



PRESIDENT'S CORNER BY GRANT CURTIS

As we continue to move through 2020, I find that I must periodically recharge my “batteries.” I wanted to take a few minutes to share my thought on “recharging.” My time is split between two non-profits (QCAIR and Underwear Because We Care), my wife and family, other non-profits, church, fixing things that need repair at home, and taking time for myself. This list is not complete nor is it prioritized and I’m sure I’m forgetting something.

If I find myself feeling run down mentally, I find myself in one of those valleys. For those who are introverts, like me, our energy comes from within. Outside factors can and do influence us, but normally do not add to our energy levels. You might ask how introverts recharge then. This may seem a little simple, but we dig down deep into ourselves and find an internal source of strength to recharge with. I have found that this always works; however, I have also found that as I get older, it becomes more difficult to find that “source” of energy.

When I was younger, I did not have to dig very deep and this was true for the first six decades of my life and most of the seventh. In truth, I did not understand why older people seemed to “kick back” and operate at a reduced level of energy. However, as I approach the beginning of my eighth decade, I am beginning to understand. It’s like that saying: “You can only hit your head against the wall so many times before you stop.” I guess I still haven’t learned very much, as I still continue to hit my head against the wall, but at this point, I wonder if I’ll ever make headway?

For me, voting is similar to “recharging your batteries.” I would encourage everyone who is eligible to vote to do so. It is your opportunity to recharge the batteries of our governments (I am talking about more than just the national election). No matter how you vote, you will find times that you feel like you’re hitting your head against that wall and still at other times, you will feel like you’re moving that wall an inch or less.

I will, however, say that if you don’t vote, please don’t ask me to listen to you say anything about our governments, the politicians who fill positions, or the policies of those politicians. Your vote is your license to speak about those three. Failure to vote means that you are not licensed or entitled to a seat at the table.

Before you decide not to vote, ask yourself do I deserve a seat at the table? I hope you find the answer is YES!

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BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: ISAAC CARR

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

I am part of QCAIR because it was organized to help immigrants and refugees like me. I like to help another suffering human being to meet a specific goal.

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

I came to the United States in search of new hope for the future for my family. I am a Liberian refugee who endured the Liberian Civil War that lasted for 14 years. I had the opportunity to serve in my church in youth and development, choir, and as Church Secretary. I was very fortunate to work for the UN and Save The Children (UK) as "Junior Child Protection Officer" for five years. I resigned before coming to the US.

What are your hopes for the future of QCAIR?

My hope is to see QCAIR grow into a bigger nonprofit program like World Relief and Project Now. I want to continue caring for those who deserve our help. Some ways I want to do this are through organizing the Quad Cities World Cup soccer tournament and inviting partners like government/nongovernment organizations as well as private businesses to unite the people of the Quad Cities. I want to help restore peace using sports and the Word of God to unite the peaceful police officers and all people of color. We need to preserve the dignity each of us deserve.



MERCADO ON FIFTH UPDATE

Due to the pandemic, Mercado on Fifth summer events were canceled so QCAIR asked the Mercado's President, Maria Ontiveros, a few questions about what is next.

How has the pandemic affected what you do? Has anything positive come out of this?

With our events canceled, we had to downsize our team and shift our primary services from providing a physical platform for businesses to volunteering our promotional expertise to help keep our small businesses afloat. We are also in the midst of an exciting building renovation to expand Mercado's programming indoors, and it is a blessing we are able to devote more attention to the project now that events are canceled. This time has also been great opportunity to evaluate Mercado's role in the community how to grow our organization in the right direction.

How is your building renovation going?

The building is now gutted and ready for the next phase of renovation. The plans are very exciting, and we can't wait to get the community using the space! Our estimated completion date is June 2021.

In light of world events, what are your current hopes and goals for the Mercado on Fifth?

Our main goal at this time is to support Mercado vendors through the pandemic since minority-owned businesses have been disproportionately affected. A secondary project has been that other minority groups have come to ask us for advice in starting their own *mercados*. We feel that every community would benefit from a weekly family-friendly event that supports business, culture and community networking, and are happy to share our five years of experience with them.



For more information, visit <https://www.mercadoonfifth.org> or visit them on Facebook!



