

**Sadagat Aliyeva – Azerbaijan** Sadagat has always pursued opportunities to engage with and create art. She grew up in Azerbaijan and earned her master's degree from Azerbaijan State University Culture of Arts in Theater. Sadagat and her family emigrated from Azerbaijan in 2004 to escape unrest from the conflict with Armenia. When they arrived in Iowa, the family lived in a bare-bones apartment without a phone, vehicle, or knowledge of English. Sadagat took ESL classes and eventually took courses at DMACC to earn her associate degree in graphic design. As a library assistant at Clive Library, she developed a free weekly improvisational theater class for adults who want to practice English, and she offers a similar class to the neighboring senior living complex. Sadagat volunteers with Whipoorwill Children's Theater in Des Moines, designing and building sets for productions. She has directed "Leading Ladies" at Des Moines Onstage, and "Palace of Fields". In her spare time, Sadagat writes and illustrates books for children.

**Nancy Mwiroti – Kenya** Nancy came to the U.S. from Kenya in 1997 as a college student. After graduation, she worked at a variety of companies, including having a successful career as a realtor, before recognizing the need for technology trainings for refugee and other underserved youth populations in Des Moines. In 2014, Nancy founded Pursuit of Innovation (commonly known as PI-515) and dedicated herself to running the organization full time. Nancy is teaching kids how to succeed in the technology workforce. Most of the kids she works with are refugees or children of refugees. She is a mentor and driving force to the students she serves. On any given day, the kids can be found making websites, building video games and learning how to code. Nancy and her team of dedicated volunteer teachers commit themselves to making technology accessible and challenging, inspiring and empowering the students to succeed. In 2016, Nancy was named one of the "15 People to Watch in 2016" by the *Des Moines Register* and she was also a finalist for the Iowa Women of Innovation: STEM Champion and Diversity Champion.

**Sanjita Pradhan – Nepal** Sanjita made the difficult decision to leave her rising career in Nepal in 2006 and move her family to the U.S. due to the political instability and civil war being waged. Sanjita took an entry level position as an insurance call center operator and in less than three years, she was the marketing coordinator for Principal Financial Group. As she navigated through her new culture and systems, she decided to use her struggles and experiences to bridge the gap for new immigrants. While maintaining full-time employment at the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Sanjita has traveled around Iowa extensively to speak on greater understanding of refugees and immigrants. In 2015, her ceaseless efforts caught the attention of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), and she was appointed by President Barack Obama to the President's Advisory Commission. Through a Civic Engagement Initiative, Sanjita has helped approximately 400 new Iowans register and learn about the importance of voting. In 2015, she founded the New Iowan Summer Youth Leadership program, which provides educational and professional resources to young Iowa refugees. Sanjita's other community outreach includes helping organize the annual CelebrAsian Festival and working on various social events for the Iowa Nepalese Association.