

The Citizen Diplomat

WINTER/SPRING 2020

26 E Market St.
Iowa City, IA 52245
civic@iowacivic.org
319.569.1115
http://iowacivic.org

New Driver Policy

Over many years, dedicated volunteer drivers have allowed CIVIC to keep costs down, while increasing opportunities for contact and conversations with IVLPs. Early in 2020, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) revised their policy with respect to drivers for IVLP programs. DOS will no longer reimburse expenses related to rental vehicles. As a result, CIVIC will no longer be able to use volunteer drivers for most of our IVLP programming. We will, however, recruit volunteers to accompany IVLP groups as escorts, with a professional driver driving. Fee-for-service programs, such as the Mandela Washington Fellows, will continue to utilize volunteer drivers. Additional exceptions to this new policy will be made at the discretion of the Executive Director or Board President.

WHAT'S NEW AT CIVIC?

Since December we have hosted **40** visitors from **20** countries! Turn the page to read about CIVIC news, such as Committee Chair Changes, Citizen Diplomat Award winners, IVLP's 80th Anniversary, and more!



This winter/spring we hosted visitors from:

Afghanistan, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei, Burma, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, and Uganda.

Thank you to all of the CIVIC volunteers who helped with these programs.

"I have hosted several dinners for delegations– which has been absolutely delightful. I enjoy the CIVIC community, other volunteers, and have only had exceptional experiences working with CIVIC. CIVIC is hands down my favorite volunteer 'gig' in Iowa City."

–Alisa Meggitt, Member

Letter from the President

2020 has been a year unlike any other. While the coronavirus pandemic has halted international exchanges, CIVIC will never be myopic; we are optimistic that clear 20/20 vision will be restored.

Monthly board meetings continue virtually, adapting to Zoom. We have seen the composition of the board change with Mahazir Salih's resignation in March and John Achrazoglou joining the board in May. John is a Clinical Associate Professor and Chief Technology Officer at The University of Iowa College of Education. He brings to the board expertise in on-line teaching and learning, assistive technologies for learners with disabilities and universal design in learning. You can read more about him and see his photo on the CIVIC website. Board member Jennifer Blair has moved to Oxford, Ohio but has not said goodbye to CIVIC since virtual meetings will allow her to work remotely. Our plan to recognize Jennifer's dedicated service at the Celebration of Citizen Diplomacy Dinner-- an event that she personally spent many hours coordinating-- was thwarted when COVID-19 forced the cancellation. I'd like to use this space to express our deep gratitude to Jennifer for her contributions to raising CIVIC's profile in the community and among our members. From serving as Board Secretary to Chair of the Communications Committee, her oversight and mentoring of interns and staff have resulted in quality newsletters and Annual Reports, better branding and a stronger Board of Directors. The board, once again, is seeking new directors and hopes to welcome another this summer. Your suggestions for potential board members are appreciated!

I saved the best news for last and that is to announce that the Board of Directors offered Janice Weiner the Executive Director position of CIVIC and she has accepted! While we face many uncertainties and challenges during the pandemic, establishing steady, unflappable leadership at CIVIC will help us get through this. Thank you for building global ties locally *and* virtually!

–Jane McMullen, Board President

Committee Chair Changes



**Amy Chastain,
Communications Chair**



**Tracy Sergeant,
Fundraising Chair**



**Liz Bergeron,
Membership Chair**

If you are interested in getting involved with any of CIVIC's committees, let us know at civic@iowacivic.org. We welcome anyone with ideas about communication, membership, or fundraising initiatives. Committees meet once every month at Old Brick.

Citizen Diplomat Awards

Despite the unfortunate CCDD cancellation due to COVID-19, CIVIC still intends to present the three 2019 awards at a future celebration.

Business/Industry:
TPI Composites, Inc.

"TPI offers great programming in the field of wind energy, which helps make eastern Iowa a unique and relevant location for many visiting delegations."

Non-Profit/Government Organization:
United Action for Youth (UAY)

"UAY has been integral for years for youth programming and they've saved the day several times by coming up with meaningful volunteer projects for visitors."

Individual:
Pamela Wesely

"Pam was integral in helping us put together both Brazil programs and ABLA. She met with visitors as part of faculty panels, but also conducted Innovation in Teaching workshops for all three. We couldn't have done those programs without her."

Visit Profile: Refugee and Migration



Participants speaking with Stu Mullins from UAY

This program was a joint project for East Asia and Pacific, South and Central Asia to learn about refugee and immigration issues in the Indo-Pacific. The six participants came from Afghanistan, Australia, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Taiwan. Some of their meetings included:

- Lunch at Oasis, an immigrant-owned restaurant in downtown Iowa City
- The Johnson County Community ID Program to discuss how they protect undocumented and vulnerable community members
- West Liberty School District, a minority-majority community
- United Action for Youth (UAY) to discuss how their program provides a safe place where young people facing economic, social, and other hardships can express themselves freely
- The Catherine McAuley Center, a resettlement and education site in Cedar Rapids, providing one-on-one tutoring for adult learners in ESL, U.S. citizenship exam prep, and basic math, reading, writing and computer skills

Thanks to everyone who made this visit possible!

80 Years of IVLP

CIVIC is joining the U.S. Department of State, in partnership with Global Ties U.S., to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). For the past 80 years, the IVLP has connected current and emerging leaders from around the world to the United States through short-term exchanges. The program has grown to include more than 225,000 alumni, including more than 500 current and former heads of state, and continues to build vital linkages between U.S. citizens and emerging leaders throughout the world. Learn more about the #FacesofExchange initiative at www.iowacivic.org/programs.



Letter from the Executive Director

Please allow me to introduce myself to you as CIVIC's new Executive Director. In fact, I'm actually both "new" and "old", having worked for three months as interim ED, and, as of June 1st, now officially on board for the long haul. I've spent a lifetime both participating in exchanges (starting as an exchange student my senior year of high school) and, as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer, seeking out the best possible candidates for a multitude of official exchanges. In my view, exchanges are the most effective means for a person to broaden his or her horizons, gain an understanding of how another culture works, and at the same time, share one's own culture and expertise. It is indeed an exchange – not a one-way street.

Lifelong learning is key to continuing to grow and develop, and exchanges are one important tool to that end. I write these words even as CIVIC finds itself in a period of semi-hiatus, with no in-person exchanges taking place because of the pandemic, at least through the end of September. Hmmm. So how do we continue to engage and carry out our mission?

In part, by preparing for when we once again welcome delegates to Iowa City. In part by reminding you of the enduring importance of our mission. And in part by looking for other ways to facilitate "exchanges" – virtually, just as nearly everything else these days is about online meetings or curbside pickup. And since there are no curbside options for exchanges, Zoom it is. Our Washington partners are working on models. We will be calling on you, our members and members of our community, to participate, once we know more. In addition to content-based meetings, we hope to create a version of Iowa Table – direct engagement with community members in small groups via an on-line chat. We have some ideas on which we're working, together with Washington.

Now more than ever – amidst a pandemic and with our country in upheaval, with Black Lives Matter protesters and their allies marching in the streets, including in Iowa City – we need to push out beyond our local and national bubbles, beyond our comfort zones; we need to reach out, listen and learn from others. BLM seeks to finally, belatedly, end systemic racism in the U.S. CIVIC supports their goals and hopes they will help us move forward collectively as a community and as a nation. It will require enormous, prolonged, determined hard work. Nothing like a pandemic and a nationwide protest movement to show us that there really are no borders - and how essential it is to engage, listen and learn.

–Janice Weiner, Executive Director

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