of Iowa."

Nurturing Youth through Humanities Programming

Ken Morris, Zay Davis

YOUTH PROGRAMMING CAN be the perfect introduction to the humanities for young people. In Iowa, these programs range from art projects to community service initiatives, providing a comprehensive platform for the younger generation to explore, learn, and grow in humanities-related fields. Spearheaded by passionate leaders in Ankeny and the Quad Cities, here are two such initiatives that not only foster creativity but also instill a sense of community and cultural understanding among the next generation.

Ankeny Community Network Bridges History and Inclusion

When Ken Morris moved to Ankeny to take on the role of Chief Diversity Officer for the Ankeny Community School District, he began reaching out to local Black-owned businesses and Black community members “trying to find my tribe.”

After speaking with community members, Morris organized a community potluck at Des Moines Area Community College, where the attendance and camaraderie blew him away.

“It really warmed my heart, because I felt like, okay, not only is this meaningful and purposeful for the adults, but I see that it’s meaningful to the children in attendance,” Morris said. “And from there, the group just kind of organically grew into what it is now, into the community network.”

Reflecting on its origins, Morris shares, “The culminating event was the series of protests and gatherings around the country centered around George Floyd. We did a peace and unity rally for Black lives that got almost 1,000 people from the community to participate.”

After the rally, the group began receiving donations from community members. With the initial donations totaling around \$5,000, the group decided to use the funds to establish Ankeny Community Network

as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

“We got a community member who was also a lawyer to help us with articles of incorporation and put a board together and develop the mission,” Morris said. “And so that’s sort of our humble beginnings to how we came together, out of recognizing that there were not only needs, but there was opportunity to center, diversity, equity and inclusion.”

Morris’ commitment to fostering inclusivity extends to involving youth in the organization’s planning. A focus group initiated by Morris opened a dialogue with students, leading to their active participation in organizing the first annual Juneteenth celebration.



IMAGE: Youth at Ankeny’s Juneteenth Celebration

“I said, ‘Whoever’s interested, write your name down, and then write your parent’s name and their contact information. We’ll call your parents and get permission and answer questions.’ And it just so happened that when we contacted the parents, the parents wanted to be a part of it too,” Morris said. “We started seeing students and their parents come to our planning meetings. And then the parents had all of

these really rich connections or resources.”

The children’s area and basketball tournament at the Juneteenth celebration were both student-created initiatives, and students helped staff the areas during the celebration.

The Juneteenth Celebration serves as an educational cornerstone, enlightening the community about the historical significance of Juneteenth while celebrating diversity and inclusion. Morris articulates the broader impact, saying, “It helps to tear down walls because people have, now going into the third year of this event, recognized that this kind of event is supported and endorsed by the larger community (and) it brought in revenue to the community.”

Bringing youth into active roles in the organization has had a “domino effect in a positive way,” Morris emphasizes, and he hopes these youth will continue leading Ankeny Community Network forward into the future.

“It definitely has been a value add to our organization, because our young people have a lived experience, and they have brilliance that we don’t always tap into,” Morris said.

Zay Davis’s Free Songwriting Workshop Hits the Right Note

In the Quad Cities area, Zay Davis orchestrated a transformative experience for aspiring young musicians.

Drawing inspiration from his own childhood memories, Davis reminisces, “I remember when I was in elementary school, my dad would bring his piano to the gym and the lunchroom and he would play and do a little show for all the kids there. And so that really inspired me because I just thought it was so cool to see my dad doing that.”

Davis’s commitment to making music

education accessible to all youth led him to organize a free songwriting workshop, breaking down financial barriers that often hinder access to such programs.

“The majority of songwriters’ workshops cost around \$400, not including plane tickets, and I know a lot of kids would love to have access to the type of information that a lot of the major songwriters have, but they just don’t have the access to it because they can’t afford it,” Davis said.

