



THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

January 15, 2016

To: Forty Under 40 Selection Committee

Foundation

Dr. Norman E. Borlaug
1914-2009

John Ruan
1914-2010

John Ruan III
Chairman

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn
President

Council of Advisors

Hon. George Bush

Hon. Jimmy Carter

H.E. Joaquim Chissano

Margaret Catley-Carlson
UN Secretary General
Advisory Board on Water
Canada

Dr. Zhangliang Chen
Vice President China Association
for Science and Technology

A.S. Clausi
Vice President of Research
General Foods (Retired)

Dr. W. Ronnie Coffman
Director, International Programs
College of Agriculture and
Life Sciences, Cornell University

Sir Gordon Conway
Professor of Intl. Development
Imperial College London

Dr. Louise Fresco
President Wageningen University
Netherlands

Michael Gartner
Pulitzer Prize Winner

Dr. Steven Leath
President, Iowa State University

M. Peter McPherson
President, APLU

Cynthia Milligan
Dean Emeritus
College of Business Administration,
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

H.E. Roberto Rodrigues
Former Minister of Agriculture
Brazil

Yohei Sasakawa
Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

Dr. M.S. Swaminathan
Chairman
Laureate Selection Committee

I am writing to provide my strongest possible recommendation that Catherine Swoboda, the Director of Planning at the World Food Prize Foundation, be chosen as a member of the 2016 Forty Under 40 class.

This nomination and my unqualified endorsement is based on my 13 years of observing, interacting and working closely with Catherine beginning when she was just a junior at East High School and participated in our Global Youth Institute; through her present leadership position on our professional staff where she plays the key role in structuring our Borlaug Dialogue international symposium.

Inspired by her personal interaction with our founder, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, Catherine, an inner city young girl from the East Side with no agricultural background, while still in high school, went to Brazil as a World Food Prize intern to study soybeans. She came back transformed.

She embarked on a path that led her to blossom into an extraordinary young woman, one who earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in agronomy at Iowa State University, completed a prestigious Wallace-Carver fellowship in Washington at USDA, and then became a state wide leader of STEM education here in Iowa, while still in her mid-20s.

In 2011, I convinced Catherine to come home to Iowa to take on a daunting challenge – building from scratch a brand new statewide high school education program – the Iowa Youth Institute. The concept was to reach into every school in Iowa and bring students and teachers to Iowa State University for a one day experience that would inspire them to pursue education and careers in STEM and agricultural science.

Catherine succeeded beyond my wildest expectations and in three years built the program so it attracted students from over the half of the schools in Iowa and became a model adopted by the National Food and Ag Council for nationwide implementation. Governor Branstad comes to each event and was so impressed with Catherine that he appointed her to his STEM Advisory Council.

Most recently, deeply impressed by her intellectual acumen and familiarity with global issues, I named Catherine as our Director of Planning, with the responsibility to design the substantive content and identify the speakers for our Borlaug Dialogue which annually draws over 1,300 participants from 60 countries to Des Moines, and has repeatedly been referred to as "the premier conference in the world on global agriculture."

In this capacity, Catherine put together two successive symposia which addressed: the critical importance of biotechnology and precision agriculture in helping farmers deal with climate volatility; the first ever session anywhere in the world on the devastating impact on agriculture of the Ebola disease; the need to globally promote education and careers for women in STEM; and, in a ground breaking conference theme, emphasizing that the need to provide sufficient food for the more than 9 billion people who will be on our planet by 2050, represents "the single greatest challenge in human history."

Catherine identified and convinced an amazing array of speakers to participate in our Borlaug Dialogue symposium including: African presidents Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone and Joyce Banda of Malawi; the president of the Rome based International Fund for Agricultural Development; the ministers of agriculture of Mexico, Kosovo, Liberia and Rwanda; Pulitzer Prize winner Sheryl WuDunn; and the CEOs and senior executives of a broad array of leading companies such as Cargill, Land O'Lakes, Starbucks, Google, DuPont and Monsanto.

In addition to these distinguished individuals, Catherine brought together leading research scientists and NGO leaders, as well as smallholder farmers and dynamic innovators such as Dr. Emma Naluyima of Uganda. During our 2014 Borlaug Dialogue, Dr. Naluyima outlined her model farm, which African leaders describe as the key to uplifting the 800 million poor smallholder farmers on that continent.

