

Barwaqo Aden – Somalia Barwaqo Aden fled Somalia as just an infant and lived as a refugee in Kenya. Barwaqo and her husband Yussuf moved to South Africa and later came to the U.S. in 2011 as refugees with their baby son, Abdiaziz. As a young woman growing up in Kenya, she was determined to get a college education and play a role in supporting women. Her mother's life inspired her to become a strong and capable woman. Through her work as Assistant Director at Nisaa African Family Services, Barwaqo has built a strong nonprofit agency whose mission is to end domestic violence and sexual assault in African immigrant refugee communities by promoting social, economic and political self-determination of all women. She is involved in events throughout Iowa, such as speaking to lawmakers on Refugee Day on the Hill, creating World Refugee Day and Refugee Summit event, and partnering with Plymouth United Church of Christ to create an annual STEM event. Barwaqo has shown a commitment to serving her community and creating bridges of understanding between people of all backgrounds and ages.

Mirza Kudic – Bosnia Mirza brings together all kinds of people through his passion for photography. "Something as simple as photography can help bridge the gaps and help people find that one thing in common that makes them forget about everything else," says Mirza, who teaches photography classes. His works can be found throughout Iowa including at the Des Moines Airport and Skywalks. Mirza immigrated with his parents to the U.S. from Bosnia in late 1996 when he was 14. In 2003, Mirza joined the Army and deployed to Iraq because he felt a sense of duty and felt it was a way he could give back in return for the new life he had been given in America. Mirza served on active duty for four years with the 101st Airborne with one deployment to Iraq and two years in the reserves for a total of six years.

Albert Liu – China Albert has exemplified the mission of the Iowa International Center by promoting mutual respect and understanding between Iowans and people from other cultures. Albert came to Iowa in 1994 as an immigrant from China. He began working at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Iowa in Des Moines after graduating from Southern Illinois University. Albert has been key to the state of Iowa's special and sustainable relationship with China. His technical skills, knowledge of China, and experience working in the Governor's office in Kansas, combined with his character, values and hard work have provided him the tools to excel as an immigrant. Some of his notable achievements in citizen diplomacy include establishing a sister city with Zhengding County in Hebei Province, acting as the primary catalyst and communicator in creating the *Friendship Song* inspired by Madam Peng, and working on the memoir, *Old Friends: The Xi-Jinping-Iowa Story*.