Remember all of the times we wished for a snow day from school, or just another day to stay home from work? Who would have imagined that one virus could impact the world in such a big way with today’s technology?! But the phenomenon isn’t new- the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918 changed the way people lived. Even Norman Borlaug and his family quarantined in their house from disease that was passing through nearby towns, away from family members who remained sick at home. How did they do it? Grit, self-sufficiency, family, resilience, and faith. The Borlaug family focused on what they had and what they needed to do rather than on what they didn’t have and couldn’t do. So, how have we focused on what we can do this year to work around COVID-19?

Typically, our interns work in the Howard County Extension office, mostly for the NBHF and partly for Extension. This year’s intern, Ellie Foelske, worked mainly remotely on a few projects, which actually helped us accommodate teachers since we can’t host an in-person Inspire Day. Ellie collaborated with board member Tom Spindler to film an interactive tour of both farms, the property, and the schoolhouse. She also compiled an interactive virtual tour of where Norman Borlaug lived and worked around the world. Marketing materials and curriculum for grades K-8 were updated and are both available on our website www.normanborlaug.org.

Board member Mary Reicks and Luke Reicks touched up paint on the Boyhood House and the schoolhouse, and board members communicated about clean-up activities to allow for social distancing. More project updates are on page 5. You’ll be amazed at the updates when you stop out on your next visit! The self-guided tour around the prairie and the farms is a great escape from working from home or from schoolwork. On your tour, look for our 8 geocaches around the properties!

This year marks the 50th anniversary announcement of Dr. Borlaug’s Nobel Peace Prize on October 22. In place of the in-person celebration we were planning, the Foundation will be hosting a virtual celebration including testimonials from ISU’s President Wendy Wintersteen, Associate Dean David Acker, Dean Daniel Robison, World Food Prize President Barbara Stinson, as well as family members daughter Jeanie Borlaug Laube and cousin Allan Borlaug.

Even though this year keeps us from our normal activities, we hope you’ll be inspired when you visit the farms and join us online!
Inspire Day is an educational event that the Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation began in the fall of 2008, focusing on teaching area fifth graders about Dr. Borlaug, where he is from, and topics related to agriculture. Norm was always interested in inspiring the next generation of students to care for the world. Since then, it has evolved to a twice annual event (soon to be three times a year), including high school seniors as well.

Since COVID-19 has prevented us from hosting Inspire Day in-person in 2020, part of the goal with this year’s intern Ellie Foelske was to create items that teachers anywhere can use to teach about Norman Borlaug and his humble beginnings. Although we are saddened to not see everyone in person, we are happy to share with you these wonderful resources that Ellie composed for teachers, parents, and anyone to utilize.

For those in the classroom, lesson plans fare available or grades K-8, with topics listed to the left. Each grade level curriculum includes three lesson plans, which meet various state education standards. These items can be found at this part of our website: [https://normanborlaug.org/education.html](https://normanborlaug.org/education.html)

Something perhaps more entertaining for children is the virtual tour of the farms and of Borlaug’s worldly adventures. This includes on-site footage of the farms with information presented by board member and property manager Tom Spindler. Overall features of the virtual farm tour are footage of both farms, prairie, school-house, boyhood house, informational signs, and the Norman Borlaug statues. For the world tour, participants click on a star on the map to read more about what Norm did in that location of the world.

A huge thank you to Tom Spindler, Ellie Foelske, and board vice president/tech expert Mark Johnson for making this become a reality within a few short months!

**"Lessons From Borlaug" curriculum for educators grades K-8:**

1. Friends on the Farm
2. Iowa Crops and Norm
3. Healthy Living
4. Meal Preparation
5. Evolution of Farming
6. Crops Farm to Table
7. Animal Domestication in Iowa
8. Global Future
9. Projects with the Borlaug Farms
The Scandinavian wheat bundles known as the Julenek are a most appropriate project for the Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation, coinciding with the work of Dr. Borlaug in his life work with wheat to feed the hungry. We invite you to join us on this win/win Scandinavian tradition that is still carried out today in Norway and Sweden...now also in Northeast Iowa and beyond! With the holiday season approaching and with gift giving on our minds, the Foundation again has these unique wheat bundles, Julenek, available for purchase to display at your homes.