The first songwriting workshop was held Sept. 22, and Davis imparted advice that will carry youth through their music careers and lives.

“What is ultimately important to me is teaching the kids how to do it, and then also simultaneously teaching them not to compete, because I think competing can

put a damper on your music ability and creativity,” Davis said. “I want to teach them and inspire them to focus on being the best they can be themselves, being the best they can be when entering into the music industry and not worrying about competing with people.”

He envisions this being an annual event that progresses from songwriting to music production and culminates in the fusion of both.

Davis’s approach extends beyond technical skills, emphasizing personal growth and creativity. “Ultimately, it’s about these kids finding inspiration within themselves to just be the best they can be once again, you know, just do the best that you can,” he said.

It’s important for adults to pass along the

advice and wisdom they can, according to Davis, especially in humanities-related fields like music.

“It’s very, very important to want to be able to pass down your knowledge, because, I mean, you can’t really take it with you,” Davis said. “It’s important to pass it down and, and to let these kids know that this is what I’ve learned, this is what other people who are in this business have learned, and we want to share that information with you so that you can do what you want with it, and hopefully become very successful in it.”

In a state like Iowa, where diversity is growing, these youth-focused humanities programs are not just about education — they’re about shaping the future of Iowa’s youth through the power of music, history, and unity.

Celebrating Día de Muertos: A Cross-Cultural Community Partnership in Des Moines

Elizabeth Hoover de Gálvez

Spanish translation provided on page 16



IMAGE: Volunteers gathered in front of the ofrenda at the Central Library in Des Moines. (Photo credit Katie Risvold)

I WILL NEVER FORGET THE FIRST time I tried to put together a book display at my library for Día de Muertos, or the Day of the Dead, more than five years ago.

I'd decorated the display with flowers, food, papel picado — delicate tissue paper cut outs — and sugar skulls. I thought it looked beautiful. My husband, an immigrant from México, pointed out that I'd forgotten the most important element: a photograph of a lost loved one. I'd completely missed the point of the tradition, which is not to build a beautiful display, but instead to honor and remember the people you love who have passed away.

In 2019 in a new job at the Des Moines Public Library, I tried again to put together a display for Día de Muertos, this time centering on the memory of lost loved ones. The display featured a flower-making station, where anyone could inscribe the name of someone they'd lost on a paper marigold. The display resonated with people, and hundreds of flowers were created by the public. But there was something important missing; I could not continue to do this work without a partner who had an understanding of the traditions. Without a partner, I could easily get the details wrong, as I had with my first display.

In 2021, José Alvarado, the director of the nonprofit Latinx Immigrants of Iowa, reached out to me with the idea of building a Día de Muertos ofrenda, or altar in memory of lost loved ones, to honor the thousands of Iowans who had died during the COVID-19 pandemic. He told me that he had always wanted to do something to promote his culture and traditions with the community. We joined forces, and, for the past three years, the Des Moines Public Library and Latinx Immigrants of Iowa have worked together to commemorate Día de Muertos.



IMAGE: Photos are placed on the ofrenda in memory of lost loved ones, alongside foods and drinks that they liked. (Photo credit Elizabeth Hoover de Gálvez)

Central to the partnership is the building of a grand community *ofrenda*, a place where mementos, photographs, and offerings for lost loved ones are displayed to invite the loved one back in spirit. Latinx Immigrants and the Library host weekly crafting sessions throughout October, and dozens of volunteers from México, Honduras, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and the United States have contributed their time and talent to build decorations for the *ofrenda*, which is on display in the Library from late October until early November



IMAGE: Volunteers create paper flowers for the ofrenda at an October crafting session at the Library. (Elizabeth Hoover de Gálvez)

each year.

