



PRESIDENT'S CORNER BY GRANT CURTIS

I was reading an article the other day and it questioned why we seem to be such a deeply divided and distrustful country. As I thought about it, I believe I have an understanding of why we have the distrust.

Let me first say, I am not, repeat, not an expert in this field and so could be wrong, but I don't think so. When we first see something or someone's actions, how do we view the actions? If you're like most people, you and I view it through a lens. What do I mean by a lens? I mean we look at it through our own eyes, based upon our experiences, knowledge, and desires. We do not consider, or at least very rarely, that they may be coming from a different point of view. After all, their experiences, knowledge, and desires are completely different than our own.

One of my favorite authors, John Maxwell, stated in one of his books, "You never really get

mad at someone else, but you get mad at yourself, as on some level you recognize the truth or validity of what the other person is saying." I have given this a lot of thought and reflection over the years since I first read it, and I do believe there is at least a grain of truth to the saying.

When I have gotten angry or mad at someone, later I usually think about it and discover that while I may not agree with everything they say, there is usually at least a small amount of truth in what they are saying. Some time it is a major item and requires me to change my own perspective. Therein lies a major issue: for I, like most people, like the comfort of consistency. When I have to rethink the situation it usually means that I have to get out of my comfort zone. We are taught as a society that we need to be in our comfort zone; after all, it is easier to continue what we have been doing than change where we are going. Oh my, doesn't that sound similar to the definition of insanity?

As we prepare for the New Year, I would challenge each of us to reach out to someone we don't know, someone who is significantly different from ourselves, and make an effort to get to know them. I mean really get to know them, not just acknowledge them. Realize that it will, by necessity, be a very uncomfortable process.

But it will enrich your lives beyond measure.

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BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: SABINA PAUDEL



How did you and your family come to the United States?

I spent my childhood in Nepal. My family and I received the Diversity Visa which gave us the opportunity to come to the US. We settled in the Quad Cities in 2003. I attended 7th grade here and also went to college in town. I struggled immersing myself into the American culture because I didn't have a social network outside of the Nepali community. As I grew older, I made friends who were from the Quad Cities, learned the culture as well as the history of the country, and the slang words, which my friends still teach me.

Why are you a part of QCAIR and what do you like about it?

The struggles of blending into the culture of a new land and not knowing where to reach out for assistance led me to join QCAIR. I like that QCAIR provides emergency financial assistance, moral support, and referrals to other agencies in the area to keep them rooted and moving forward. I think the cultural festivals we have organized have helped build awareness of refugees and immigrants in our community.

What are your hopes for the future of QCAIR?

I hope that we can reach out to more people in the Quad Cities community, as there is plenty of support and guidance we can give to them. QCAIR is becoming stronger as a team and I am looking forward to being more trusted and relied on by the people in this area. I hope we can continue making our community stronger and healthier by supporting each other.

LOCAL ETHNIC GROCERY STORES TO SUPPORT DURING THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

La Finca, a Latino restaurant and grocery store located at **916 W. Second St. Davenport, Iowa**, has been in operation for 13 years. The owners are originally from Mexico and they first emigrated to California before landing in Iowa. Most of La Finca's business comes from the restaurant side. La Finca serves up a host of delicious dishes and daily specials, like Pazole, and Tacos on Tuesdays. In light of the pandemic, they are still "keeping up with things" in order to provide customers with fresh produce, kitchen staples like their amazing chorizo sausage and freshly made tres leches cake, and delicious Mexican cuisine served right in store for dine in or for take out. Hours are 8 AM - 9 PM daily. Call (563) 322-0041, visit them on Facebook or stop by!



La Finca
916 W. Second St., Davenport, IA
8 AM - 9 PM daily

Namaste Plaza, a multi-ethnic grocery store located at **3228 Avenue of the Cities, Moline, Illinois**, has been open since 2002. The owner, Raj, came to the US from India to pursue a better life, the "American Dream." His determination led to the success of his grocery store by being a source of sustenance to people from many ethnicities and from all over the Quad Cities. The food in Namaste Plaza serves people from Indian, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and other Asian, Middle Eastern, and African backgrounds. There is truly something for everyone to enjoy at Namaste Plaza, whether it's the fresh fruits and vegetables, the halal meats, the array of spices and flours, or the specialty snacks and cookies. Hours are 10 AM - 8:30 PM Tuesday - Sunday and 12 PM - 8:30 PM on Mondays. Call (309)797-2804 or stop in! Visit: <http://namasteplazamoline.com/>



Namaste Plaza
3228 Avenue of the Cities, Moline, IL
10 AM - 8:30 PM Tuesday - Sunday and
12 PM - 8:30 PM on Mondays

RECAP: WATCH THE 2020 IES NATIONAL SUMMIT AWARDS CEREMONY

The 2020 Immigrant Entrepreneurs National Summit was held virtually on Saturday, November 21st, 2020. There were more than 600 registrants, 22 workshops by qualified experts from all over the United States, 3 immigrant recipients of "Success Story" awards, and 1 winner who received \$5,000.

