Diversity Focus is excited to publish this second edition of Inclusive Communities. We, the board of directors and our stakeholders, hope this magazine will help stimulate reflective thoughts and discussions. The word “diversity” may elicit a variety of images and preconceptions. Diversity is the differences each of us possess, including ethnicity, views of religion, cultural and family traditions, along with individual choices we make during our life. It may be difficult to have one true definition of diversity, because like most facets of our complex lives, ideals and forward-thinking concepts take on greater significance and adapt as we actualize new principles.

Our organization’s goals pivot on communication. As our community continues to be open to various forms of education and dialogue, it is our hope to foster a Corridor that values diversity. Diversity Focus is a clearinghouse and a resource you can use for work, family and personal growth. We offer programs and support for corporations, schools, government and any organization or individual wishing to positively impact inclusiveness where we work, live and play.

At the core is a society which goes beyond that of acceptance and understanding, to strive for appreciation of those qualities that make each of us unique. From the outside, one may first notice differences in another’s race or ethnicity; but as we delve deeper into the nature of humanity we can become truly inspired by the richness of this world. Like nature itself, this biosphere of our world is strengthened by the diversity of all people and the many cultural heritages learned over the millennia of history.

As we move from crisis to crisis, it is often difficult to step back from the flood of adrenaline one must employ to ask, “What can I do to make life better?” It is my opinion that empathy for others is paramount. Empathy is not sympathy, but rather the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person. It is the attribute that makes us human. A world where we judge one another, show indifference and simply tolerate our neighbor is a world divided and without gratitude for the art of civilization itself.

Reach out to a co-worker or neighbor that you don’t know. Welcome newcomers to our Corridor. Consciously utilize empathy to go beyond tolerance to seek appreciation for the uniqueness within each of us.

Robert D. Becker
President
Diversity Focus
I was in transit to Cedar Rapids to become the Executive Director of Diversity Focus on June 11 just as the historic flood of 2008 arrived. Not only was the Diversity Focus office destroyed, the staff was displaced and, on a personal note, I could not find housing. I arrived in the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Corridor unprepared for the aftermath of a major disaster and was unprepared for some of the personal challenges I encountered both as a new member of the community and as an African-American woman.

My personal experiences confirmed that I was indeed in the right place at the right time to carry forth the vision that brought me here… the vision that led forward-thinking community leaders to form a one-of-a-kind organization, Diversity Focus. Those same experiences fueled my longtime passion for diversity and inclusion work, particularly Diversity Focus’ unique approach.

Timing is everything! Diversity Focus’ mission is to enhance diversity and inclusion throughout the cities in the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Corridor. The goal is to minimize losing a population of people who are different from the long-term, homogenous population. This approach: to provide opportunities, resources and experiences to promote understanding, valuing and embracing differences.

These leaders embarked upon a novel approach to diversity, to provide the community with resources to help understand Diversity and Inclusion:

- What is it?
- Why it is important
- How to embrace it
- The consequences of not embracing it

Early on, Diversity Focus created communitywide events and conferences to engage, educate and solicit input from the community to enhance and support our mission. From that input, we developed learning and awareness opportunities as well as skill-building programs and tools that continue today. They are:

- Spanish Conversation Circles – network and have fun while learning Spanish (no need to be Spanish speaking) in informal settings, meets weekly.
- FindIt – online resource to find everything from personal grooming providers, lifestyle groups to houses of worship and everything in between, continuously available.
- Diversity Focus Ambassadors – helps newcomers become acclimated by matching with volunteer community members, continuously available.
- Crash Dialogues – workshop based on the Oscar-winning film, which brings awareness to personal attitudes and beliefs about diversity and inclusion, meets monthly.
- Student Diversity Leadership Conference – annual conference for high school students to empower them to embrace diversity and inclusion.

Brown Bag Speaking Series – community experts speak on a variety of diversity and inclusion topics, meets bi-weekly.

Inclusive Communities Publication, bi-annual magazine that celebrates diversity and inclusion in the Corridor.

Consulting, as requested.

In late 2008, Diversity Focus commissioned Vernon Research Group to conduct a diversity climate study, the first study of its kind in the state. We wanted to understand how people in the Corridor experience diversity and how they could be encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of its importance. We also wanted to benchmark the community’s perceptions and attitudes on diversity and inclusion to measure the impact of our work.

The Corridor Diversity Climate report chronicles the results of the study, some of which are:

- Many respondents – 53 percent – believe the community does an average or better job embracing diversity; among minority respondents the study found that discrimination persists.
- While most respondents agree on which community diversity objectives are most important, there are substantial perception gaps between Caucasians and non-Caucasians, especially African-Americans, on how much progress has been made.

These and other major findings in the study tell us there is work to do in making the Corridor a more welcoming and accepting community for all people. Diversity Focus is using these findings to prioritize and focus our efforts and resources to work toward closing some of the gaps the study highlighted. We are focused on finding, acquiring and making available “best-in-class” awareness and skill-building opportunities for the community at large and for sectors highlighted in the study specifically.

The Corridor Diversity Climate results provide Diversity Focus and the community with invaluable direction and insight on how together we create the welcoming and accepting climate that we want to live in. We are committed. I hope you will join us!
The University of Iowa had always intrigued Chad Simmons. For the longest time, he didn’t quite know why. But after reflecting on the career path that led him back to where he earned his master’s of business administration degree 18 years earlier, the 42-year-old Chicago native arrived at an explanation: “I came back to Iowa because of the people,” says Simmons. “People make all the difference. That’s the selling point of Iowa.”

It’s a good thing, because Simmons is squarely in the people business. Appointed as the first-ever associate vice president for human resources for UI Health Care, he was given the daunting task of integrating the human resources functions for University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, the Carver College of Medicine and University of Iowa Physicians, a multi-specialty physician group practice.

When he began his new role in January 2009, he hit the ground running—and hasn’t stopped since. With just over 180 days on the job, he and his human-resources team successfully completed a restructuring of the UI Health Care human resources entity, negotiated three labor contracts, implemented two voluntary cost-reduction programs, managed a potential pandemic, helped during difficult workforce reductions and acknowledged the first anniversary of devastating flooding that affected Iowa City and the UI campus.

Undaunted by the challenges he faced during his first six months on the job, Simmons is clear on his mission: “Our goal is to be the best academic medical center in the world, with the best people.”

Even with his impressive academic resume and new job title, Simmons says he makes it a priority to check his ego at the door when he comes to work. “It’s about the organization, not about me,” says Simmons, who eschews a “me first” attitude in favor of being a team player. “If the organization fails, I fail in my mission. My goal is to make sure people do inspirational work.”

Maintaining a clear focus and surrounding himself with good people, Simmons hopes to take UI Health Care to great heights. He is quick to acknowledge the talents of his team and credits them with helping him make such a smooth transition to the university. He also plans to rely heavily on them to be a major catalyst in developing UI Health Care’s future identity and culture.

“There are so many talented people and my goal is to help them achieve their highest potential in serving the people of Iowa,” he says. On the job, Simmons strives to never lose sight of finding the best solution to a problem. “I leave my mind open and do not make decisions quickly,” says Simmons. “I like to sit down with my superiors, peers and subordinates alike, and I’m open to the possibility that there are better
A self-described “people person,” his philosophy is to push everyone he meets to achieve his or her absolute best. He claims to know no other way, and says he has been driven toward excellence throughout his life — setting lofty goals and working hard to achieve them.

Simmons graduated from Whitney Young High School in Chicago, which has a distinguished alumna in First Lady Michelle Obama.

“At Whitney Young, everyone is smart,” Simmons says. “Everyone is trying to achieve a level of excellence. They taught you to always strive to be the best.”

Simmons then headed to Morehouse College in Atlanta, the only all-male historically black college in the United States whose distinguished alumnae include Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and film director Spike Lee. At Morehouse, Simmons again found that the bar was raised very high.

“They developed leaders,” Simmons says. He graduated in 1998 with a bachelor of arts degree in business operations. A few years later, Simmons came to Iowa on a fellowship and earned his MBA from the UI.

Simmons, and his wife, Carol, enjoy the change of pace that Corridor living provides. The couple takes pleasure in sitting down to dinner together most evenings and relishes the opportunity to create new friendships. After settling in, they even welcomed a second dog into their family, Churny, a young and rambunctious female pit bull. She, too, is settling into her new home and learning the ropes from her big brother, Champion.

Before returning to Iowa, Simmons endured years of long daily commutes to school and work and he says he isn’t missing them a bit. He now savor his short commute and jokes about going from rush hour to “rush minute.” The time savings is one of the things he likes most about being back in the Corridor. Simmons also appreciates close proximity to his hometown and his family, as a three-hour drive puts the couple back in Chicago.

Although I’m originally from Seattle, I had been living in New York City for several years before moving to Cedar Rapids. My facial muscles were very sore after the first week in Iowa from returning everyone’s smiles! I try to model this friendliness with others, whether it is welcoming new students into our campus community or reaching out to new Iowans. Because my husband is from Nepal, I have a great deal of empathy for the daily life challenges of immigrants, and I try to help in as many ways possible. As a teacher, I strive to make the Corridor even more welcoming by sharing with my students my cultural experiences from traveling and living abroad in Europe and Asia, integrating global perspectives into the classroom, leading study-abroad trips to Oaxaca, Mexico, (and hopefully Nepal and India), and even “tricking” my students into eating new foods (e.g. Malaysian, Korean, Ethiopian) on field trips and area excursions. The pleasure for me is witnessing their immediate reaction and being there to successfully guide them through it so that they lose their trepidation in new contexts and with different groups.

— Kathryn Hagy
Mount Mercy College associate professor of art,
chair of the department of communications, literature & arts

I was born in Bien-Hoa, (South) Vietnam and moved with my parents to the United States in 1990 to Ames. I was ordained a priest in 2004 and moved to Cedar Rapids. It was a difficult decision for me to move to the Cedar Rapids area. My reservations about being a non-Caucasian in a new area were soon calmed by the very accepting, open-minded and welcoming community and parishioners here. There is an energy and excitement from the people who live here. I have observed a collaboration and outpouring of social concern and outreach by all age groups. In my parish, it is very refreshing to be accepted in my professional line of work, even though my English is not perfect. I hope to be able to stay in the area longer than my term of six years.