In addition to building the *ofrenda*, Latinx Immigrants of Iowa and the Library have hosted a public celebration on November 2 for Día de Muertos each year. We offer pan de muerto, a traditional sweet bread eaten on the holiday, face painting, a Catrina contest, and an opportunity for

IMAGE: Sabina Hurtado, a volunteer with Latinx Immigrants of Iowa, serves pan de muerto at the Día de Muertos celebration. (Photo credit: María del Carmen Jaime Cruz)



everyone to see the completed *ofrenda*.

For the last two years, I've worked closely with María del Carmen Jaime Cruz who has been coordinating the project on behalf of Latinx Immigrants of Iowa. Jaime Cruz, a Mexican immigrant residing in Des Moines, has worked tirelessly to bring the community together



IMAGE: One contest participant signed up for his first Library card. (Photo Credit: Arlette Uribe-Gonzalez)

each October to help build the *ofrenda*. I asked Jaime Cruz what motivated her to do this work. She responded that she wanted the *ofrenda* to serve as “a reminder for all Mexicans that are living here in a foreign country.” She wanted it to be “an experience to remember their childhood and their adolescence in México...to remember that our culture is very rich, and we have many traditions in México that are very beautiful.” Jaime Cruz has brought her sons to help, and she explained that she is also doing this for them, and for other children of immigrants who were born in the United States, “this will remind them of our roots and above all, although we are far from our country, we carry [the loved ones who we have lost] in our hearts.”

Her answer helped me to remember who the holiday belongs to; although Día de

Muertos has taken on great meaning for me and transformed my life and my worldview, my primary role in this partnership is to be an ally for the Latinx community as they express their culture in a public space — not to tell their story for them.

When I asked Jaime Cruz what Día de Muertos means to her, she said that “I have relatives that I’ve lost; so it is really beautiful to put their memories on their *ofrenda*. It’s a Mexican tradition. The purpose is to remember our relatives that have died, that are unfortunately no longer with us, but they live in our hearts. This *ofrenda* is basically for thinking about them and for them.”

I went on to ask her if the tradition was helpful in processing grief, and she responded that, “This day sometimes helps to close the cycle of grief. It’s really hard to lose a relative and you can’t go to the funeral because it’s in another country. In my case, I lost three people,” Jaime Cruz said. “This tradition helps you to heal because at that moment when you put the foods [your loved ones] liked on the *ofrenda*, we have the belief that they come to eat or they come to drink their pulque or tequila that they liked. So it’s a little period of solace...for that reason, this day is very important for me. They may not be with us physically, but we will always carry them with us in our hearts.”

I asked José Alvarado the same questions; he shared that, “Día de los Muertos is an important event in several Latin American countries to remember those who have died, to try to keep them alive; we do that all year, but this day we yearn more to keep them alive and to keep them as part of our families. That is what Día de los Muertos is for us. So we want the community who don’t know about this tradition to come to learn and to know the meaning of the flowers, and the altar, and that this tradition is about love. The only intention is to keep all of our relatives who we have lost, alive.”

He also emphasized inclusivity, inviting those who aren’t Latinx to participate and learn about Latin American culture.

“We are learning about the cultures of the people around us here in Iowa,” Alvarado said. “So we want to do the same — to share Día de los Muertos with people in Iowa so that they feel comfortable practicing this tradition, to feel comfortable knowing that it’s something that isn’t only for Latinx people.”

The openness of Latinx Immigrants of Iowa in sharing their culture is a gift to the people of Iowa, particularly in the face of the racism and xenophobia that some residents and leaders in the state espouse. Jaime Cruz wants people to know that México is more than the stereotypes often portrayed in the media.

“In México, it’s not only drugs, as they say on the news,” Jaime Cruz said. “We have a very rich culture; we have cities that are declared by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites; one of those is in my city of Zacatecas. It’s good to have this type of program for American citizens and Anglos, so they see that México is rich in culture, education, and tourism.”