These achievements, which are detailed in our below formal nomination (and supported by attached letters of endorsement from Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds, Catholic Bishop Richard Pates and ISU Dean of Agriculture Wendy Wintersteen) would alone justify Catherine being designated as a Forty Under 40 recipient.

Indeed, Catherine's diverse array of experiences in agricultural research (she has two peer reviewed research publications) STEM advocacy and her work in bringing the top agricultural and bio-science leaders in the world to Des Moines, would alone make her the perfect example of the young professional that the Cultivation Corridor seeks to inspire to pursue education and careers in bio-technology and agricultural science.

As a Forty Under 40 designee, Catherine Swoboda will stand out to young Iowans, and particularly young women, as a role model to be emulated.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, however, Catherine has an inspiring array of humanitarian achievements in voluntary service through her church to assist members of the greater Des Moines refugee and immigrant community. Her dedication and exemplary commitment to enhance education and alleviate hunger for those least fortunate sets a personal

standard worthy of emulation and that draws praise from senior most religious leaders such as Bishop Pates.

In this regard, there is one event that deserves special mention: Catherine's role as the catalyst and key organizer of a celebration that, for the first time ever, brought together the 16 different communities of ethnic African immigrants that exist in Des Moines. She did this as part of the World Food Prize events in 2013, when we were honoring a young woman scientist from Kenya named Dr. Charity Mutegi. Nairobi had just been devastated by a terrorist attack, shortly before Dr. Mutegi was to leave for Des Moines.

To send a message of solidarity to people in Kenya, Catherine embarked on a personal mission to organize a welcoming ceremony for Dr. Mutegi at our Hall of Laureates. She spent hours going to meet with representatives of different communities and soon discovered that the African immigrant community in greater Des Moines had never before all come together across national origin lines for a common event. Suddenly, thanks to Catherine, they had a shared event and point of pride and inspiration which brought them all together, as never before, to celebrate their common African heritage.

As I stood watching hundreds of ethnic African Iowans, in native dress, dancing on the Principal Riverwalk to African music with Catherine in their midst, I was so incredibly impressed by what she had achieved with this welcoming ceremony. One of the community leaders told me that "there had never been such an event until Catherine stepped forward." Even more significantly, he said that up until that moment, African immigrants felt that they were marginalized citizens living on the outer edge of the Des Moines community with few people concerned about them. Catherine had changed that.

In sum, there are few, if any, under the age of 40 who can match Catherine's remarkable string of accomplishments, including:

- Bringing to Des Moines each year more of the leading government officials, agri-business CEOs, research scientists, international development leaders, global non-profit executives than any other person or organization in Iowa;
- Leading the effort to build from scratch the World Food Prize Iowa Youth Institute (IYI), which now is a model being emulated nationally to inspire high school students to study agricultural science and STEM subjects. The IYI now attracts students and teachers from over half of the high schools in Iowa and has the support of the Governor, the bipartisan leadership of the state legislature and business leaders;
- Appointed at age 25 to the Governor's STEM Advisory Council and then, based on her multiple contributions as outlined by Lt. Governor Reynolds' in her letter of endorsement, was re-appointed to a second full term;

- Being named the youngest ever Outstanding Young Alumni in the history of Iowa State University;
- Being selected to participate in the Greater Des Moines Leadership class for 2015/2016; and
- Reflecting her ability to think big, Catherine had the personal inspiration to personally write to invite Pope Francis to come to Des Moines and convinced Governor Branstad, Bishop Pates and me to write letters of support. While the Holy Father has not yet accepted her invitation, he has not said no. If The Pontiff were to retrace the steps of Pope John Paul II, it will happen because Catherine planted the seed.

Whether she is teaching a young Eritrean refugee to read, writing a column for the Catholic Mirror newspaper, dealing with State Department officials in Washington to organize our annual laureate announcement ceremony, communicating with individuals like Howard Buffett on our symposium sessions or meeting with the Governor on STEM issues, Catherine Swoboda is demonstrating why she truly deserves recognition as a member of the Forty Under 40 class. She has my highest possible recommendation.

Sincerely,



Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn (ret.)

President