

Mone Aye – Karen As a child, Mone remembers Burmese soldiers destroying her village. She watched her hut burn as she ran with her aunt into the jungle to hide and feared she would never see her mother or father again. The next day, Mone was forcibly moved to a refugee camp, where she was reunited with her family and lived until she was 19. Prior to arriving in the U.S. in 2007, Mone and her family received only a cursory orientation about what life would be like. These instructions did not include how to use electricity, a toilet, stove, or hot and cold water. Because Mone understands the needs of new refugee arrivals, she has become an effective advocate and navigator for thousands of Burmese refugees living in Iowa. She is the co-founder of EMBARC and has served as Board President since it was formed in 2011. She also teaches ESL on the weekends to Karen adults, helps community members read their mail, and shows them how to handle appointments and bills. Mone currently works as a Bilingual Community Outreach Worker at the Des Moines Public Schools. In 2014, she earned her U.S. citizenship and completed her GED; her next goal is to complete a college degree. Recently Mone was honored as a White House Champion of Change for World Refugees.

Alejandra Vidal-Soler Graham – Argentina Born in Concordia, Argentina, Alex earned her degree in farm administration and worked in Argentina for a large multi-national company before immigration to Miami in 1997 with dreams of starting her own organic beef company. She met her husband, Scott, and they moved to his home state of Iowa in 1998. She took English and internet classes and started the long and lonely process of making cold calls to start business. Alex took a \$10,000 investment and built it into a multi-million-dollar business. Her company, South American Beef, Inc., moves over 1 million lbs. of meat every week and has expanded to include high-quality lamb, goat, mutton, veal, pork, rabbit, seafood, and poultry. Alex currently sits on the board of directors at the Meat Importers Council of America (MICA) as the only female business owner on the board. She served as a delegate of Governor Branstad, representing the State of Iowa on a mission to develop further trade in Brazil and Chile.

Nu Huynh – Vietnam Nu and her family left Vietnam with only the clothing on their backs and photos of their relatives. Behind them lay the horrors of war and ahead of them a harrowing journey by sea. Her parents worked diligently to ensure that Nu and her siblings would have a better life. Nu secured a full-tuition scholarship, and upon graduation accepted a position at Principal Financial Group. Several promotions brought her to the position of Diversity and Inclusion Manager in 2010. Nu was responsible for propelling the annual Iowa Asia Business Summit, an event that connects Iowa businesses with multiple Asian Consul Generals and their economic teams. Nu has also been a vital member of the Greater Des Moines Partnership's Diversity and Inclusion Council where she was instrumental in launching the D&I Roundtable. In 2013, Nu left the corporate world to become the Executive Director of the Iowa Asian Alliance (IAA). The vision of IAA, according to Nu, is "to create an Iowa in which Asians, Asian-Americans, and Pacific Islanders are an integral part of economic growth and community development."

Serkan Usta – Turkey Serkan was born in Turkey and placed in an orphanage at age six by his mother. Almost by sheer good fortune, he was selected to take ballet at age ten because boys were needed in the dance company. He travelled three and a half hours each way to lessons and faced bullying from the other boys in the orphanage. Despite these struggles, a passion was born in him and by age 17, Serkan had won a full scholarship to the Kirov Academy in Washington DC. He didn't have the required English skills for his F-1 visa, but a wise person wrote on his visa: "Ballet is an international language. He doesn't need to speak English." He later went to the San Francisco Ballet School and from there in 1996 to the Tulsa Ballet where he was a featured dancer for ten years. There, he fell in love with his now wife Lori Grooters. Lori's sister persuaded Lori and Serkan to return to Des Moines to teach and help manage the School of Classical Ballet and Dance. As co-owner, Serkan believes in catering to the diverse learning styles of his +400 students. Because of Serkan's relentless dedication to dance education, in just a short decade Ballet Des Moines has grown from an entity that invited outside dancers and choreographers to a community hosting resident professionals from around the world.

San Wong – Singapore San believes in and advocates tirelessly for a world in which everyone has a seat at the table. Since 2011, San has been Director of the State of Iowa's Department of Human Rights. As the head of an agency serving Asians, Latinxs, African Americans, women and people with disabilities, the enormous challenge is how to address all their needs. San learned how to bring access to all through her own family's experience. Her younger sister, born with developmental disabilities, was the person who brought the family together around her needs. San watched her father, an educator, create ways to improve her sister's life and include her in the community. San emigrated from Singapore prior to attending college and understands the importance of using her own culture as an asset to benefit her new community. As a co-founder of the Immigrant Entrepreneurial Summit in 2006, she helped connect hundreds of immigrant businesses with mainstream businesses and resources to ensure success. As incredibly busy and hardworking as San is, she has always taken the time to give back through volunteering time to serve on boards including the Chrysalis Foundation, the Asian American Council of Iowa, Des Moines Public Schools, Gateway Dance Theater, the Greater Des Moines Partnership Diversity Committee, Iowa Asian Alliance, the James B. Morris Scholarship fund, United Way of Central Iowa and more.