This year, the November 2 event drew more than 400 attendees. Additional organizations collaborated with us for the event; Zuli Garcia with Knock and Drop Iowa brought and served tamales and *champurrado*, a thick hot chocolate drink; her organization also brought Mi Salud Iowa and Primary Health Care, to provide health screenings and free vaccines. Dawn Martinez Oropeza with Al Éxito provided face painting and crafts. Area businesses including Tortillería Luna, Rio Verde, Pastelería Raquel, and Lupe’s Flowers donated *pan de muerto*, bouquets of *cempasúchil*, marigold flowers, and fresh fruit to place on the *ofrenda*.

Hoover de Gálvez is a Humanities Iowa Board Member and a librarian at the Des

Celebrando el Día de Muertos: Una Alianza Comunitaria Intercultural en Des Moines

Elizabeth Hoover de Gálvez



IMAGE: Voluntarios reunidos frente a la ofrenda en la Biblioteca Central en Des Moines. (Crédito de la foto Katie Risvold)

NUNCA OLVIDARÉ LA PRIMERA vez que intenté montar una exposición en mi biblioteca para el Día de Muertos, hace más de cinco años.

Había decorado la exposición con flores, comida, papel picado y calaveras de azúcar. Me pareció hermoso. Mi esposo, un inmigrante de México, me señaló que había olvidado el elemento más importante: una fotografía de un ser querido fallecido. Se me había pasado por alto completamente el punto fundamental de la tradición, que no es construir una hermosa exhibición, sino honrar y recordar a las personas que amas y que han fallecido.

En 2019, en un nuevo trabajo en la Biblioteca Pública de Des Moines, intenté nuevamente montar una exposición para el Día de Muertos, esta vez centrada en el recuerdo de seres queridos que ya perecieron. La exposición incluyó una estación para hacer flores de cempasúchil de papel, donde cualquier persona podía escribir el nombre de un ser querido que pereció. La exposición resonó entre las personas, y cientos de flores de cempasúchil de papel fueron creadas por el público. Pero faltaba algo importante; no podía continuar con este trabajo sin una alianza con socios que tuvieran un conocimiento de las tradiciones. Sin esa alianza, fácilmente podría equivocarme en

los detalles, como me pasó con mi primera exposición.

En 2021, José Alvarado, director de la organización sin fines de lucro Inmigrantes Latinxs de Iowa, me contactó con la idea de elaborar una ofrenda de Día de Muertos, o un altar en memoria de seres queridos que han perecido, para honrar a los miles de habitantes de Iowa que habían muerto durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Me dijo que siempre había querido hacer algo para promover su cultura y tradiciones con la comunidad. Unimos esfuerzos y, durante los últimos tres años, la Biblioteca Pública de Des Moines e Inmigrantes Latinx de Iowa han establecido una alianza para trabajar juntos y conmemorar el Día de Muertos.

Parte central de la alianza es la elaboración de una gran ofrenda comunitaria, un lugar donde se exhiben recuerdos, fotografías y ofrendas para los seres queridos que han perecido, para invitar al ser querido de vuelta en espíritu. Inmigrantes Latinx y la Biblioteca organizan sesiones de manualidades semanales con la comunidad durante octubre, y docenas de voluntarios de México, Honduras, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Guatemala y Estados Unidos han contribuido con su tiempo y talento para construir decoraciones para la ofrenda, que se exhibe en la Biblioteca desde finales de octubre hasta principios de noviembre cada año.



IMAGE: Colocando fotos en la ofrenda en memoria de seres queridos han perecido, junto con alimentos y bebidas que les gustaban. (Crédito de la foto Elizabeth Hoover de Gálvez)

Además de elaborar la ofrenda, Inmigrantes Latinxs de Iowa y la Biblioteca han organizado cada año una celebración pública de Día de Muertos cada 2 de noviembre. Durante el evento se ofrece pan de muerto, pintura de caras, un concurso de Catrinas y la oportunidad para que todos aprecien la ofrenda ya terminada.