— Father Dustin Vu
Blessed John XXIII Catholic Church
Identity is not always cut and dried. Growing up in Cedar Rapids, Jasmine Almoayed learned that lesson well as a young woman of Bosnian descent and Muslim upbringing.

Today, Almoayed is the program director for Kirkwood Community College’s training and outreach services. As such, her duties include going out into the Eastern Iowa business community, determining the needs of area employers and helping them meet ongoing changes. The task requires flexibility and a knack for connecting with a variety of people and their challenges, but Almoayed has a lifetime of experience communicating with different groups and understanding their perspectives and priorities.

Amy Lasack, Almoayed’s supervisor at Kirkwood Training and Outreach Services, says her passion and personality also make her an effective force in the Cedar Rapids community. “She can connect with individuals from all backgrounds, whether it’s ethnic, religious, or if someone is a CEO or a front-line worker,” she says. “She’s passionate about everything she does, from her family and friends to her job and volunteer work with the American Cancer Society.”

Almoayed was born in Cedar Rapids, but as a young girl she began to understand that she carried with her a couple of different identities. Her father had come to America in the 1960s after learning that his father — whom he believed to have been killed in Yugoslavia during World War II — was in fact alive and living in Eastern Iowa. Almoayed’s grandfather had ended up in Cedar Rapids due to the presence of the Mother Mosque, one of the first in the United States, and the efforts of the area’s Islamic community to sponsor refugees.

Growing up in Cedar Rapids in the 1980s, Almoayed says, “I wasn’t even really aware that we were different. The Islamic community in Cedar Rapids has been around so long it doesn’t seem as weird. Yeah, I would fast during Ramadan, but most of my teachers were aware of what it was, and other kids didn’t really seem to think it was odd.”

Almoayed found, instead, that there were cultural differences between her family, with its European heritage, and the majority of the area’s Muslim population, many of whom were from Lebanon and were of Arabic descent. “When I was a kid,” recalls Almoayed, “my Lebanese and Pakistani friends were like me in one way because of our religion, but my sisters and I didn’t really know any other Yugoslav kids.”

Like any young person, Almoayed found herself identifying as much with her friends and their Arabic culture as with her family’s Yugoslavian background. “Yeah, we went to the mosque,” remembered Almoayed, “but I was not really sure what my identity was. I was trying to be an American kid in Iowa, and many of my friends were white and Christian.”

But that changed somewhat in the 1990s as Yugoslavia was torn apart by a civil war that pitted Serbs against Croats, with Bosnian Muslims often caught in the middle.

“Suddenly,” Almoayed says, “everyone over there wanted to start dividing off from what was once one country. Different groups were saying, ‘Oh no, I’m from Albania, I’m not really Yugoslavian.’ ‘And I’m Bosnian.’ ‘And I’m Croatian.’ ‘I’m this, I’m that, I’m whatever.’ They started segmenting themselves out.”

Though she had been born and raised in America, the tragedies of the Yugoslavian civil war reached Almoayed’s family in Cedar Rapids.

“We had a large number of relatives killed — a lot,” says Almoayed. “And our parents didn’t hide any of that from us — we’d hear about cousins getting killed as part of the genocide.”

Stories of atrocities and horrific
killings made their way back to Bosnians living in the Midwest.

“A lot of old grudges came up,” she notes as she relates stories of how families in the former Yugoslavia that had once dined and played soccer together turned on one another to avenge perceived wrongs from before World War II.

The war also brought more refugees to Cedar Rapids. “I remember being 9 years old,” says Almoayed, “and we would get phone calls from the hospital asking for a translator. So there I am, 9 years old, at the emergency room trying to explain to a nurse or doctor that some guy was saying his heart hurt.”

In 1999, Almoayed visited her relatives in Bosnia. “After the war, it became so important to people to differentiate themselves as Bosnian,” recalls Almoayed. “I didn’t know it was such a big deal until I was walking down the street there and used a Serbian ‘good day’ greeting. My cousin chewed me out.”

In Europe, Almoayed observed Bosnian Muslims taking on Turkish phrases and trappings as a way of differentiating themselves from Serbs and Croats.

“There was this whole new sense of identity,” she says.

A few years later, Almoayed experienced another shift in identity following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11.

“I didn’t really think much about being Muslim until Sept. 11 happened,” she says. “It was a double whammy for me because my husband’s family is Arabic. I had never heard the slurs and stuff like that until that point. I’d never realized how much I am grouped into this mix of people. As far as I was concerned, I was American, but now here I am getting lumped into this group. And I was doing it myself — all of a sudden I’m identifying with all these Muslims and Arabs who are feeling discriminated against, and it really did feel like ‘us versus them.’”

Almoayed graduated from the University of Iowa, where her background and experiences as both a Bosnian-American and a Muslim-American steered her toward an interest in human rights law.

“My dream job would be prosecuting at the Hague,” she says. “My passions lie in politics, and I pay close attention to policy in the Middle East. When a war happens, I tend to focus a lot more on how the civilians are being impacted, because I had a good half of my extended family just wiped out as a result of being in the wrong place.”

Dr. William Davis has known Almoayed and her family since she was a young girl and even became ordained online in order to marry her and her husband.

“When we’d sit and discuss religion and politics, Jasmine was clearly the most informed and passionate in her views,” Davis remembers. “I think her well-rounded fund of knowledge and passionate nature means she will always be a strong, progressive advocate for female equality and anyone disadvantaged. I know she realizes that had her family stayed in Bosnia, she might not be alive.”

Almoayed herself is thankful for the opportunities the Cedar Rapids area has provided her and her family.

“This area has a lot of women in higher positions,” she says, “and I’ve been encouraged to further my education, as someone in my 20s who has a lot of working life ahead of her.”

After all, as Almoayed has learned, who you are is always a work in progress.
When Pastor Michael Lynch came to the Iowa City Church of the Nazarene in 2002, he found a congregation in stagnation. Church member Ginny King remembers, “We were a dying church, set in our ways. All of us wanted something, to see change, to reach out into the community.”

What Lynch brought to his new church was a philosophy of engagement. “We have a vision of opening our doors to all people,” he explains. Seven years later, that vision has manifested itself in a unique and exciting arrangement at the Church of the Nazarene: Three ethnically and organizationally different congregations sharing the same resources and physical church space while working together to meet the spiritual needs of the diverse Iowa City community.

Today, the Iowa City Church of the Nazarene is home to the English Church of the Nazarene with Pastor Lynch, the Hispanic Church of the Nazarene with Senior Pastor Jose Segura and Co-Pastor Dayrin Lovan, and the newest addition to the fold, the African Church of the Nazarene, with Pastor Chapain Tosingilo. Each congregation is a separate entity and holds its own services on Sundays, though all three gather together on special occasions such as Christmas Eve and Easter.

“This arrangement was never part of any grand plan, but rather it came together organically over the past few years.

“Ethnic groups coming into the community can’t always afford to buy property and build buildings, so we have that ready made. We’re saying, ‘Let’s all live together and pool our resources.’ But we all share a common goal.”

Michael Lynch

“The first couple years were about opening our doors, finding out who lives in our community, and needs they might have,” Lynch says. One of the first things Lynch did on his arrival was bring in a parish nurse, Theresa Stecker. “Theresa stepped out of these four walls,” Lynch recalls. “She began to engage people, and you cannot engage people in a community without discovering all the different cultures. She was the contact with those cultures, cultivating a relationship and portraying our church as a welcoming place.”

Stecker eventually became the director of the Christian Culture Community (CCC), a partner organization that addresses the needs of immigrants in the area.

One person who came in contact with Stecker through the CCC was Dayrin Lovan, who had moved to Iowa City from Guatemala in 2002. Lovan noticed a lack of Hispanic churches in the area, but was pleased to find an open and welcoming attitude from Pastor Lynch and the Church of the Nazarene.

The first barrier was language. Initially, the church tried using translators like Lovan during its services, but that proved unwieldy and time-consuming. It became clear to everyone that the Hispanic members of the Nazarene congregation needed their own church and own services.

“We all identify as Christians, as part of the Nazarene,” says Lovan. “But we all have our own way to worship, our own way to express our...
selves.” So, the Hispanic Church of the Nazarene was formed in 2006.

Around that same time, Tosingilo arrived in the Iowa City area. Born in the Republic of the Congo, Tosingilo had moved to New Orleans in the late 1990s to study in a seminary and eventually form his own church. But in 2005, the devastation of Hurricane Katrina sent Tosingilo and his family to Dallas. While there, he heard from friends about the growing number of African refugees, immigrants and students in the Iowa City area and their need for an African church.

“God led us to the Christian Culture Community,” said Tosingilo. “We knew we had been called to read the Gospel to people, to preach, to help them worship God.”

In August 2007, Tosingilo opened the African Church of the Nazarene within the existing church building and the current three-congregation system was born.

“We share the kitchen, the church building, the copy machines, everything,” Lynch says. “Ethnic groups coming into the community can’t always afford to buy property and build buildings, so we have that ready made. We’re saying, ‘Let’s all live together and pool our resources.’ But we all share a common goal.”

The African Church ministers to people from all across the African continent, including The Republic of Congo, Guinea, Tanzania, Guyana, Togo, Central Africa, Liberia and Mali. The Hispanic Church’s congregation includes people from Mexico, Guatemala, Columbia, Honduras, Puerto Rico, El Salvador and Costa Rica. That makes for three very different services on Sundays. The African and Hispanic services often use more and different types of musical instruments, including guitars and drums.

“These guys don’t have the time consciousness we all live with,” laughed King. “They can start a half hour late and it’s very comfortable. And they have noisier services, more joyous — you have a freer type of gathering with 20 people praying out loud.”

“That’s the beauty of the differences,” notes Lovan. “We have our separate ways of how we pray and worship and we preserve our own culture.” Adds Tosingilo, “We see the diversity and how we worship God in our manner, but we worship the same God in three different cultures.”

“Our philosophy is that there is a greater sense of love from allowing people to worship in the context of their own culture, rather than try to force them into our own,” Lynch says. “But there is also such a sense of wonderment and curiosity about our differences when we all come together.”

English congregation member Velma Crum agrees that the Nazarene set-up is a positive part of the area. “We reflect more of what the community of Iowa City is,” she says. “It’s certainly diverse and growing in diversity, and we’re enjoying being a part of that.”

