



WORLD FOOD PRIZE FOUNDATION NORMAN E. BORLAUG INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

2025 Norman E. Borlaug International Dialogue

Session Title: Growing Generational Legacies

Date: October 21, 2025

Speakers

- Isaac Vosburg | World Food Prize Foundation Youth Programs Alum and Student, Grinnell College
- Zachary Thomas Vosburg | World Food Prize Foundation Youth Programs Alum and Veterinarian, Hampton Veterinary Center

Transcript

Issac Vosburg:

Esteemed guests, I have the honor of not only being here, but introducing you to my father. This is doctor Zachary Vosberg. He's a mixed animal practitioner in North Central Iowa. And back in 1999, twenty six years ago, he was part of the second ever group of Borlaug Ruan International Interns, where he spent a summer working at the International Livestock Research Institute in Nairobi, Kenya.

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

Following that, I get to introduce my son, Isaac Vosberg, global citizen, probably the most popular student at Grinnell in the freshman class there at college, and he was at the S. M. Sehgal Foundation in India this past summer. So they've asked us to speak and knowing the father-son team, guess we're the first dynamic duo of the World Food Prize. And I think Norm would be awful happy.

This is what he's looking for. One of the things that we wanna probably touch base or at least look at Okay. Is the differences between

Issac Vosburg:

Your experience.

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

My experience and your experience.



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Issac Vosburg:

Twenty six years is an awful long time, and I think that that speaks to, you know, the fact that that these youth programs have been around for so long now. You can have a father who did this when he was my age, and you can have someone like myself who gets to look up to that. Right? Who gets to understand the impacts of the world food prize watching Iowa PBS every October to watch the the Laureate Awards ceremony. Right?

And was just that was just another another night. Right? It was something that that was that was ingrained whether I realized it or not into my childhood, and I think that I'm grateful for that. Such that when I was able to go off and have my own experiences, I could build off of the stories that you share.

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

When I was in high school, my idea of world hunger was fairly simple. As a teenage boy when the refrigerator is empty, my world was hungry. I now have a much bigger, much more global sense of that. What caused you to want to follow or flip the script depending on how you look at it and do something that I did or similar to?

Issac Vosburg:

I think that the biggest thing for me was looking at who in my life had been my role models. First off was was you. I got to grow up hearing these stories of you sitting down at the table at breakfast at summit reading the Scientific American to doctor Norman Borlaug because his eyes weren't as good as they used to be. And, you know, I think that that had a profound impact as I went and I started to create these experiences and opportunities for myself. One of the other big factors was we've been hosting exchange students since I was five years old, and that was through a connection that you had with the World Food Prize that we began hosting in the first place.

Those were my older siblings. Those were my role models as well. And so my junior year of high school, I ended up doing the same thing in reverse. Did an exchange program sponsored through the US Department of State. I lived in Malaysia.



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And while there, for ten months, I got to live life on the other side of the world, experiencing things in an entirely new way. And I think that that tore down all of my preconceived notions on the world, whether it be world hunger, poverty, water, all of all of these issues, right, that that that plague our planet. I came into that and I had to dismantle everything that I had known before only to build that back up, and that that started from from you.

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

So my journey started with my ag adviser telling me I should get involved. Thank you, mister Dean Dodd, With the World Food Prize. And once I was involved with that and went overseas, I realized there was a much bigger world and that opened doors to working internationally in Ghana, in Kenya, in Nicaragua, in Mexico, most recently in Mongolia. And then when it came time to raise you, I decided that I probably should stop running around the world a little bit and probably raise kids. And so I still wanted to make the world a better place and change it for the better.

So your mom and I started hosting foreign exchange kids. You learned from those exchange kids then decided to go overseas and now have done the world food prize.

Issac Vosburg:

Yeah.

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

So the bigger question then becomes, if we're on the same path but just in different orbs Yeah. Yeah. Where does it go from here?

Issac Vosburg:

I think it's a very interesting dynamic that for you, the World Food Prize was this first step. Right? Whereas for me, it's been my latest step being able to work in India. In the state of Haryana with three different villages. We worked, me and my mentors, on creating these programs to implement in schools talking about vitamin a and eye health.



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And it was absolutely transformative for me because it was the first time that I had worked a real job that wasn't picking rocks in the field every summer or selling sweet corn on the side of the road. I was out doing something that I saw as a career for myself. This kind of service. Right? This kind of, you know, working to to really make the world a better place.

Right? To be out in it. And for me, having that that experience to understand that this is something that I can do for the rest of my life. It's kind of set me down that path now to where I have a better understanding of the things that I want to do with my life, with my career, and that's thanks to the World Food Prize. How did those experiences for you kind of shape the way that you took your path moving forward from that after, you know, we both did this our senior summers.

Mhmm. Right? What were what were your takeaways from your time at Illyria?

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

It it really opened my eyes to something bigger. I worked on a East Coast Fever project at the International Livestock Research Institute. So I got to know ticks really well. I collected them. I painted them. I sexed them. I looked at different things. I got bitten by them a time too, not without fear at that time, but it really cemented the fact that I did wanna go into veterinary medicine. But instead of being tied to a county, a state, a nation, it allowed me to look at it in a bigger world view. And that really allowed me to take chances and or to do things that I would not have otherwise done.

And like I said, through connections and the thing that you'll find is the world is a very large place and yet a very, very small place all at the same time. And so through connections with the World Food Prize, then we went on, mom and I, and like I said, have raised a herd...There's a lot exchange students. We've had what? Nine now?

Issac Vosburg:

Nine. Yep.

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:



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And I look at things now and I don't see global issues. I see global faces. I see my kids.

Issac Vosburg:

I think that for me, growing up around that, understanding that, you know, the word family encompassed more than just those people who happen to be biologically related to me, that the people that I called my brothers and sisters might not look the same as me, might not have the same faith as me, might not eat the same foods or share the same cultures or traditions. They might speak different languages. I think that was a beautiful thing to have growing up to where whenever people asked, you introduce yourself, oh, how many it comes up. How many siblings do you have? And I go, well, actually and I get the opportunity to share about what what family has meant to us.

And I think that that's an incredible thing to to have experienced the world in that way in rural North Central Iowa. Right? You know, it's it's absolutely incredible what the connections that these youth programs have have brought for for both of us and especially in my life. I know that I would not be where I am today without that, and I would not have this sense of purpose, this sense of drive that that I see in myself now, and I aim to go out and do.

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

So, twenty six years different, any advice for or parting thoughts for those that are trying to climb this conquer or conquer this thing called world hunger or for those that want to do this. I was lucky enough to watch Norm and others like him. I was lucky enough to read to him, spend time with him, learn how he liked his eggs in the morning and things like that. I got to stand on the shoulders of giants and I was pretty darn lucky. Yeah. And I owe that all to the World Food Prize.

Issac Vosburg:

I think that my advice from that, from my experience would be don't be afraid to take your perspectives and your inspiration from the simplest of places. I think that it took a long time for me. I would always say that my siblings were my role models. It took a long time for me to come around to the fact that in reality, all that was driven by you.



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And I can say that confidently now because I've seen the way that that's played out in my life.

And so as you go forward, notice those little things, the people in your life who make you who you are. How about you?

Zachary Thomas Vosburg:

Whenever Norm and whomever dreamed up these youth programs, if he had anything like this in mind, I think you're a shining example of what he had hoped for. Thank you guys.

Issac Vosburg:

Thank you.