If you'd like to watch the awards ceremony, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gysi8fnyhjk&feature=youtu.be&mc_cid=5b9ba75195&mc_eid=7ca4fa2dfa.

You can also revisit any of the sessions for free. Go to www.accelevents.com/e/IESNational and click "Enter Event."

SAVE THE DATE for the IES National Summit to be held on November 20, 2021.



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Progressive Action for the Common Good (\$7,500)
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LOCAL RESTAURANTEUR MUN LUANGRUANG AN EXAMPLE OF RESILIENCY AND CREATIVITY

Mun Luangruang is an example of perseverance. She came to the United States 20 years ago from Thailand and became a US citizen. She worked as a server, a cook, and a bus girl in order to pay for her ESL tuition bills. Mun realized how rewarding it was and how much joy it gave her when she went into the restaurant and talked to the customers who were eating and enjoying the food she made. When her father and his cousin opened a restaurant, Mun learned how to use a wok and a dream took shape in her heart: a dream of owning her very own restaurant someday.

Fast forward a little bit. She met a man from Iowa, fell in love, and got married. She kept pursuing her restaurant dream and on January 6, 2002, **Exotic Thai** on 53rd St. in Davenport opened which serves distinctly Thai dishes. **Exotic Thai** on John Deere Road in Moline soon followed. She kept working and soon wanted another restaurant to display variations of some of the well-known Exotic Thai classic dishes. Thus, **Lemongrass Cafe** on 5th Avenue in Moline opened up in February of 2010, featuring more spicy and more street-food style Thai and Vietnamese dishes.

Fast forward to 2019, and Mun felt like she still wanted to pursue another restaurant: this time in a historical building in downtown Davenport, and a place she could own. She wanted to display the intersecting culinary cultures of Southeast Asian countries and the ways the foods are similar, yet uniquely different. She also desired a larger restaurant space for hosting cooking classes in the community. She wanted a place for guests to linger over their meals, order drinks, cocktails, cold-pressed juices, and stay until closing. In September 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, **Miss Phay Cafe** on Brady Street in Davenport, opened its doors.

Opening a restaurant in the middle of a pandemic is extraordinary. Maintaining three other existing restaurants in light of these difficult times is nothing short of a miracle. On the business side of things, there has been a drastic loss in revenue for the restaurants--truly drastic. Overtime pay had to be cut for her servers. Illinois cooks and servers are working at both Lemongrass Cafe and Exotic Thai Moline to keep themselves afloat. Mun and two of her servers experienced painful personal losses too--all three had parents pass away and they weren't allowed to attend a funeral for them. Mun sighs for the time when things will be better--after the vaccine, maybe, when things calm down and go back to normal.

Still, Mun is ever persistent and ever hopeful. She encourages anyone in the Quad Cities to call her restaurants for take out or visit for socially-distanced dine-in (Moline Exotic Thai location is only open for takeout). She's still a believer in "good food," especially when things in life are difficult. She and her cooks, no matter how slow their business may be right now, are committed to making good food. And that is something worth holding onto.

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2020 QC WORLD CUP RECAP

In September 2020, QCAIR teamed up with Quad Cities Interfaith to hold a World Cup Soccer tournament in Rock Island. Seven teams of 22 players each were represented. The event was well-attended, even during a pandemic. People have been looking for recreational activities so perhaps that explains the excellent turnout of teams and fans. Many Asians, Latinos, Africans, and Caucasian American sports lovers showed up to play or watch.

Quad Cities Interfaith provided the soccer balls, the trophy, the medals for the winning team, and the sound system. Thanks to Costco, water was provided for all of the teams. Masks were provided for any in attendance who didn't have one.

There will hopefully be another QC World Cup event in 2021, so stay tuned for more information!

PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES OVERVIEW

Prairie State Legal Services is a legal aid provider in Rock Island, IL. They provide **free** civil legal services to low-income members of the community and serve Rock Island, Henry, Lee, Mercer, and Whiteside counties in Illinois. Prairie State Legal Services provides their services to immigrants and refugees and keeps all information regarding their clients completely confidential.

The services they provide are in housing and family law, specifically:

- Housing law - they assist individuals who are facing eviction.
- Family law - they work with individuals who are victims of domestic violence with receiving and maintaining orders of protection.
- Record expungement - A new program helps people expunge criminal records, especially if they are struggling with access to housing and employment as a result of these records.

Anyone can apply for these services at pslegal.org/apply or by calling [309-794-1328](tel:309-794-1328). Those interested in the criminal records expungement should call [309-283-3744](tel:309-283-3744).

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Newcomers Initiative finances low-cost immigration services through select partners listed on ascentra.org/newcomers.



Quad Cities Alliance For Immigrants and Refugees

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MORE TO OFFER: ABE'S STORY

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO WORLD RELIEF FOR ALLOWING US TO SHARE ABE'S STORY

Mbanzamihigo “Abe” Ibrahim’s first memory of the U.S. is of fireworks. “It was two days away from the Fourth of July. I had never seen, experienced, or even heard of fireworks,” he recalls. On that day, he was blessed with a sense of hope that would last a lifetime.