The church reaches out to the Iowa City community through its partnership with the CCC, which Lynch describes as “a safe place for people to come to.” Open to anyone, including those with no connection whatsoever to the Church of the Nazarene, the CCC aids immigrant family with food, clothing and gas vouchers, as well as spiritual counseling and legal referrals. The Compassion Ministry Center operates out of the CCC, working to help low-income families in the area.

All this diversity and change also means continued growth and change for the church. Though there is no set plan, Lynch says, “If we see a door open, we’re going to walk through it.”

Tosingilo started a new African Church of the Nazarene in Cedar Rapids in early June 2009, and Lynch says they are actively looking to find leaders in the African-American community who could help the church serve that particular demographic.

“Seven years ago, we welcomed Pastor Lynch with open arms,” says church member King. “We needed the vision and hope he was bringing to us. This has been a journey and we’ve lost a few along the way who didn’t share the vision or maybe couldn’t handle the diversity. But those of us who have stayed have grown and become more excited as the journey has continued.”

— Christopher Thoms
Northland Fitness Club
Anne Pham: Engineering connections to Hispanic culture

By Ruth Paarmann

Anne Pham, a project engineer at Alliant Energy, speaks English, Vietnamese, Spanish and American Sign Language. While she doesn’t have the opportunity to apply her multilingual skills at work, she has found ways to share her passion for the Hispanic culture with others.

“I feel like there is a need to advance the Hispanic culture because it’s the second most-common culture in Iowa and not many people are aware of that,” Pham says.

She performs Latin dance with Baile Latino, a local dance group. She has met Hispanics from many different countries, including Cuba. Her friends told her how difficult it was to assimilate into the community due to the language barrier.

“They sometimes feel there is no place to go where they can be understood,” says Pham, who emigrated to the U.S. from Vietnam as a baby.

A true problem solver at heart, she took action to improve understanding in the community. In a poll of her coworkers at Alliant, she found they were open to learning the Spanish language but didn’t have the proper channels to develop their knowledge. So, Pham started a Spanish conversation circle for Alliant employees in early 2009. Once a week over the lunch hour, a group of half a dozen employees meets to practice the language.

“A lot of people think, ‘Why would you want to learn Spanish?’ But it’s the third most spoken language in the world,” says Pham. “For me, it’s not really about learning one language or the other. It’s about accepting and understanding each other better.”

“We have a range of people from beginners to native speakers,” Pham explains. “This is great for anyone who enjoys being able to explore a different language.”

She also participates in the Diversity Focus Spanish Language Circle on Thursdays. In addition, Diversity Focus holds other weekly conversation circles at Coe College and in downtown Iowa City.

Pham’s experience immigrating to the U.S. allows her to empathize with many of her Hispanic friends. Her parents escaped their home country and landed in a refugee camp in Malaysia, where she was born. The family came to Des Moines, where they were active in the Vietnamese community.

“Since we were immigrants, we grew up poor. There were five of us, and my mom had to take English classes at night,” says Pham. “She’s my inspiration. She’s a special ed teacher now. There are always language barriers, and I don’t think they should prevent people from seizing any opportunities that come to them.”

Throughout her education, Pham found a passion for language, learning English, Spanish and American Sign Language. She attended the University of Iowa for mechanical engineering. She notes that at graduation, she was one of only four other females in the group.

Professionally, Pham started as a project engineer at Alliant in 2007. She is a Green Belt in Lean Six Sigma and participates in Women in Science and Engineering and the Society of Automotive Engineers.

While she’s the youngest employee and the only female project engineer on her floor, she says her coworkers are very welcoming and open. Among her accomplishments in supporting the Alliant Energy power plants, Pham was involved in implementing Lean Six Sigma process management into the company’s engineering projects.

She looks forward to balancing work with her involvements in the Spanish language circles and dancing the salsa, meringue, cha cha and bachata — a Dominican dance — with Baile Latino.

“At work, everything is so logical and structured, it’s a lot different from what I do on my free time,” she says. “I hope more local people would attend the Corridor’s international events, like the ones held in Marion, Iowa City and Cedar Rapids. To have everyone participate and come to these cultural events would be a big step toward people understanding other cultures,” she says.
More than 6,000 miles lie between Platteville, Wis., and Lagos, Nigeria. But the two places are separated by much more than geographic distance. More than 10 million people call Lagos home, compared to the 10,000 who live in Platteville. Lagos enjoys a hot equatorial climate in contrast to the subzero winters of Wisconsin. And in Lagos, tap water is a luxury that most citizens of Platteville probably take for granted.

So, it’s safe to say that diversity has been a natural part of Jen Sesay’s life. The Rockwell Collins software engineer, who turns 25 this year, was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, but grew up mostly in Lagos before heading to college at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville at age 17.

“There are so many amenities out here in the U.S. that you don’t have to think about getting water for tomorrow, or electricity,” she says. “To me, life was a little better here. So, it was easier to adjust in that way. My biggest hardship was missing my family, but I was doing the right thing so I felt OK.”

After taking the SAT in her native country, Sesay applied to several U.S. colleges but decided to try a “random school” after she tired of waiting several months for her visa paperwork to clear. “Random was Platteville, Wis.,” she says. “I knew it was the U.S. It’s such a small school but they were great with international students.”

Despite being born in a country torn by civil war for more than a decade, Sesay says she witnessed little of the conflict firsthand. Her family moved to Nigeria when she was 4, after her late father took a diplomatic job with the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS.

“Compared to what other people saw, I was totally sheltered, and the fact that my dad had a diplomatic job meant there were certain securities we had that the average person didn’t,” she says.

The transition to Wisconsin was difficult at first. Besides missing her family, the hardest part of moving to Wisconsin was the weather. “I hated the first year, I’m not going to lie,” she says. “It was too small of a town. Lagos has about 10.6 million people just in the city, so I’m used to people walking all around, nobody saying ‘hi.’ Then you come back to laid-back Platteville, Wis., and everybody’s totally nice. I didn’t know how to embrace it, but then I thought it might not be such a bad thing that people are nice here, and not such a bad thing that you don’t have too many things to do.”

Despite her initial misgivings, she stayed there to complete a bachelor’s of science degree in computer science with a minor in French. She managed to graduate debt-free with the help of scholarships, funding from her family and working jobs as a campus tour guide, at a burger shop and as a network consultant who helped to debug the campus computer network.

She found Platteville a welcoming environment and felt accepted despite the fact that only “two or three” other native Africans attended the same college.

“There were times I wished I had people who knew where I was from, understood my background and mannerisms, but honestly it was just good to meet people who were different,” she says.

Sesay joined Rockwell Collins in 2005 and went on to earn a master’s degree in systems engineering from Iowa State University. She is working to obtain project management professional certification from Villanova University.

She first became interested in working with computers as a teenager after opening a file with the infamous “I Love You” virus on her father’s Intel laptop and working with him to fix the damage. “My dad had a laptop and that was the coolest thing ever,” she says. “I was always a big fan of trying things out.”

Continued on page 23
out, and I knew I had an interest in computers. It was a luxury then, because you didn’t have computers in school, you had typewriters.”

Sesay has emulated her father, an electrical engineer by training who died in 2002, in more ways than one. Like her dad, she is fluent in three languages — English, French (which she has been tutored in since childhood) and Krio, the national language of Sierra Leone.

It’s not a language spoken by many Americans, although Sesay was once surprised to hear her native tongue being spoken by a Rockwell Collins cafeteria worker.

“I thought it was my mom!” Sesay says. “There are lots of dialects of it. There are lots of refugees from the war – they land everywhere.”

Sesay has landed many places herself, filling three passports traveling around the globe. She returns to visit her mother in Sierra Leone almost every year and likes to visit her older sister in Dublin. She has traveled many other places abroad, from Geneva to the Grand Canary Islands, and within the U.S. enjoys visits to the West Coast.

At home, Sesay stays busy with after-work activities. She is an active member of the First Assembly of God Church in Cedar Rapids and the Wind and Fire Ministries prayer group. Last October, she started her own online business marketing wedding and party favors, Emma’s Favors and Gifts. Inspired by her mother’s wedding shop back in Freetown and her own desire to be an entrepreneur, Sesay calls her business “one of my late-night hobbies.”

Sesay also serves as chair of the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers, which aims to build a community and retain black engineers in the area by offering activities and programs such as tutoring for young students. She says the group isn’t strictly for black people; white engineers have also served on the group’s board.

“I think a lot of people look for community,” she says. “At least what I’ve noticed is that people find it better when they have people who look like them, who think like them. I’m a little different, to be honest with you. I think most of my friends don’t look like me, don’t think like me, but we get along great.”

Sesay remains somewhat surprised that she’s stuck around Cedar Rapids since graduation from college.

“There are people like me who have been here four, five or six years. It is home,” she says. “I feel a little out of place in my home country, which is totally unbelievable. Even when I speak the language, they’re like ‘Yeah, you’re not from here.’”

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The Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Corridor is a welcoming and inclusive community. This is demonstrated by the Corridor Networking and Welcome Receptions. These events are created to welcome those new to our community. More than 200 people attend the receptions, which shows just how eager people are to welcome new faces to the community. Besides the receptions, there are several groups individuals can join to build their network. Examples are ImpactCR, Base, Rotary Clubs, the PTDN Diversity Network, religious communities, athletic associations and so much more. Everyone is always friendly and interested in meeting and connecting with different people. A diverse community is something we all strive for to build our quality of life. Businesses, nonprofit organizations, committees, boards, you name it — continuously think about how our community can be welcome and inclusive for all who choose to make the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Corridor their home.

— Kari Lammer
Priority One director of workforce initiatives

Rockwell Collins was a major influence on my decision to move to Cedar Rapids. I did a few co-ops/internships while in college and most enjoyed my time at Rockwell Collins. Some other attractions for me to the IC/CR Corridor are the cost of living, proximity to family, and travel opportunities. Within my first year of working, my husband and I were able to save enough to have an elegant wedding and purchase a home. Spending time with family is very important to us as well. Cedar Rapids is one-and-a-half hours from my side of the family and two hours from my husband’s side of the family which makes it convenient to visit. I enjoy traveling and taking weekend road-trips to other cities such as Des Moines, Chicago, Kansas City, Omaha, Minneapolis and St. Louis. I feel at home in Cedar Rapids and welcome anyone who is interested in living here.