IMAGE: Voluntarios creando flores de papel para la ofrenda en una sesión de manualidades en octubre en la Biblioteca. (Crédito de la foto: Elizabeth Hoover de Gálvez)

Durante los últimos dos años, he trabajado en estrecha colaboración con María del Carmen Jaime Cruz, quien ha estado

coordinando el proyecto en nombre de Inmigrantes Latinx de Iowa. Jaime Cruz, una inmigrante mexicana residente en Des Moines, ha trabajado incansablemente para reunir a la comunidad cada octubre para ayudar a construir la ofrenda.

Le pregunté a Jaime Cruz qué la motivó a

IMAGE: Sabina Hurtado, a volunteer with Latinx Immigrants of Iowa, serves pan de muerto at the Día de Muertos celebration. (Photo credit: María del Carmen Jaime Cruz)



trabajar en esta iniciativa. Ella respondió que quería que la ofrenda sirviera como “un recordatorio para todos los mexicanos que viven aquí en un país extranjero”. Quería que fuera “una experiencia para recordar su infancia y su adolescencia en México... para recordar que nuestra cultura es muy rica, y tenemos muchas tradiciones en México que son muy hermosas”. Jaime Cruz ha traído a sus hijos a ayudar, y explicó que también lo hace por ellos y por otros hijos de inmigrantes nacidos en Estados Unidos, “esto les recordará nuestras raíces y, sobre todo, aunque estemos lejos de nuestro país, llevamos [a los seres queridos que hemos perdido] en nuestros corazones”.

Su respuesta me ayudó a recordar a quién pertenece la festividad. Aunque el Día de Muertos ha adquirido un gran significado para mí y ha transformado mi vida y mi visión del mundo, mi papel principal en esta alianza es ser una aliada de la comunidad Latinx, apoyándoles en la expresión de su cultura en un espacio público, en lugar de contar su historia por

ellos.

Cuando le pregunté a Jaime Cruz qué significa para ella el Día de Muertos, dijo “tengo familiares que he perdido; así que es realmente hermoso poner sus recuerdos en la ofrenda. Es una tradición mexicana. El propósito es recordar a nuestros familiares que han muerto, que lamentablemente ya no están con nosotros, pero viven en nuestros corazones. Esta ofrenda es básicamente para pensar en ellos y para ellos”.



IMAGE: Un participante del concurso se registró para obtener su primera tarjeta de biblioteca. (Crédito de la foto: Arlette Uribe-Gonzalez)

Continué preguntándole si la tradición era útil para procesar el duelo, y ella respondió que, “este día a veces ayuda a cerrar el ciclo del duelo. Es realmente difícil perder a un familiar y no poder ir al funeral porque estás en otro país. En mi caso, perdí a tres personas”, dijo Jaime Cruz. “Esta tradición te ayuda a sanar porque en ese momento en que pones los alimentos [que les gustaban a tus seres queridos] en la ofrenda, tenemos la creencia de que vienen a comer o vienen a beber su pulque o tequila que les gustaba. Así que es un pequeño período de consuelo... por esa razón, este día es muy

importante para mí. Puede que no estén con nosotros físicamente, pero siempre los llevaremos con nosotros en nuestros corazones”.

Le hice las mismas preguntas a José Alvarado; él compartió que, “el Día de los Muertos es un evento importante en varios países Latinoamericanos para recordar a aquellos que han fallecido, para tratar de mantenerlos vivos; lo hacemos todo el año, pero este día anhelamos más mantenerlos vivos y mantenerlos como parte de nuestras familias. Eso es lo que el Día de los Muertos es para nosotros. Entonces, queremos que la comunidad que no conoce esta tradición venga a aprender y a conocer el significado de las flores, y el altar, y que esta tradición es sobre amor. La única intención es mantener vivos a todos nuestros familiares que hemos perdido”.

También enfatizó la inclusión, invitando a quienes no son Latinx a participar y aprender sobre la cultura Latinoamericana.