The 2020 Immigrant Entrepreneur's Summit for eastern Iowa and Illinois was held virtually on Saturday, August 14th and had 183 registrations. The event showcased the vibrant immigrant entrepreneurs that make up the fabric of our communities.

If you were not able to attend and would like to check out the awards videos, they can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/2HJySoD>.

The next 2020 National Immigrant Entrepreneur's Summit will be held virtually on Saturday, November 21st, 2020 from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM.

Registration starts at \$35. You can buy tickets and learn more about the event at <https://bit.ly/3jszcBy>.

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GRANTS RECEIVED

- Progressive Action for the Common Good (\$5,000)
- QC Community Foundation (\$5,000)
- The Helpenstell Foundation Fund (\$20,000)
- Northwest Bank and Trust Co. (\$1,000)
- Wells Fargo Foundation (\$5,000)

For Illinois US Citizenship Outreach Program from the State of IL with the IL Coalition for Immigrants and Refugee Rights (\$7,500)

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WORLD RELIEF FACES CHALLENGING TIMES



Even without a pandemic, the path to U.S. Citizenship is not an easy one. Since COVID, World Relief has had to shift to virtual appointments with its clients, so each citizenship application takes longer to process and fewer numbers of people can be helped.

Another complication is the fee increase taking place on **October 2nd, 2020**. Citizenship application fees will increase to almost \$1200 per individual and no fee waivers will be accepted. For those who would like to apply for citizenship at the cheapest rate, try to do so before the fee increase on October 2nd.

Another difficulty right now is the limited number of accredited representatives able to help those seeking citizenship. To help the process go more smoothly, clients should have their information ready regarding employment and address information for the last five years, as well as information about marriages, children, and criminal history.

Despite all of this, World Relief is adapting and continues to make a difference in the lives of so many Quad Citizens.

For more information about the work they do, visit worldreliefmoline.org.

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CATALYST KITCHEN, SERVING UP HOPE IN THE QUAD CITIES

If you're familiar with Moline's Florecente neighborhood, you might have heard of Catalyst Kitchen at St. John's Lutheran Church in Rock Island. And chances are, you may have heard of Melissa Friedhof-Rogers, the woman behind the transforming work they do in our community.



Melissa's background in social work and business management led to her involvement in Catalyst Kitchen, a commercially licensed kitchen at St. John's available to rental by food industry entrepreneurs. They also provide guidance and mentorship to those interested in starting their own businesses (in both English and Spanish).

Catalyst Kitchen also partners with other local organizations to create a network of support. Recently, they received a grant from Progressive Action for the Common Good to help entrepreneurs pay for the Food Manager Course (a requirement for food producers) as well as microgrants for equipment.

One of Melissa's favorite stories of a business supported by the Kitchen is "Tamales for Hope." Maricarmen, an immigrant from Guatemala and single mother, came to them wanting to start a tamale business after losing her job due to a leukemia diagnosis. After much planning and hard work, she was able to make her dream a reality and pay for all of her medical treatments as well as support her daughter. She is now in remission and her business continues to thrive and grow! You can find "Tamales for Hope" on Facebook. Melissa is honored to be a part of the story of so many budding restauranteurs in the Quad Cities, especially in light of the changing food industry during the pandemic. Carry-out and curbside services are much more common right now.

To support the work they do, see <https://www.palomaresqc.org/catalyst-kitchen> or check them out on Facebook!



FALL 2020 VIRTUAL COOKING CLASSES

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach for Scott County continues to offer the program called “Buy. Eat. Live Healthy,” which includes free virtual cooking classes for adults and families.

This program is available to anyone in Illinois or Iowa who meets specific income requirements. If the family qualifies for benefits like WIC, Head Start, or food assistance, they would be eligible for this program. To get set up for the program, please contact Gale Francione by text or by phone (563-726-3237) or by email at galefran@iastate.edu.

Visit <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu> for some time and money-saving tips in the grocery store and your kitchen.



Four organizations received funding from Progressive Action for the Common Good raised for their 15 year birthday celebration. QCAIR will be use the funds to assist low income immigrants and refugees in Iowa who are impacted by COVID-19.

From left: Melisa Freidhof-Rodgers (Catalyst Kitchen), Grant Curtis (QCAIR), Allison Ambrose (PACG), George Barajas (QCAIR), and Linda Sargent (Heart of Hope).

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Quad Cities Alliance For Immigrants and Refugees

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