— Nichole McCown
Rockwell Collins systems engineer

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Adisa Kudumovic:
Enhancing cultural competency in health care

By Ruth Paarmann

What’s a health-care worker to do about a Muslim patient who is diabetic during the daily Ramadan fasting period?

Ask Adisa Kudumovic. The Sarajevo native is spreading her knowledge of Muslim religious practices in the Cedar Rapids and Waterloo health-care communities.

Kudumovic started giving workshops titled, “Addressing Healthcare Needs of Muslim Patients,” several years ago at St. Luke’s Hospital, Allen Hospital and Allen College. The information she imparts helps health-care workers understand Islamic practices as well as the specific Bosnian aspects of the religion.

“At first, I was skeptical how people would respond, especially in light of 9/11/01, but America is America. People are beautiful here, especially in health care,” Kudumovic says.

“Everyone has been eager to learn how to help these patients cope with illness, birth or death.”

In the seminar, Kudumovic explains the main principles of the Muslim religion, its dietary restrictions (e.g. no pork or alcohol, fasting during Ramadan) and the customary practices for birth, death and burial. It is also part of the curriculum on death and dying at Allen College in Waterloo.

“It’s rewarding to see my colleagues learn about my culture so they can be more prepared to meet patients’ needs,” Kudumovic says.

She started the talks a few years ago, and she also has been asked to translate for Bosnian patients while on the job as a nurse. This has been in addition to her duties as a full-time assistant professor of nursing at Allen College and an on-call nurse for St. Luke’s Intensive Care Unit.

Kudumovic’s success follows a harrowing experience escaping Sarajevo in 1995 when she was 21. The city had been under siege for more than three years as part of the Bosnian War.

“Living in Sarajevo, it was like being in a big concentration camp,” Kudumovic says. Snipers and bombing were rampant when her family helped her and her husband, Alen, find their way out of the city through an underground tunnel.

“We crawled out through a very small hole,” she says. “Luckily, when you are that young, you are brave enough to make that step.”

Leaving her entire family behind, Kudumovic and her husband looked for a place to relocate. Europe refused refugees, so when the U.S. began taking applications to help the Bosnian refugee population, they applied and got a sponsor in Des Moines.

However, Kudumovic spoke only Bosnian and French, and her nursing training and experience did not translate overseas. She concentrated on making friends through a job in housekeeping and immersed herself in learning English.

After discovering her nursing background, friends encouraged Kudumovic to attend nursing school a second time at Mount Mercy. He and other friends encouraged Kudumovic to attend nursing school a second time at Mount Mercy. She faced a huge language challenge, sometimes memorizing phrases verbatim. Multiple-choice tests were particularly difficult as she worked on her verbal, comprehension and writing skills. The outpouring of assistance helped get her through.

“I am amazed at how many wonderful people are here to provide encouragement and support,” she says. “The instructors were always there, giving positive feedback. It helped me grow as a student and take on the next challenge.”

“Without the support from my husband and family, I would not have been able to be as successful,” she adds.

As a registered nurse, Kudumovic has worked full time for St. Luke’s Hospital and she’s now part of an on-call program in the intensive care unit there. She also volunteered at the...
Kudumovic enhanced her health-care training by earning a master’s degree in health education at Allen College. Since 2007, she has served as a full-time assistant professor there, where she teaches three courses: pharmacology, medical/surgical nursing and complex nursing. The clinical component of the courses leads her and her students to St. Luke’s ICU and Allen Hospital.

Kudumovic is pursuing a second master’s degree as an adult gerontology nurse practitioner from Allen College. Her master’s research has focused on critical care and gerontology.

Her efforts earned her a peer nomination and a place of honor among the 100 Great Iowa Nurses in 2007. At www.greatnurses.org, the honor is described as recognition of “demonstrated concern for humanity, significant contribution to the nursing profession and leadership through mentoring.”

As is customary in Bosnia, Kudumovic’s grandparents took care of her and her two sisters while her parents worked. While her whole family is Muslim, her grandfather, who actively practices the Bosnian Muslim traditions, guided her spirituality.

“Many people have an image of how a Muslim woman or man looks. I explain that there are over a billion adherents of Islam from diverse cultures, such as Chinese, Asian, African, European and American,” she says.

“Bosnian Muslims are more liberal in their practices, which may be due to the multi-religion environment in Bosnia. The Koran is the cornerstone of the Muslim faith; however, cultural backgrounds influence the practices,” she adds. “We must understand that not every Muslim will have the same needs. Hence my desire to elaborate about the specific needs and beliefs of Bosnian Muslim patients.”

For example, she says a patient may favor religious practices over health, particularly during Ramadan, the month of fasting from sunrise to sunset. Nevertheless, adjustments in medications and diet can help accommodate both faith and medicine.

“As far as her career influences, a suggestion from her father led her to train as a nurse, which began in her Bosnian high school. “I wanted to be an accountant, but my father said, ‘You’re a very caring person. Have you ever thought of nursing?’ He pointed out there are many other things you can do from there,” she says.

At this time, Kudumovic is happy to continue her education while teaching others.

“If I have the opportunity to continue these workshops, that would be wonderful,” she says. “If there is a need to make the workshops more frequent, that would be okay, as well.”

She’s glad to have a positive impact on others, giving them the tools so “they can really express their true compassion for the job.”
Cedar Rapids native Kory Bassett, 31, has a true passion for entertainment — acting, improv, standup and writing to be exact. So, when he woke up nearly 10 years ago in a cold sweat worried that he’d never achieve his dreams, he packed his belongings and hit the road for Los Angeles.

Once there, he worked odd jobs, started sketch-improv training and later worked with his childhood friend Ashton Kutcher (yes, they are truly friends — Bassett even lived at Kutcher’s house when he first got to Los Angeles) on his MTV “Punk’d” project. Not necessarily “big time,” but down the road to stardom.

Just two years into his LA venture, Bassett got a call from a contact in New York offering him a co-starring role in a film. So he packed up and moved again. It’s a move, he says, “that set everything in motion.” That motion included spending the next seven years auditioning in New York City. He’s had roles on “CSI” and “Law and Order: Criminal Intent.” In 2007, he spent a month in India where he starred in an Indian-English comedy, “Loins of Punjab,” that was a huge hit overseas (he’s told there were 50-foot banners with his face on them all over Bombay).

Then in December 2008, Bassett decided to leave the stress of auditioning behind and moved back to the Corridor. At home now in Cedar Rapids, he says he had planned to work two jobs and save up some money in hopes of starting his own production company.

“And then, doing ‘Hair’ in Cedar Rapids is almost outrageous. ‘Hair’ was the greatest role I’ve played to date, straight up.”

Kory Bassett

That was before he got involved with Theatre Cedar Rapids (TCR). “I’ve done two productions — ‘Fences’ earlier this year and ‘Hair,’ which was just awesome,” he says. “It’s ironic, because he moved back to the Corridor not to act. ‘But I’ve grown as an actor through those productions.’”

Perhaps even more ironically, his debut on the TCR stage was his first attempt at performing a play or musical, despite all of his previous work. “I needed to come all the way back home to do that. It’s funny how life works like that.”

The two TCR shows were, according to Bassett, amazing and “real intense” experiences. “I was completely blown away. I was shocked at the fact they did a production (‘Fences’) with an all-black cast. And then, doing ‘Hair’ in Cedar Rapids is almost outrageous. ‘Hair’ was the greatest role I’ve played to date, straight up,” he says.

Having never before worked with local talent, Bassett says he was equally impressed with the other performers. “The people I met, the cast, are some of the most talented people I’ve worked with,” Bassett says. “It’s like a huge underground entertainment scene here.” That’s a telling statement coming from someone who has been in the business on both coasts.

Bassett feels the cultural and entertainment scene — underground or not — in the Corridor plays a major part in the area’s diversity. “There’s so much going on. And this town has so much potential, it kills me,” he says.

Bassett now spends his days working as a pharmacy technician at St. Luke’s Hospital. When he’s not on stage, you can find him riding his BMX bike, enjoying the outdoors.
playing ping-pong and writing screen-plays (he’s currently working on a dis-aster drama).

He loves that the Corridor is an inexpensive place to live. Plus, Bassett — like many urbanites reunited with the Midwest — also truly appreciates the trees.

“In New York you have to go out five doors and up the street to get to the park.”

And while he’s not sure where his acting career will take him next, there’s one thing he knows for sure. He can’t wait to audition for TCR’s production of “Rent” in spring 2010.

You see, while Bassett left the big city, he realizes he didn’t leave behind his passion for acting. “I don’t care about the fame. I just want to survive off the craft.”

Thus far, the Corridor is allowing him to do just that.

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I was born and raised by my parents in a small town in northwest Iowa with three sisters, and I always knew that I wanted to stay in Iowa for the great opportunities in business and friendly people. When I was 17 years old, I started searching for colleges to attend and decided that the University of Iowa would give me the best education to succeed as a young business professional in Iowa. Upon arriving at the UI in Iowa City, I was overwhelmed by the “big city” and large university, but I soon realized that I could make my home here as well by networking with many diverse people and being involved in this exciting cultural community. After graduating from college in 2008, I knew that the only place for me was in Iowa City. I started my career in 2008 at McGladrey & Pullen LLP as an assurance associate, and I have been able to experience many different industries and diverse people in the Iowa City area through my career. Iowa City’s great culture and expanding business community have given me the opportunity to follow my dreams as a business professional.

— Rachel McGuire
McGladrey & Pullen LLP associate
Raj Inani:
Hard work leads to success
By John Riehl

Raj Inani learned at an early age in his native India that giving 100 percent effort on the job is not nearly enough. “You had to deliver 200 percent to get 100 percent salary,” says Inani, president and chief operating officer of the Cedar Rapids-based global information technology company Infinite Computing Systems.

Inani first exhibited that tireless work ethic in two-and-a-half years as a systems analyst for a bank in India in the late 1980s. His ambitious and highly successful endeavor transformed the financial institution from paper-driven to paperless.

That success story enabled Inani to relocate to the United States in 1990, accepting an information-technology position with Pacific Bell in San Ramon, Calif. Three years later, after a brief stay in Chicago, Inani found a home in Cedar Rapids doing telecommunications work for MCI.