Norman Borlaug and his ancestors came from Norway, where it was common practice to follow this tradition by hanging out these ‘Julenek,’ wheat bundles. In Norway on Christmas Eve, sheaves of wheat or oats decorated with a red bow are tied to a post or hung on the door to feed the birds on Christmas morning. According to an article about this tradition, giving to the birds is a reminder to us that no matter how lean the times, when people share, good fortune will follow. The Norwegian tradition has the head of the household checking the wheat just before sunset on Christmas Eve— if a lot of sparrows are seen dining, it indicates a good year for growing crops. And with the Julenek being made from wheat, what better reminder of the work Dr. Borlaug did to help feed folks (and creatures) around the world?!

Wheat for the Julenek fundraiser for the Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation is donated and planted in the spring by local farmer, Bill Seele, who also happens to be the master mind behind this project. In the past two years another volunteer, Amish farmer Merv, assists with the planting and harvesting of the wheat via his team of horses. After the wheat is harvested in July, the following day another group of volunteers gathers to assemble the wheat into bundles. The bundles are then taken to the barn to hang upside down to finish drying. Later red ribbons are tied around the bundles attaching a card with a little history of the ‘Julenek’ tradition on one side with some interesting history of Dr. Norman Borlaug on the other side.

This year instead of having a group of volunteers gather, the project was completed by Bill and the Arlyn Grube family to accommodate for COVID-19 distancing and reduced exposure.

100% of the funds raised from the Julenek is used to help cover the cost for the food packaging event with The Outreach Program. Each year at the Fall Inspire Day, roughly 300 local area 5th graders package these bean and rice meals in the newly restored barn at the Borlaug Birthplace. Last year was the 5th year for this event and a record of 10,000 meals were prepared for kids in the children’s school in Tanzania, Africa.

The Outreach Program was started by Floyd Hammer and Kathy Hamilton of Union, Iowa, in 2003. It is a non-profit 501c3 organization that has packaged more than 550 million meals that have been distributed across the United States and around the world. Its four promises are assisting with Food, Safe Water, Medical Mission Volunteers, and Education. Education is the ladder by which students can climb out of deep poverty and hunger.

If you would like to join in this WIN/WIN endeavor in feeding the birds this winter and supporting the food packaging event with the 5th graders you can contact the Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation at the Cresco Area Chamber of Commerce at 563-547-3434 or Vickie Grube at 563-203-0186. Wheat bundles are also available for shipping.

Amishman Merv collaborates with Bill to plant and harvest wheat for our Julenek fundraiser.
The Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation collaborates with Iowa State University’s College of Agriculture & Life Sciences to select a summer student intern to help with projects for the Foundation and also with the Howard County ISU Extension office in Cresco. This year’s intern was Ellie Foelske, who we interviewed below.

**Hometown:** Denver, IA  
**Majors:** Agriculture & Life Sciences Education (Communications option), and Environmental Sciences

**What sparked your interest in the Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation internship?**  
I discovered this internship within CyHire of Iowa State University. The opportunities this internship provides, the importance of sharing Dr. Borlaug’s work, and relevance to my career goals is ultimately what attracted me to this summer experience. I am continually amazed by Dr. Borlaug’s drive for helping others. Although his work was not easy for him and his family, he kept the end goal in sight: to feed the world.

**What was your favorite part of the internship?**  
My favorite part of my internship was getting to work one-on-one with numerous board members to create a virtual tour that encompasses what the farms are, what they stand for, and how they came to be. In the process of doing so, I learned more about Norman than any textbook could describe.