Abe’s family was granted asylum in the U.S. when he was just 10 years old. He had always dreamed of a way to make his mark on the world. But having been “basically born” in a Tanzanian refugee camp, he was never asked what he wanted to do when he grew up. His family was focused on survival.

“I would be done with high school, but probably wouldn’t be doing anything with my life,” he said.

When his family’s case finally made it off the waiting list, Abe was scared. The music, the food, the language – all of that was about to change. With a little encouragement, Abe’s fear turned into passion. Sometimes, the question “What do you want to do with your life?” is just as important as a safe and accepting environment.

After World Relief Quad Cities helped Abe’s family settle into their new home, he re-enrolled in school. Abe was finally around people who asked him about his future – the support he never realized he needed. “Like a sponge” absorbing information, he learned English in just one year.



Abe reflected the kindness he was shown and quickly began to make new friends. “When you’re surrounded by good people, you become a good person,” Abe continued.

Most importantly, he didn’t lose touch with his culture. Though he was born in Tanzania, Abe embodies his parents’ Burundian values. One of those values is community. By showing compassion to others, especially when they’re vulnerable, together we can build loving communities whose actions reach the hearts of everyone involved.

Abe’s main goal in life is to give young people the same support that he received when he was a child. As someone who “looks and talks like them,” he hopes to be a role model they can truly relate to.

While working as the Preferred Community caseworker at World Relief Quad Cities, Abe is pursuing a psychology degree at St. Ambrose University. He also holds a platform that advocates for the success of Burundi children, hoping to visit one day and tell them how much they have to offer.

“I want to show them how *big* the world is,” he said.

From fear and uncertainty to inspiring and educating others, Abe has remained kind and courageous – he will always find more to offer.

GUEST CORNER

QCAIR is pleased to introduce a Guest Corner, which will feature an article by local business leader, activist, political, civic, or business leaders in the Quad Cities. The "inaugural" Guest Corner article is by Pastor Richard Sorrentino of New Hope in Christ Ministries. We have invited Imam Bashir, of the Islamic Center of the Quad Cities in Moline for the Spring 2021 newsletter. If you would like to write for the Guest Corner, or have an idea of someone you would QCAIR to reach out to, please email qcair@qcair.org.

As the President of New Hope in Christ Ministries, I bring you the peace, serenity, and tranquility that we have in God! As our world sits at the crossroads of a new reality, as the denizens of this planet grapple with unanswered scenarios of human bondage, unethical abuses of civil rights, and deep racial and cultural divides, our multitudes are seeking a calmer existence, one that is rooted in the simple sanctuary of the human heart!

What I hear most from our many friends around the world is a consonant theme, whether it comes from the desert sands of Namibia, or, the lush forests of the Amazonian River Basin. Even across our grand country, from sea to shining sea, people are beginning to re-evaluate their lives, their loves, and, what it means to be human. We are all children of wonder; at some time in our early lives we lived in a world between mystery and faith, beholding the magic of love while embracing the para-reality of something, and, someone, beyond ourselves. We lived, as children, in the twinkling world of imagination, where we wished upon stars, and the Christmas box which housed our favorite present became a contrivance to visit other worlds, and, converse with other creatures.

No matter how much we spiritually progress, no matter when we finally "get it" as a human civilization, no matter whether peace comes from extraterrestrial emissaries as it did that one starry night, or, we collectively through their words and actions find that peace within us, those angels of compassion and charity which surpass human understanding, ego will always be a part of us. We must all make a decision to love, and also to be loved, for love must be a two-way street, or it is not love at all! We must choose to open our hearts, those mangers of good feeling and good will, so we can encircle the needs of those around us, even if they come from distant shores!

We are all "children of promise," the everlasting promise of a loving Creator to work grace through charitable organizations to feed the hungry, to clothe the barely dressed, and to provide education and learning so others can experience the American Dream, even in their own time! We must as a human race help all people, or we help none; we must help others "reach for the stars," as that Christmas Star reached down to us, shining its light of liberty from fear, peace from persecution, and refuge from retribution! Christmas means a lot of things to different people; to some it means presents, to others it means to give love as a present, a gift which truly keeps on giving! May we give love, may we give love without fear, and may we give love without measure, so everyone may receive what they truly need!

Pastor Richard Sorrentino, President of New Hope in Christ Ministries

LET'S GET GLOBAL!!!

New Year's Traditions Around the World

Colombians' carry an empty suitcase around the block to bring a year of travel.

People in **Denmark** break dishes on each other's front doors and let them pile up to show who has the most friends.

Some **South Africans** throw old furniture and appliances from the windows!

In **Egypt**, New Year's Day changes according to the moon. But, unlike other countries that go the lunar route, here the festivities start with a crescent moon!

In **Japan**, families clean the house together and then decorate with natural items such as pine branches, plum blossoms, and bamboo.

There are 39 time zones in the world and the islands of **Samoa and Kiribati** are the first places on Earth to reach January 1st.

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more at bit.ly/3nwU0xv



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