“We come from a very competitive environment,” says Inani, who hails from Mumbai, India. “There were a less number of seats for any position, so you had to be very qualified and very hard-working, and very committed to your job to get a job.”

A typical workday in India lasted 10 to 11 hours, including Saturdays and Sundays.

With that willingness to work as a backdrop, Inani and his wife, Nita, took a big chance in 1997 and started Infinite Computing Systems with a mere $9,700. Inani was the only employee.

“We have to have people who can think on their feet, very smart thinking. When they go from customer to customer, they face new problems. The solution can be different, so they have to learn how to think on their feet.”

Raj Inani

Here, when you do minimum work, you outshine other people, because the environment in the U.S. is more relaxed,” Inani says.

Inani used that laid-back American approach to his advantage by making the privately held Infinite Computing Systems a global company. In addition to the Cedar Rapids location, the company has offices in Thailand, Singapore and Mumbai.

Infinite Computing Systems delivers customized software solutions and IT staffing services to business and governmental entities. Infinite provides onsite, local experts to develop one-on-one relationships, backed by global company resources and capabilities.

Infinite’s clients include Target, the Iowa Department of Transportation, Pearson, Alliant Energy, Walmart, Bank of America and Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust.

The worldwide staff has ballooned from one employee to between 200 and 250. Inani said his company is worth more than $10 million.

“Fortunately, I have a good team and people have very high work ethics here. Yes, I like it,” Inani says. “There are negatives; we do not get customers here. Outside projects don’t come. But I do have a very good team right now.”

Inani’s team members all possess a quality that puts them in their boss’s favor — out-of-the-box thinking. That is the No. 1 attribute he looks for when interviewing candidates for a

Continued on page 34
position with his company.

“We have to have people who can think on their feet, very smart thinking,” Inani says. “When they go from customer to customer, they face new problems. The solution can be different, so they have to learn how to think on their feet.”

While Inani expects more than 100-percent effort, he isn’t unrealistic in thinking his employees will have 100-percent success. That’s not what it is all about.

“It’s not how much they deliver, but how they’re sincere in delivering,” Inani says.

“Sincerity to the work is more important than delivering. Sometimes, you might fail to deliver, but if you’re sincere the next time you’ll do well.”

Inani demands his staff be in the top five or 10 percent of the people working around them when they go on a consulting assignment.

“You don’t have to be the smartest guy on your team, but you have to be the most truthful and hard-working guy,” Inani says.

By surrounding himself with these people, Inani wants his company to be worth more than $40 million in four to five years, while creating plenty of jobs in Iowa in the process.

Inani regularly visits his company’s locations in Mumbai, Thailand and Singapore. He has witnessed India become more Westernized, abandoning that never-quit work ethic that he observed from his father while growing up.

“My dad didn’t give me any direct advice. He was a very focused person toward his work,” Inani says. “Always for him, the work was No. 1. For him, if he could deliver the best, he will survive in his job. That is translated in us.”

Inani is that same kind of by-example guy, and his employees take notice.

When I moved to the Corridor three years ago, I wasn’t sure what to expect. Having worked in various university communities, I was used to being immersed in an environment that nurture different ideas and a variety of opinions. I am happy to say that I found the Corridor both welcoming and supportive in this regard. As an arts professional, I was especially interested in a diverse offering of the arts. I am pleased on this count as well, for between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids (and the many surrounding communities), there are more cultural activities than one could possibly attend. The Corridor is a great place to live and work!

— Sean Ulmer
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art curator

I’ve found the people in the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City Corridor area to be especially friendly and easygoing. Even though I didn’t grow up here, I’ve made so many great friends and they all have different and interesting backgrounds. Cedar Rapids is a really family-oriented town, with great schools and so many activities for kids that parents can be actively involved with as well. There also are many social organizations that are easy to join, so you can meet people who are engaged in the community and share similar interests, and they will really go out of their way to make you feel welcome. Besides the great family environment and wonderful people of Eastern Iowa, the other thing that makes it easy to fit in here is there are so many things to do. My husband and I are interested in the cultural and outdoor activities, and our biggest challenge is to find enough time to do all the things we’d like to do.

We often go to events together with friends, and even if we don’t, we always bump into several friends who are already there.

— Lijun Chadima
Thorland Co. president

The people, plain and simple, are the biggest asset of this area. The majority of the people I have met and have gotten well-acquainted with are more than a pleasure to be around. Growing up in an area on the west side of Chicago that has a 1 percent Caucasian population and living in one of the most notorious gang-riddled neighborhoods in the city, chances of me making it past the age of 18 were against my favor. Subsequently, coming to Cedar Rapids was both a huge shock and relief. People welcomed me with open arms and I felt at home here. It was a difficult transition to say the least, but my new found friends helped me get acclimated quickly. I went to a great college here that prepared me for the “real world” and I landed a great job with Diversity Focus!

— Daniel Arroyo
Diversity Focus program associate

I have been blessed to have had the opportunity to travel, live or have extended stays in various regions around this world. The previous chapter in my life had me living in the copper mines of Arizona. Accomplishments in my career and educational tenure have subjected me to a diverse landscape of different people, thoughts, processes, ideologies, philosophies and principles.

Having such experiences, one may believe that a person would only experience the pinnacle of life in large cities and metropolitan areas. To the contrary, I have found this not to be true in all cases. The Cedar Rapids -Iowa City Corridor has the necessities of a large metropolitan area with a personal, inviting and welcoming feeling. As a young professional I have and can take part in educational and social events at a top tier university, take pleasure in fishing in a clean lake and enjoy Bluesmore at the Brucemore Mansion. It is all in the Corridor; people just have to look for it. It is my opinion that professionals in the early stages of their careers not only look at their salary potential but their quality of life. My wife and I wanted to live in an area that was economically and sociably stable while having an educational system that met our standards. We have found the Corridor to be a favorable fit.

— Vincent Allen
Mechanical engineer
Ben Rogers doesn’t have a typical day. Rogers is serving a four-year term as one of five Linn County supervisors. His district includes most of the northeast side of Cedar Rapids as well as all of Hawatha. At the age of 29, he is one of the youngest people in the Corridor to currently hold public office. It’s an honor, he says, but also a daily adventure.

“In public service, there are no two days that are the same,” says Rogers. “A ‘typical’ day is one in which I sit in quite a few meetings and make decisions that will have implications for the short- and long-term. We have our regular board of supervisors meeting, county department liaison meetings, flood-recovery meetings and council meetings. I also attend events in the evening and on weekends and ensure that I am accessible to Linn County residents. This is a job where you are always on and available.”

Rogers says the vast majority of the supervisors’ focus is on flood recovery of Linn County infrastructure and services, but that remains just a part of what the board does.

“It’s a challenge to also be mindful of priorities that were important before the flood. It’s one of many challenges,” he says.

Unlike many young professionals, Rogers has always been politically active. “In 1999, my mom ran for statehouse and that’s when the bug hit me,” he says.

Before his election to public office, Rogers worked for AdTrack Corp., developing a political software system called SmartVote. “When it changed from three to five supervisors I thought, ‘What a great opportunity to run,’” he says. “There weren’t any young professionals on the board and that group of constituents wasn’t being represented.”

That, combined with his drive to affect change, led him to run for office. “There is a saying that has had a significant impact on my life and one of the main motivators for running for office: ‘Decisions are made by those who show up,’” he says. “It was not enough for me to sit and hope that things will change. You have to be that change, get involved and be in the room where decisions are made and policies implemented. That is why I ran for supervisor.”

You might say things haven’t been typical in Rogers’ life since he was 10 years old. That’s when he and his family — his father Dan, mother Marcia and brother Michael — packed up and moved to Auckland, New Zealand.

“It’s an experience, he says, that changed his life. “To be at that age and have those experiences, it forever changes the lens through which you see life,” he says. “Our house was on the beach. I learned to surf, sail and scuba dive. You just can’t do those things here.”

When he looks back on the time he spent living abroad, it’s the little things that create the most vivid memories. “It is oftentimes the small, everyday mundane experiences that end up having a profound effect on you later in life,” Rogers says. “Simple things like having to wear school uniforms at public school, living on the beach, swimming in the ocean every day, picking up a foreign accent and maintaining friendships over distance and time. I try not to imagine my life without my experiences in New Zealand.”

Rogers and his family maintain ties to New Zealand to this day. His brother is in law school there. His mom continues work to create collaborations between Iowa and New Zealand. Rogers himself has several close friends he keeps in touch with.
and visits. “I go back as often as possible,” he says.

The Rogers family lived in Auckland for four years before returning to Cedar Rapids, where Rogers later attended Washington High School. Then it was off to the University of Iowa where he received his political science degree.

After graduation he moved to Mount Vernon — where he joined the volunteer fire department — before eventually moving back to his hometown. Rogers says he stayed in the Corridor not only because he has family here, but because of the opportunities he and other young professionals have to get involved and effect change.

“You go to a big city to be a smaller fish in a bigger pond,” he says. “Here you are a bigger fish in a smaller pond, and that helps make this a better community for all.”

The four years he spent in New Zealand often come into play with the work he does in the Corridor.

“It helps you come to situations with a more global perspective and apply that locally,” he says. “And having that cultural competency and helping others become more culturally competent in the end helps promote diversity.”

Diversity, says Rogers, plays a vital role in the Corridor.

“Oftentimes, diversity is thought of as an add-on. People will say, ‘We need to become more diverse,’” he says. “But diversity truly is innate and ingrained in everything we do… diversity of people and ideas. I go back to having a lens through which we see the world and becoming more culturally competent. We can only accomplish that by incorporating diversity in everything we do.”

He offers his experience of bringing a fresh, younger perspective to the board of supervisors thus far in his term as one such example.

“Diversity of thought and diversity of energy has been impactful (on the board)... Hopefully that leads us to find new solutions.”

Rogers says he is not alone in his quest as a young professional to make the Corridor a more diverse community.

“Young professionals are helping make this a more diverse community by advocating for amenities that appeal to families, young professionals and businesses to attract them to stay here and to make this community a beacon for others,” he says. “Let’s face it, it’s a great community, a fantastic community,” he says. “There is so much to offer and still room for improvement. We haven’t stopped evolving.”

