

**Tej Dhawan – India** Born and raised in New Delhi, Tej took the advice of his father’s colleague at the embassy who suggested he give the heartland of the U.S. consideration when choosing a college. Tej chose Central College and graduated with a degree in computer science and mathematics. He’s demonstrated a knack for entrepreneurship, developing a series of technology-based businesses including Advanced Technologies Group and Startup City. Tej was named the Interim Managing Director of the Global Insurance Accelerator and organized the first DSM Tech Week. He understands the importance of attracting top global talent to Central Iowa and has become a state and national leader in the immigration debate. Tej has been invited to the White House to participate in high level discussions on why immigration reform is critical to the future of the tech industry. He volunteers as a member of the Board of Trustees of Central College, Ballet Des Moines and as a member of the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council. Tej was part of the group that established the Sikh Gurudwara in Johnston, Iowa and he helps to promote understanding of the Sikh religion. Tej says Sikhism is about equality and service; it is about how to live, not about to whom you pray.

**Li Zhao Mandelbaum – China** Li has always had an entrepreneurial spirit, from the young age of eight when she would sell ice cream on the streets of Nanning, China. Li studied business and management for six years at the Central South University in Changsha, China and graduated with both a bachelor’s and master’s degree of Economics: International Trade and Global Marketing. She arrived in the U.S. in 2008 as a Commercial Information Analyst and thoroughly impressed Senator Daryl Beall due to her commitment to promoting business between China and Iowa. By 2010, Li formed and became the president to the China Iowa Group, an organization that provides comprehensive services for importing and exporting, as well as market entry and development strategies. Li has represented several U.S. companies in China including Stine Seed Company. She gives back to the community by volunteering with World Food Prize, the Botanical Garden and Broadlawns Hospital’s Advocate Circle.

**Aiddy Phomvisay – Thailand** Aiddy and his family arrived as refugees in Alta, Iowa in 1979. Prior to coming to the U.S., they lived in a refugee camp in Thailand for three years because Aiddy’s father had been protecting U.S. Forces and was no longer safe. The family received mix responses to their arrival; volunteers brought by baskets of fresh fruit, but there were also KKK signs painted on their house. Despite facing hostilities, Aiddy has remained a respectful yet straightforward advocate for persons who “don’t look like native born Iowans”. Aiddy graduated from ISU in 1998 and became very active in the community at his first teaching position in Ames. He was appointed by the Mayor to the Ames Human Relations Commission. Aiddy went on to teach history in West Des Moines and quickly rose through the ranks to become the principal of Marshalltown High School. In 2014, he was named the Secondary Principal of the Year. He leads a diverse body of students, with 37 different languages spoken and 45% of the student body consisting of minorities. One of the many initiatives Aiddy has championed is the “Not in Our Town” bullying prevention model. He has held many leadership positions, serving on the Iowa Department of Education English Language Learner Taskforce, the Iowa State’s Education English Language Leader Taskforce, Iowa State’s Education Preparation Coordination Council. He has taught classes at both Drake University and Iowa State and recently completed his Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University.

**Claudia Schabel – Brazil** Claudia was born in Campinas Sao Paulo Brazil at a time when Brazil was experiencing an economic crisis. Her parents decided to immigrate to Japan where there were better opportunities. Claudia worked twelve-hour shifts in a factory six days a week. It was a job no one wanted, but she was still accused of stealing jobs from the Japanese people. She met her husband and immigrated to Iowa, where she attended DMAACC and graduated from Drake University with a Bachelor's in International Studies. A professor recommended Claudia for an internship at the Iowa International Center, and she came to admire the Passport to Prosperity honorees and the impact they have on their communities. Claudia is the president elect of the Greater Des Moines Partnership's Diversity and Inclusion Council. She began her career with Principal Financial Group and currently works at DuPoint Pioneer as their diversity and inclusion director in Human Resources. Since her arrival in Iowa, Claudia has worked with Alianza Latino Business Association, mentored young Latina women with the Latina Leadership Association and served on the Drake Neighborhood Association. She volunteers at the Art Center and dedicates her time to homeless persons and young women at risk. In 2008, she was featured in the *Business Record's* Forty Under 40 and in 2010 she was honored with the Robert D. Ray Iowa Latino Ambassadors Award.