**What is your favorite Norman Borlaug story?**  
From my understanding, Norm and his sisters grew up during a time where harmful illnesses were striking children across the country. To remain healthy and happy, Norman’s family remained on their little Norwegian farm secluded from the country’s chaos. This story of camping out at home reminds me a lot of what we all have been told to do due to COVID-19. I find comfort in knowing if Norman stayed home and remained untainted by disease, then I can, too.

**How has learning more about Norm’s home through this internship impacted you?**  
Learning more about Norm’s home throughout my internship has given me a strong sense of pride in Iowa history and Iowa agriculture. Since my internship, I have taken initiative to read and research more about the history of agriculture within the Midwest.

**What are your goals with the NBHF?**  
I plan to share the work of Dr. Borlaug with educators, parents, children, and agricultural industry workers by creating sustainable projects. This will be done by building off of previous work completed by interns and board members. In addition to education, I plan to increase the Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation’s media presence by adding goal updates and virtual touring options to the website.

**How has this internship helped you work towards your goals?**  
My internship with the NBHF has helped me work towards my professional goals by giving me the capacity to expand in areas I feel are both strengths and weaknesses. I have created educational materials in the past, but the curriculums I created this summer helped me understand the importance of meeting learning standards for Iowa schools. Additionally, I learned how to use another digital creation software – Adobe Captivate. I foresee these experiences helping me become a more marketable candidate as I begin my job search.

**Why do you think folks should visit the birthplace and boyhood farms of Norman Borlaug?**  
Families should visit the birthplace and boyhood farms of Norman Borlaug because they showcase valuable pieces of Iowa history. The information and stories told on the farms sadly are not shared in schools and other places that share historical information. Iowa history is something to celebrate and Norman’s story is one for all Iowans to be proud of!
2020 PROJECT UPDATE

With restrictions on in-person get-togethers and for the safety of everyone, we put our focus on some projects around the farms. Within the next month we’ll be completing our goal to remove the addition on the birthplace house—stay tuned to our Facebook page for updates! Thanks to our many volunteers and donors for your support and assistance—we can’t do it without you! Stop on out and take a peak!

A wood/coal burning stove was installed in the one room schoolhouse. Board member Tom Spindler acquired this one, which is similar to the ones used when Norm attended school.

FIND US ONLINE!

NBHF
Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation

@nbhf_cresco

@borlaugheritage

www.normanborlaug.org

Spring flooding washed the bridge down the creek, so a new culvert system was installed to replace it. Work was also done along the streambank for erosion control.

A shelterhouse with bathrooms and plumbing was installed on the boyhood farm this summer. Thanks to all involved in making this project a reality! It will be useful for visitors, tours, Inspire Day, board meetings, and more.
GET INVOLVED

Tour– Feel free to take a self-guided tour along the walking trail. Tours are also hosted with events, or privately upon request.

Geocache– Make a point to search for 8 geocaches that can be found on and between the farms and other important sites in Dr. Borlaug’s life!

Teach– Bring out the class to teach a few lessons, or simply for a field trip!

Volunteer– Help the foundation with maintenance or with upcoming projects.

Donate– Monetary donations help us reach goals of educating and inspiring visitors to help others, like Norm did.

Meet– Host a meeting and enjoy the tranquility of the farms.

CONTACT US AT:
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CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS:
Bill Reed
Mary Reicks
Christina Riessen
Laura Schmauss
Neil Shaffer
Shirley Sovereign
Tom Spindler (Property Manager)
Dale Vagts
Ted Wilson

Do you want to help continue Norm’s legacy through preservation of his childhood homes and through educational efforts?

DONATE!

DONOR LEVELS:
Nobel Prize: $5,000
Medal of Freedom: $2,500
Gold Medal: $1,000
Benefactor Level: $500
Sheaf Level: $250
Stalk Level: $100
Seed Level: $50
Friends of NBHF: $25

Donations can be made at www.normanborlaug.org or mailed to:
NBHF
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Cresco, IA 52136

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