Almost two years ago, I was presented with the opportunity to work at University of Iowa Health Care. Admittedly, the thought of moving from the comforts of my Southern home in Raleigh/Durham was a bit scary; after all, I had never lived so far away from North Carolina. Shucks, why not, I can always return home if things don’t work out in Iowa. I’ve lived in the Corridor for about 18 months now and I love it! The community is welcoming and friendly. The people have shown a genuine interest in getting to know me. I am often struck by the many smiling faces and laughter. Generally, folks seem happier here. I am pleasantly surprised and appreciate so much the wonderful fine arts and culture. I really like the beautiful landscape and often take advantage of the nice trails. Though I am more than a thousand miles away from home, somehow it doesn’t quite seem so far. Perhaps it’s the down-home feel Corridor living affords. In hindsight, I am glad I came to Iowa City (except for the snow!).

— Kathleen Barbee
University of Iowa Health Care

I was born and raised in Cedar Rapids and as my parents, two of the most wonderful people in my life, grew older, I realized to fully enjoy them I needed to be in this area, so I moved back. For 20 years I lived in metropolitan areas, San Francisco, Chicago and New York, where my lifestyle was more accepted. Gay men were not overly welcomed in Iowa during the 1980s and my own bias and memories were still in full swing in 1999, but I bit the bullet and moved back. What a fantastic surprise. I found employers looked at my skill set and not my orientation. I am judged on my abilities, qualities and strengths. God has never been kinder, as I am marrying my partner of five years in my hometown at my best friend’s home, and my boss and wife are helping host the wedding. I have the most rewarding job I have ever had helping families. As Dorothy on the Wizard of Oz said,”there’s no place like home,” and home is the Corridor.

— Craig Chapman
Cedar Memorial flower shop manager
Nothing was created to suffer.
That’s the philosophy Ife Chidebell’s mother shared with her. Through the Bureau for African Families (BAF), Chidebell is determined to follow through on that philosophy.

While Chidebell grew up in Jos, Nigeria, her mother tended to child slaves and others in need, trying to keep them out of harm’s way. Drawing on her life experiences — which include witnessing the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, firsthand — she is carrying on her legacy by helping others to overcome loneliness, stress and fear, and to focus on self-sufficiency and family bonding.

“My interest has always been in social work — helping people solve their problems. My siblings and I learned that very early in life from my mother,” Chidebell says.

She is dedicated to providing a “listening ear” for the distressed, lonely and afraid, and counseling in relation to cultural differences that create stress for Africans in Eastern Iowa.

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“Nothing was created to suffer.
That’s the philosophy Ife Chidebell’s mother shared with her. Through the Bureau for African Families (BAF), Chidebell is determined to follow through on that philosophy.

While Chidebell grew up in Jos, Nigeria, her mother tended to child slaves and others in need, trying to keep them out of harm’s way. Drawing on her life experiences — which include witnessing the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, firsthand — she is carrying on her legacy by helping others to overcome loneliness, stress and fear, and to focus on self-sufficiency and family bonding.

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“As an adult, Chidebell was married in 1978 when teaching as a member of the National Youth Service Corps program. Her husband disappeared in 1989 during a terrorist uprising. She and her children were rescued by fellow church members and taken to the airport, from where they escaped to Lagos, Nigeria.

As those tensions continued, she and her four children moved from there to New York City in 1999. She taught in the United Nations international school and felt relieved to have escaped impending violent conflicts in Nigeria.

However, New York presented many difficulties for her family and other Africans she knew. When they first arrived, crime and violence kept the Chidebell family close to home. They did their best to avoid the negativity.

Then, Chidebell had the horrifying experience of witnessing the collapse of the Twin Towers on Sept. 11, 2001. As the Staten Island Ferry that she took to work approached Manhattan, the first plane hit the World Trade Center. She was among the throng of commuters near the towers when the second plane hit.

Torn between wanting to help and survival, Chidebell and several others who were tending to dust-covered victims came to realize the gravity of the situation. She made the frantic decision to escape to safety, flinging herself on what was likely the last subway to Brooklyn. In the confusion and aftermath, she focused on how she could help.

“A lot of immigrants didn’t know what to do, and most of us who escaped the collapse were not allowed to help,” Chidebell says. “For years

Continued on page 42
after the World Trade Center collapsed, many immigrants died from debris inhalation, loss of work, loss of housing and associated ailments. That is when my mind was made up that I had to do something.”

Chidebell adopted a male medical student who was struggling with culture shock and medical issues. He moved to a hostel, convinced he could sustain himself, but while on a business trip, she received the call that he had died. She attributes it to a combination of starvation, a breathing condition, a lack of health care and the poor-quality housing accommodation he was able to afford.

She soon developed the groundwork for the Bureau of African Families in 2002, with the hope that it can prevent unnecessary deaths and suffering like his and promote family harmony.

She continued doing social work in New York until one of her sons started working at Rockwell Collins in Cedar Rapids.

“He said, ‘Mom you need to come to live here. It is quieter,’” she says, so she moved to Marion in 2007.

Soon after making the move, Chidebell started to hear of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi who were suffering from various problems. “They were helped to come here, but after a while, their housing provision expired and they became homeless,” Chidebell says. “I couldn’t imagine coming from the horrors of Africa’s wars and being homeless here.”

In July 2008, she registered the Bureau of African Families as a non-profit and began outreach while shaping program ideas. “We target families, because a lot of families break up when they are confused and stressed,” says Chidebell. “We provide a listening ear — a number to call when distressed, confused or lonely, and we provide counseling, particularly in relation to cultural differences.”

Continued from page 41

Having grown up in Iowa, I knew there is an “Iowa Way:” friendly, community-centered and hard-working, where family and faith are important. Recognizing the Iowa Way as a phenomenon has been both a challenge and an opportunity. Friendliness, community, hard work, family and faith are also embedded in my upbringing. It certainly was one of the reasons I felt so comfortable moving back to Iowa after 40 years. It’s refreshingly to see and feel the synergy of people in the Corridor saying, “We want everyone to feel welcome here.” It’s exciting to be involved with organizations that seek to provide tools for global citizenship in our community. For those moving here, there was a time when I could truthfully say the Iowa Way was raising corn, hogs and kids who could receive a quality education. While all of these attributes are still important, the demographics are changing rapidly. The Iowa Way recognizes change. In many circles of the Corridor, the Iowa Way has been expanded to be more inclusive, more welcoming and more inviting. I’m proud to be an Iowan!

— Dorothy Simpson-Taylor
University of Iowa director of diversity services

She looks to build support teams and collect people together to learn, study and work. “Self-sufficiency is a goal,” she says.

One program sponsored by Coe College gathers African families together with international students to play, cook and work together. Chidebell explains that this brings people together to develop family and community bonding.

With the help of the college’s intercultural communications program, a fashion-design training program is in the works. Chidebell says the bureau is seeking board members; a website is also being developed.

“Our challenge now is to find a place to house the fashion-training program and an office for the organization.”

She also wants the bureau to start a paid African choral group. She is seeking donations to pay participants. The choir’s goal would be to share African culture and bring comfort to people from all cultures while providing jobs (income for choristers).

Chidebell feels the enthusiasm for the cause growing, however, she knows it will be difficult to get Africans to trust something good is happening.

“In the future, I hope that we will be able to create greater cultural understanding and get people established and contributing to community development,” says Chidebell. “I want to see African families learning to bond.

“I also want them to know there are people who care and appreciate them as people,” she adds. “We recognize the trouble that they’ve been through and see the value in making the pain and anguish produce positive results instead of self-pity and despondency.”
Dr. Nicole Nisly came to the United States from Brazil in 1990 to continue her medical education at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. At the time, she felt she had “exhausted the possibilities in Brazil.” As it turned out, during Nisly’s residency at the UI Hospitals, she expanded the possibilities here when she brought an aspect of Brazilian health care with her: the use of alternative medicines.

“In Brazil, people tend to use more traditional medicine that you learn from your great grandparents, like herbs,” Nisly says. “It’s much more commonly incorporated.”

Today, Nisly is the director of the UI Hospitals’ Complementary and Alternative Medicine Clinic, which she helped found in 1998. The clinic helps patients learn how to balance the use of herbs and vitamins with more conventional medical drug intake and to use alternative therapies such as yoga, meditation, Tai Chi and acupuncture for both healing and prevention of disease.

Nisly had not intended to make alternative medicine her specialty in the United States, but in the early 1990s, she began working with a small outreach clinic in Sigourney. “I noticed that a lot of patients asked me about it,” she says, “and we didn’t have anything in the hospital to address that. I thought, gosh, we have to talk about that — that’s part of medicine.”

Nisly began to give lectures at UI Hospitals about the use of complementary medicine — that is, using alternative medicines to complement, not replace, modern medical treatment. Around the same time, articles in medical journals pointed out that at least one-third of patients employed some sort of alternative treatments. It was a controversial topic in hospitals and medical schools 15 years ago, but Nisly’s department chair gave her approval to create the clinic as long as it fulfilled the general mission of the UI Hospitals: research, medical education and evidence-based clinical care.

“Most patients have a desire to take charge of their health and to find natural ways to prevent disease,” Nisly says. “My goal is to try to help my patients use traditional healing techniques as well as preventive techniques such as nutrition and stress reduction as a way of helping them live longer and healthier lives.”

Therefore, Nisly’s clinic doesn’t just focus on patients’ ingestion of herbs and medicines — it also helps them create a strong mind-body balance through the use of techniques such as meditation, yoga and Tai Chi. Still, the biggest task of the clinic is to help patients use herbs and vitamins correctly, especially in conjunction with other drugs they may be taking.

“As people age, they accumulate medications,” Nisly says. “The problem is, how do these herbs and medications get along? A lot of the issues I address in the clinic have to do with herb-drug interactions.”

The issue of using herbs safely becomes more important if a patient is undergoing major medical treatment, such as chemotherapy, surgery or ongoing conditions like diabetes or kidney problems. “Many physicians don’t discuss this, so it can be hard for patients to find reliable information about herbs and supplements, with so much advertising around them,” Nisly says. “A lot of people get information from infomercials, and they become easy prey, especially if they are sick and vulnerable.”