“Estamos aprendiendo sobre las culturas de las personas que nos rodean aquí en Iowa”, dijo Alvarado. “Así que queremos hacer lo mismo: compartir el Día de los Muertos con las personas en Iowa para que se sientan cómodas practicando esta tradición, para que se sientan cómodas sabiendo que no es algo solo para personas Latinx”.

La apertura de Inmigrantes Latinx de Iowa al compartir su cultura es un regalo para la gente de Iowa, especialmente frente al racismo y la xenofobia que algunos residentes y líderes en el Estado enfrentan. Jaime Cruz quiere que la gente sepa que México es más que los estereotipos que a menudo se retratan en los medios de comunicación.

“En México, no solo hay drogas, como dicen en las noticias”, dijo Jaime

Cruz. “Tenemos una cultura muy rica; tenemos ciudades que son declaradas por la UNESCO como Patrimonio de la Humanidad; una de ellas está en mi ciudad de Zacatecas. Es bueno tener este tipo de programa para los ciudadanos estadounidenses y anglos, para que vean que México es rico en cultura, educación y turismo”.

Este año, el evento del 2 de noviembre

atrajo a más de 400 asistentes. Colaboramos con varias organizaciones adicionales; entre ellas, Knock and Drop Iowa, con Zuli García al frente, ofreció tamales y champurrado. Knock and Drop también facilitó la participación de Mi Salud Iowa y Primary Health Care, quienes proporcionaron exámenes de salud y vacunas gratuitas. Dawn Martínez Oropeza, de Al Éxito, estuvo a cargo del maquillaje facial de calaveras y

de las manualidades. Además, negocios locales como Tortillería Luna, Rio Verde, Pastelería Raquel y Lupe's Flowers donaron pan de muerto, ramos de cempasúchil y frutas frescas para la ofrenda.

Hoover de Gálvez pertenece al consejo directivo de Humanities Iowa, además, es bibliotecaria en la Biblioteca Pública de Des Moines.

Go back

by Nancy Hayes

to when this plot of earth was tallgrass prairie,
before proud settlers broke thick sod with ploughs.
Make of this memory a reliquary

for brittle bluestem bones, a sanctuary
for seeds not sown by sweat of human brow
back when this plot of earth was tallgrass prairie,

to when west winds fueled glaciers' legendary
melt-back, silted land to moraine scoured.
Make of this memory a reliquary.

Go back some million years as emissary.
See mammoths wade through bluestem waving now
when this rich earth was home to tallgrass prairie.

Go back eleven thousand years when wary
humans hunted them, their meat devoured,
left giant bones on hearths, charred cemeteries.

Go back to when those pioneers less chary
sowed corn and oats. Come now to witness how
this plot of earth again hosts tallgrass prairie.
Make of this miracle a reliquary.

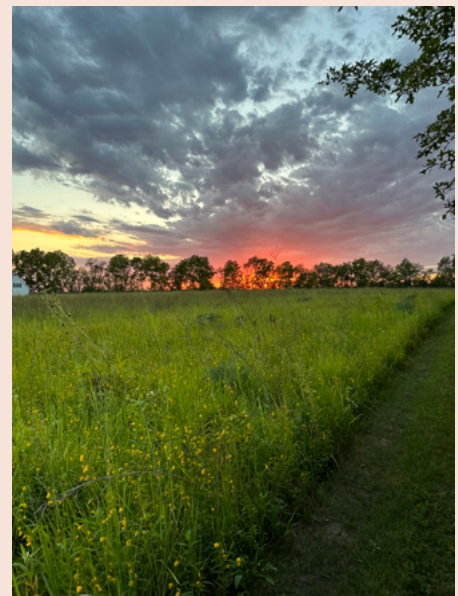


IMAGE: Prairie at sunset. (Photo credit Nancy Hayes)