In addition to running the alternative medicine clinic, Nisly and her colleagues have worked with Iowa State University to study the effectiveness of herbs such as echinacea and St. John’s Wort. She also helped create curriculum electives for medical students to teach them about complementary medicine.

“We need to educate a new generation of physicians to address patients’ use of these things,” said Nisly. “Surveys have shown that younger physicians are much more interested in and open to complimentary medicine and want to learn how to incorporate it into their practices.”

Nisly’s interest in promoting complementary medicine continues on page 47.
diverse alternative treatments also extends to the make up of the medical classes and student body. A strong advocate for diversity and cultural competencies within the UI College of Medicine, Nisly says, “Our goal is to see that our college is producing a class of very diverse students from a variety of backgrounds who are both well-prepared to address a variety of cultures, and are themselves diverse. It’s very important that physicians are aware of other cultures both outside and inside the United States, and how things like cultural background inter-relate to health care.”

When Nisly came to the United States nearly 20 years ago, one cultural shock for her was the long hours medical residents were expected to work. “It left very little time for family, and Brazilians are very much about family and relationships,” she says. “It was very hard to adapt to the American idea of work until you drop. But now we’re seeing medical training moving toward a more respectful division of work and personal life and care. More people find that their community and family are essential to maintaining a mind-body balance on a professional level.”

In fact, Nisly’s husband, James Nisly, shares her interest in increasing physical — and therefore, mental — health. He operates Nisly’s Organic Sprouts, a greenhouse-based business that produces sprouts and other micro-greens for sale to both local restaurants and health-food grocery stores.

The first of his family born outside the Amish church, James Nisly’s parents instilled in him an interest in health, diet and alternative medicine. Later, his involvement with an agriculture project at his church in Kalona led him to commercially grow items such as soil-grown sunflower, snow-pea and radish sprouts, as well as wheat grass and micro-greens often used as garnishes.

James Nisly is also president of the Johnson County Local Food Alliance, a nonprofit volunteer organization that works to foster a more sustainable local food economy.

“Most patients have a desire to take charge of their health and to find natural ways to prevent disease.”

Nicole Nisly

“I moved to Cedar Rapids in 1989, fresh out of high school, and I feel that there is no other place in the United States that offers as much as the Corridor. Between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, there are many educational and entertaining activities one can engage in. I found that even walking through the University of Iowa campus and downtown Iowa City while being a student was a grateful change compared to walking through the universities in El Salvador. At the time I left, the civil war in El Salvador was in full swing and walking anywhere left me with bad memories and haunting images. The peaceful and welcoming environment in the Corridor was and has been life changing. As an immigrant, I found the Corridor provides opportunity for advancement to anyone, no matter their origins. I am confident that my children will receive the highest quality of public education, life values, and cultural diversity while living in the Corridor.

— Reyna Martinez-Narhi
St. Luke’s Hospital pharmacist

“Local sustainable food can and should be a part of a healthy community,” he says. “Food is the basis of health and if you’re going to have a healthy community, that starts with healthy people.”

The wife and husband’s health interests mesh together neatly. “Eight of the 10 most prevalent diseases in the United States have a strong connection to diet and nutrition,” he points out. “People need to realize that it’s less expensive to eat better and develop healthy nutrition habits than to spend a small amount of money on food and then a large amount of money on health care. Plus the benefits of personal wellness and productivity.”

Nicole Nisly has noticed a change in Americans’ attitudes toward health and alternative healing practices. “We see people live longer and longer, so as they age vision and hearing declines,” she says. “People are now interested in how to live well into their 100s and how to preserve the body’s functions a longer time. The baby boom generation — which has been one of the driving forces behind complementary medicine — is getting old.”

“Every culture has traditional healing practices,” she says. Her goal is to help Americans integrate those alternative treatments with the best modern medicine has to offer. Simply put, she wants to use everything she can to “help people live longer, healthier lives.”
Woo Jin Jung wanted to be one of the “good guys.”

He wanted to go to a land where hard work was rewarded. That place wasn’t his native war-torn Korea.


“Anyone can achieve the American dream,” Jung says. “In Korea, money, wealth and family status dictate your course in life. If your family is rich, you get everything. If your family is poor, you have no chance for advancement.”

Jung’s farming family didn’t have financial stability or social status. But every member welcomed hard work.

“We were poor and had chores seven days a week from sunrise to sunset,” Jung said. “At six years old, I was in charge of one cow. I learned the lesson of hard work and I still work six to seven days a week, 12 hours a day. My childhood taught me that you have to work for what you want.”

To this day, he hasn’t stopped working regardless of the task. Jung’s first job was as a pump man at a gas station. Today, he’s known as one of the most successful tae kwon do masters in the United States.

Jung, 67, operates seven fitness clubs and owns several shopping malls. He runs a 36-acre tae kwon do training site in the Rocky Mountains and is the publisher of Tae Kwon Do Times. The magazine’s home office is at 3950 Wilson Ave. SW in Cedar Rapids.

He opened his first tae kwon do school in 1973, and his first testing had only 11 students. That number grew to 20, then 30 and finally 100 after one year. Despite not having any money to advertise, he tested 700 people in seven years at the school.

In 1980, Jung started Tae Kwon Do Times and still serves as CEO and publisher.

Even with his success, Jung remains grounded. He doesn’t shy away from getting his hands dirty at his clubs, picking up garbage and cleaning pools.

Jung’s business philosophy is based on two principles he calls, “Apple Tree” and “Not Always Blue Skies.” “My ‘Apple Tree’ philosophy tells the story of how you cannot sit under the apple tree and wait for the apples to fall and feed you. You must be ambitious and go after the apples on your own if you are to succeed in anything,” Jung says. “‘Not Always Blue Skies’ is a reminder that life isn’t always easy. You may be cruising along, succeeding in life and business with no speed bumps, but that won’t last for long. There will always be a new obstacle to overcome. You must find a way to...”
Inclusive Communities

Many areas are inviting places to live because of business opportunities or the educational system and institutions. Other places beckon with arts and entertainment, and still others because of the safety of their community. Friendly people seem particularly abundant in a few places. What happens when you find an area that has all five of those characteristics and more? You have found The Cedar Rapids-Iowa City Corridor! Fourteen years ago, when my family and I moved to Iowa City from Colorado, the first thing that impressed me was the neighbors who stopped by to introduce themselves and lend a hand to help make our transition as smooth as possible. Parents with children the age of ours came to meet the new boy and girl on the street. When some of them found out that soccer was part of our DNA and that we needed to kick a ball more than we needed air to breathe, they put us in contact with recreational and competitive teams that provided an instant outlet to meet people. We soon made friends who cheered and yelled “GOOOAL!” when our children scored, or watched out for them walking home from school, or met people. We soon made friends who cheered and yelled “GOOOAL!” when our children scored, or watched out for them walking home from school, or stopped to chat when we took our evening walks. Work and pleasure have taken our family to many places in the world, but Iowa City is truly our home.

There are many places I have called home, and the Corridor is one of the most welcoming, inclusive cultural and religious communities of them all. I have been on the board of directors of the Islamic Center of Cedar Rapids for nine years. The local Muslim community is extremely diverse. I am proud to be on the board of the Inter Religious Council of Linn County, founded 15 years ago by a Muslim, a Christian and a Jew. It has long constituted a wide diversity of faiths, and is a shining example of people with similar strong beliefs interacting in a peaceful and constructive manner for the greater good, as God intended. As the multilingual son of an English father and a Brazilian mother and the husband of a beautiful Moroccan from my Peace Corps days, I have long embraced diverse cultures and thinking. I am grateful that our current adopted hometown does, too.

—Timothy Hyatt
Midama project manager

The vignettes sprinkled throughout the magazine feature people who live and work in the Corridor and were asked to respond to the question, “What is it about the Corridor that gives you a sense of welcome and inclusion?”

Continued from page 49

work around the obstacles and hardships, instead of consistently trying to go through the obstacle.

There were hardships at every corner when Jung arrived in Cedar Rapids. He lived in a rough neighborhood, didn’t know the English language very well and didn’t have much money. But he kept his chin up and didn’t compromise his work ethic, which is a large part of his identity as a successful businessman.

“In the U.S., people expect handouts from the government. In Korea, you worked for what you had and that was it,” Jung says. “People couldn’t believe how hard I worked here, but it was the only way I knew. I didn’t have much money and ate only rice almost every day. Each day, I would lean against a large tree in front of Kentucky Fried Chicken and enjoy the free smell of chicken.”

Friday was his big meal day. He spent 99 cents and purchased one piece of chicken at the fast-food restaurant.

“I still visit that tree to this day, whenever I feel I’m getting a little lazy or a little too comfortable with the easy life,” Jung says. “I go there to remind myself what I have been through and where I have come from. I go there to become humble once again.”

Despite leaving his home country behind, Jung says he will never forget those wartime memories.

In 1967, he fought in the Vietnam War and witnessed a man get blown up by a booby trap. That experience made his decision to leave for America an easy one.

Jung also saw countless Americans die in the Korean War for his country’s people. In his own way, this martial arts master is giving back to the American people, while contributing to diversity in the Corridor.

“I helped bring the multi-million dollar Korean owned business, PMX, to Cedar Rapids. I also brought the North Korean Tae Kwon Do Demonstration team to the U.S. for the first time ever,” Jung says. “I did this so Americans and North Koreans could see a side of one another, other than politics.”

That’s not the full extent of his outreach efforts.

“I also have established the Jung Family Foundation, which helps children all over the world, paying for cleft palate surgeries that they otherwise could not afford,” Jung says. “Giving back is important to me.”

It seems as if Jung has become one of the good guys after all.

Cedar Rapids is a special place to me because it is my adopted home. In other words, I wasn’t born here, I chose to live here. When I told my family and friends that I was moving from Bridgeport, Conn., to Iowa, I was bombarded with their concerns and questions. “Why would you want to move to Idaho?” “Do they have black people in Iowa?” “Are you worried about raising your kids there?” That was 34 years ago, and I am happy to say that it was a great decision to move to Iowa. I believe the key that makes the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City Corridor so special is the spirit of community and caring that individuals show to each other. I experienced the caring qualities of our community firsthand when St. Luke’s Hospital gave me the opportunity to be one of their loaned executives for United Way. Like The Grinch Who Stole Christmas, my heart is still bursting with pride when I think of the outpouring of support that our businesses and citizens continue to provide to those less fortunate in our community. A caring community is a great community, which is why I am proud to call Cedar Rapids home.

—Gwen Randall
St. Luke’s Hospital director of education/OD

Gwen Randall
Ethnic Clubs & Organizations

African American
African American Historical Museum & Cultural Center of Iowa
www.blackiowa.org

Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans
Department of Human Rights
www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/saa

University of Iowa African Students Association
www.uiowa.edu/~uiafrica

Asian
Commission on the Status of Iowans of Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage
www.iowacapi.org

Iowa Asian Alliance
www.iowaasianalliance.com

Buddhist
Cedar Rapids Zen Center
Cedarrapidszencenter.org

Wat Lao Buddhavath of Iowa
The Lao Buddhist
www.watlaoiowa.org

Chinese
Friendship Association of Chinese Students & Scholars (FACSS)
Chen Zhou, president
www.uiowa.edu/~facss/

Iowa Chinese Language School
www.iowachineseschool.org

Czech/Slovak
The National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library
www.ncsml.org

Danish
The Danish Immigrant Museum
www.danishmuseum.org

Filipino
Filipino-American Association of Iowa
www.filamofiowa.com

German
Amana Heritage Society
www.amanaheritage.org

Greek
Church of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
www.stjohncr.org

Hindu
Hindu Temple Association of Eastern Iowa
www.iowahindutemple.org

Hindu Temple & Cultural Center of Iowa
www.iowatemple.org

Hispanic/Latino
Iowa Division of Latino Affairs
www.latinофairs.iowa.gov

Indian/India
Friends of India Association
www.foicr.org

University of Iowa — Indian Student Alliance
www.uiowa.edu/~isa/

Indonesian
Indonesian Student Association
www.stuorg.iastate.edu/indo/

Irish
SAPADAPASO
www.sapadapaso.org

Italian
Italian-American Cultural Center
www.iaccopia.org/

International Student Programs
Intercultural Life Office
Office of Intercultural Life
Cornell College
http://www.cornellcollege.edu/intercultural-life/

Kirkwood International Students Office
www.kirkwood.edu

University of Iowa
International Programs
www.intl-programs.uiowa.edu
Clear Creek Amana Community School District
www.cc-amana.k12.ia.us

College Community School District
www.prairiepride.org

Grant Wood Area Education
www.aea10.k12.ia.us

Grant Wood Area Education — Coralville Office
www.aea10.k12.ia.us

Iowa Afterschool Alliance
www.iowafterschoolalliance.org

Iowa City Community School District
www.iccsd.k12.ia.us

Linn-Mar Community School District
www.linnmar.k12.ia.us

Marion Independent School District
www.marion.k12.ia.us

Regina Catholic Education Center
www.itregina.com

Solon Community School District
www.solon.k12.ia.us

Trinity Lutheran School
www.trinitycr.org

Business, Government & Community Services

10,000 Hours Show
www.uiowa.edu/~tenk/GetStarted/index.html

Access Iowa/ImpactCR
www.impactcr.org

The Arc of East Central Iowa
www.arceci.org

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids
www.beabigcr.org

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County
www.extension.iastate.edu/johnson/bbbs/

Boys & Girls Club of Cedar Rapids
www.bgccr.org

Bureau of Refugee Services
www.dhs.state.ia.us

Catherine McAuley Center
www.catherinemcauleycenter.com

Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
www.cedarrapids.org

Cedar Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
www.cedar-rapids.com

Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission
www.cedar-rapids.org/civilrights

Cedar Rapids Freedom Fest
www.freedomfestival.com/

Children’s Home Society & Family Services
www.childrenshomeadoption.org

Churches United Inc.
www.churchesunitedcr.net

City of Cedar Rapids
www.cedar-rapids.org

City of Coralville
www.coralville.org

City of Iowa City
www.icgov.org

City of North Liberty
www.northlibertyiowa.org

Community Foundation of Johnson County
www.communityfoundationofjohnsoncounty.org

Downtown Association of Iowa City
www.downtowniowacity.com

Entrepreneurial Development Center Inc.
www.edcinc.org

Friends of the Immigrant
www.friendsoftheyimmigrant.org

Goodwill Industries of Southeast Iowa
www.goodwilliowa.org

Grant Wood Studio and Visitors Center
www.grantwoodstudio.org

HACAP Corporate Office
www.hacap.org

Health Info Iowa
State Library of Iowa
www.healthinfoiowa.org

Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association
www.hooverassociation.org

Immigrant Rights Network of Iowa & Nebraska
www.departments.central.edu/servicelearning/students/courses/

Interfaith Worker Justice Center of Eastern Iowa
www.iwjoeiwa.org

Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce
www.iowacityarea.com

Iowa City Area Development Group
www.iowacityareadevelopment.com

Iowa City/Corialville Convention & Visitors Bureau
www.iowacitycorialville.org

Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center
icgov.org/senior

Iowa Civil Rights Commission
www.state.ia.us/government/ccr

Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
www.state.ia.us/government/dhv/sw

Iowa Cultural Coalition
www.iowaculturalcoalition.org

Iowa Department for the Blind
www.blind.state.ia.us

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
www.culturalaffairs.org

Iowa Department of Human Rights
www.iowa.gov/dhr/ds/index.html

Iowa Department of Human Services
www.dhs.state.ia.us

Iowa Department of Public Health
www.idph.state.ia.us

Iowa Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning
www.state.ia.us/government/dhv/cjjp

Iowa Legal Aid
www.iowalegalaid.org

Iowa Peace Corps Association
www.iowaei.org/~pcorps/

Iowa SMP — Seniors Fraud Protection
www.stopmedicarescams.org/

Iowa United Nations Association
www.iowauuna.org

Iowa Workforce Development
www.iowaworkforce.org

Jane Boyd Community House
www.janeboyd.org

Johnson County Historical Society
www.jchsiowa.org

Johnson County
www.johnson-county.com

Junior League of Cedar Rapids
www.juniorleaguecr.org

AM Association of Gay Men in Iowa — First Friday Breakfast Club
www.ffbcior.org

LGBT Student Services
www.dso.iastate.edu/lgbtss

Linn County
www.co.linn.ia.us

Linn-Mar Community School District
www.linnmar.k12.ia.us

Solon Community School District
www.solon.k12.ia.us

Trinity Lutheran School
www.trinitycr.org

Inclusive Communities
Many organizations in our community support diversity. However, our communities will progress and grow more quickly if we work together to draw from the vast cultural experiences we have here, in Eastern Iowa, and look to other areas of the country and world to expand our focus.

To spearhead this activity, Diversity Focus was proposed and then established in 2005 as a new entity to integrate and coordinate existing efforts as well as identify or create other activities and programs.

Diversity Focus is a nonprofit organization devoted to enhancing the diversity of the Cedar Rapids - Iowa City Corridor with the following goals:

- **Communication** - Promote awareness, inclusion and that diversity is welcomed, necessary, and valued in the community
- **Findit! Connect to All Things Diverse** - Findit! is an online repository of ethnic and diverse resources and services, for new and not so new community members
- **Program Enhancement** - Advance new ideas and opportunities through interactive programs to enhance diversity and inclusion within the community

For a complete listing, please visit: www.diversityfocus.org/findit

### Persons with Disabilities

- **Deaf Services Commission of Iowa**
  www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/dis

- **Iowa Department of Human Rights**
  www.iowa.gov/state/main/disabilities.html

- **Standing by Words Center**
  www.standingbywords.org

- **Systems Unlimited, Inc. – Serving People with Disabilities**
  www.sui.org

- **University of Iowa Center on Aging**
  www.centeronaging.uiowa.edu

- **Waypoint**
  www.waypointservices.org

### Media

- **Art Scene Iowa**
  www.artsceneiowa.com

- **Corridor Business Journal**
  www.corridorbiznews.com

- **Daily Iowan**
  www.dailyiowan.com

- **Des Moines Register**
  www.desmoinesregister.com

- **Gazette Communications**
  www.gazetteonline.com

- **Iowa City Press-Citizen**
  www.press-citizen.com

- **Public Access Television – Iowa City**
  www.pats.t

### Staff

- **Daniel Arroyo**, Program Assistant
- **Hazel Pegues**, Executive Director of Diversity Focus
- **Stacie Bedford**, Communications Manager
What are you looking for?

Thinking about moving to the Corridor and looking for ways to get connected to others with similar interests? Have you been looking for specific ethnic foods? How about resources to develop a diversity and inclusion plan for yourself, department, community or business? Diversity Focus provides an easy way to find what you are looking for, Findit!

Findit! at www.diversityfocus.org is a Diversity Focus online resource that provides an easy way to find whatever you are looking for, ethnic restaurants in the Corridor, personal care, diversity resources, civil rights groups, arts and culture, and many, many more.

Searching for “African” provides possible places of worship, arts and culture, social clubs and ethnic organizations in the Corridor.

The power of Findit! lies in the ability for contributors to keep information up-to-date and relevant. Like Wikipedia, Findit! is built on wiki technology that allows anyone interested in contributing information to provide new entries or make corrections to existing information.

It can be hard to get “connected” in any community. Findit! provides a way to see what’s going on in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Corridor and get to know people with similar interests.

Findit!
Comprehensive lists of All Things Diverse in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Corridor

Findit! Categories:

- Adoption Services
- Arts & Culture
- Child Care Services
- Civil Rights Groups
- Disability Resources
- Diversity Resources, inclusion training, strategic planning
- Education, includes minority grants & scholarships
- Employment
- Food Markets
- Gay & Lesbian Resources
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Nightlife
- Personal Care, e.g. hair care, etc.
- Recreation & Sports
- Restaurants
- Shelters
- Social Networks — Connecting with Others in the Corridor
- Translation Services
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Worship Centers

www.diversityfocus.org/findit

Become a Findit! Contributor
Diversity Focus is seeking people interested in being part of Findit! Go to www.diversityfocus.org/contact-us. We’ll set you up to make new entries and keep existing information always up-to-date. Help others in the community and those thinking about moving to the Corridor to connect. Share what you’ve learned and places you’ve found that make the Corridor home.
Diversity Focus thanks its generous sponsors.

For more information on becoming a Diversity Focus sponsor or member, please visit our website at www.diversityfocus.org/sponsor-levels.