New Board Members



Protecting audiences from boring speakers and speeches, Tina Bakehouse has started her own company, Tina B LLC, to provide speaking and communication consulting and storytelling coaching to help heart-centered leaders and organizations internationally and nationally communicate more effectively. With more than 20 years of teaching communication and theatre (10 years at Creighton University), a former Disney Cast Member and TEDx speaker and coach, Tina is passionate about educating others to become more self-aware and enhance their speaker style. After earning two BAs from the University of Northern Iowa, one in communication studies and psychology, and the second in theatre and English teaching, she completed a master's degree in communication studies from the University of Nebraska-Omaha along with certificates in Advanced Professional Writing, Keirsey's Temperament theory, Holistic Coaching, and two levels of improvisation training.

Her past positions have included Malvern Bank's Chief Creative Officer, assisting with community development and coordinating financial literacy and educational opportunities for Mills County and Golden Hills RC & D as Outreach & Communication Coordinator, promoting the arts and local foods in southwest Iowa.

Tina has performed and coordinated multiple storytelling shows in southwest Iowa, including two teen shows. She continues to use her creativity, leadership, and passion for the arts to help people communicate effectively and solve problems. Tina lives at Maple Edge Farm, a 150-year old family farm in southwest Iowa, with her husband Jon and son Anderson and her beloved dog Shyla.



For more than 35 years, Gretta Berghammer served the UNI Department of theatre as Professor of Theatre for Youth and Communities.

After heading the department in the '90s, she played a key role in its theatre and drama for youth initiative until retiring in 2022. Beyond teaching drama education, Gretta is the Artistic Director for Sturgis Youth Theatre, focusing on performance and production experiences for students aged four through 16.

Her creative focus lies in theatre education, particularly exploring drama's impact on youth with exceptionalities. In 2011, she launched the Spectacular Theatre program for kids on and off the Autism Spectrum, expanding it in 2014 to include Spectrum Pre-School Theatre. Notably, she initiated To Touch the Moon in 2019, an immersive theatre experience for youth with developmental delays, reinforcing UNI Theatre's leadership in inclusive theatre.

Gretta's influence extends globally, with frequent speaking engagements supporting drama and theatre for youth. She annually traveled to Poland from 1992-2006, aiding teachers in developing theatre curriculum for PK-12 students. As co-editor of "Theatre for Youth: Twelve Plays with Mature Themes," she has earned several awards, including the UNI Outstanding Teaching Award and the Stephen Tsai Award for Excellence in Autism Education. Gretta's commitment to the humanities also reflects in her role as a Lincoln Center Big Umbrella Fellow and as president of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education.

Grants Awarded

2022-2023

AMANA

- Iowa Valley RC&D—\$3,000

ANKENY

- Ankeny Community Network—\$10,000

CEDAR FALLS

- Earlville Ruth Suckow Memorial

Association—\$3,000

- University of Northern Iowa — \$2,525

CLARION

- Heartland Museum—\$702

COUNCIL BLUFFS

- Pottawattamie County Conservation

Board—\$3,000

DAVENPORT

- Mississippi Valley Blues Society—\$5,000

DAVENPORT

- River Action—\$3,000

- Great Sounds Promotions—\$3,000

DECORAH

- Seed Savers Exchange—\$9,500

DES MOINES

- Des Moines Public Library

Foundation—\$5,000

- Edmondson Art Foundation—\$5,000

- Iowa Poetry Association- \$10,000 (2022),
\$10,000 (2023)

- Living History Farms—\$3,000

- Drake University —\$3,000

DUBUQUE

- Clarke University—\$3,000

INDIANOLA

Simpson College—\$2,700

HARLAN

Harlan Community Library—\$958

IOWA CITY

Iowa City Foreign Relations

Council—\$5,000

- CARTHA —\$5,000

- University of Iowa — \$5,000

SIoux CITY

- Art Center Association of Sioux City

—\$2,000

TABOR

- Tabor Public Library —\$2,000

WATERLOO

- Waterloo Public Library —\$3,000

Council Conducted Partnerships

2022-2023

DUBUQUE

Clark University —\$1,021

DUBUQUE

Dubuque Arts Council —\$10,000

IOWA CITY

Iowa City Noon Rotary —\$2,500

SIoux CITY

Sioux City Arts Center —\$10,000

Statement of Activity

for the year ended October 31, 2022

REVENUES	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
Grant income	20,000	0	20,000
Gifts & membership	11,805	0	11,805
Dividends & interest	0	0	0
Fees	34,423	0	34,423
Net Assets released	0	0	0
Total Revenues	66,228	0	66,228
Functional Expenses			
Program Services	319,961	0	319,961
Management & general	51,641	0	51,641
Fundraising, newsletter	6,395	0	16,395
Total Expenses	377,997		377,997
Increase in Net Assets for the year	(478,796)		(478,796)
Net Assets—Beginning of Year	1,108,726	250,000	1,358,726
Net Assets—End of Year	629,930	250,000	879,930

Donors 2022-2023

Mrs. Donald Allgood	Lorraine Habben	Karen Mitchell
Johnathan Andelson	Dr. William Hamm	Richard Moeller
Jonathan and Tina Bakehouse	Victoria Hansen	Moore Corbett Law Firm
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Sue Berger	James P. Hayes	James Nepple
Gretta Berghammer	Jeff and Cindy Heland	Joann Neven
Sheila Borg	Elizabeth Hoover de Galvez	Nancy Nickerson
Suanna & Chett Breed	Kamyar Enshayan and Laura Jackson	Carrie Z. Norton
Brenton Foundation	Sheila Johnson	Jim O'Laughlin
Janet Brown-Lowe	Jay Kacena	Chris and Heather Plucar
Richard and Ann Burton	Barbara Kesi	Joe Reece
Richard Carlson	Dr. James & Mary Ellen Kimball	William P. Roba
Cynthia Charlton	Dianne Koch	Thomas Rockafellow
Hal Chase	Ruth Kuntz	RPC, Inc. Charitable Foundation
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Thomas Dean	Randall Lengeling	Linda Shenk
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Carol Gronstal	Kurt and Paula Meyer	Gail Zlatnik



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www.humanitiesiowa.org

“It All Depends on the Soil ” by John Bakehouse

It doesn't matter what we do or where we live, we should be able to articulate how, exactly, we depend on the soil. As a mostly traditional corn and soybean farmer in southwest Iowa, an initial series of Q&As for me might look like this:

When do you plant?

It depends on the soil.

What is your drainage like?

It depends on the soil.

What kind of yields do you get?

It depends on the soil.

These questions translate onto our balance sheet as well:

What is your land worth?

It depends on the soil.

How resilient is your land in a drought or flood?

It depends on the soil.

What kind of livelihood do you have?

It depends on the soil.

If we pull our lens back for a wider angle, we start to

Get Q&As like this:

What kind of water quality do you and your neighbors downstream have?

It depends on the soil.

What kind of air quality do you and your neighbors have?

It depends on the soil.

What kind of quality of life do you and your neighbors have?

It depends on the soil.

If we take a world view, our Q&As look like this:

How well is the world fed?

It depends on the soil.

What is the health of our population?

It depends on the soil.

What does the future of our world look like?

It depends on the soil.

I don't think it's a stretch to reprint our initial statement like this: It ALL depends on the soil. Whether you're a CEO of a Fortune 500 company living in a condo in New York or a CEO, COO, CFO, HR and labor operating a farm in southwest Iowa, both should be making decisions based on what's best for the soil. Businesses spend a lot of time making sure their balance sheet pencils out, but how much time is spent making sure their environmental balance sheet also balances?

The next time you make a decision, big or small, ask yourself if it's the best decision for your soil. If it's not, rethink your position. We all depend on it.

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