



UNA ★ USA
Johnson County Chapter

News and Events

c/o JC UNA
308 E. Burlington St. #245
Iowa City, IA 52240

December 2021

Upcoming Events

Friday, December 10, Noon

Virtual Human Rights Day Event. Dr. Thomas Farer, University of Denver, speaking on “Should We Recognize a Right to Cross Borders in Search of a Better Life?” Zoom ID 913 3410 3854. Hosted by the UI Center for Human Rights and co-sponsored by the JCUNA and the Iowa UNA.

Sunday, January 16, 1:30 pm

Introducing En-ROADS, a climate action simulator. During this virtual event, Jackie Armstrong, a leader of 99 Counties for Climate Action, will invite all participants to use En-ROADS, a simulator to develop their own best practices and policies for addressing climate change. The Zoom registration link will be emailed to chapter members prior to the event; non-members may request the link at:

unajohnsoncounty@gmail.org.



COP26: The Issues and the Results

by Caryl Lyons

In recognition of the 76th United Nations Day, the Iowa City Foreign Relations Council and the Johnson County UNA co-sponsored a presentation on “COP26 and the Road to Glasgow,” by Dr. Jerald Schnoor, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Co-Director of the Center for Global & Regional Environmental Research at UI. Here is a summary of his October 20 presentation followed by Schnoor’s assessment of COP26.

What was COP26?

COP26 was the 26th meeting of the parties to the UNFCCC. COP stands for “Conference of Parties” to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Almost every country in the world attends these COPs, along with tens of thousands of businesses, government representatives, negotiators, and citizens. One hundred fifty-four countries signed the UNFCCC at the 1992 UN Conference of Environment and Development, also known as the “Earth Summit,” held in Janeiro (the number of state parties now numbers 197). Schnoor and many Iowans, including former Iowa UNA directors Dorothy Paul and Katy Hansen, attended the Earth Summit, as did President George Herbert Walker Bush.

Schnoor noted that, in his lifetime, we have warmed and acidified the oceans in a very short time. Within this time period, 16.4 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases have accumulated in the atmosphere, making a blanket around the earth to steadily increase warming. We had a slight bit of relief because of using fewer fossil fuels during the pandemic, but the temperature must come down quickly by 2030, and we must end the age of fossil fuels. On a more positive note, if we actually do this, it can be the start of millions of new high-quality jobs in the alternative energy industries.

At COP21 in Paris (2015), 194 countries pledged Nationally Determined Contributions, each country’s pledge to cut its emissions.

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From the President

by Jim Olson



Thanks to all who attended our November 14 chapter annual meeting. A panel of four Iowa UNA College Ambassadors, moderated by IUNA Executive Director Debra DeLaet, shared their passion for the work of the UN and their optimism for the future. The College Ambassadors program is a new Iowa UNA initiative to engage students across the state in advocacy for the UN.

We elected a new board member, Emily Petersen, and re-elected four current board members: Mercedes Bern-Klug, Barbara Eckstein, Jean Paul Mugemuzi, and Blake Rupe. Continuing board members are Nancy Allendorf (Treasurer), Jerry Anthony, Barbara Badovinac, Joyce Carman-Baldus, Amal Elmardi (Secretary), John W. Fuller, Katy Hansen, Britta Loftus, Bijou Maliabo, Dorothy M. Paul, and myself. Many thanks to the 2021 Nominating Committee: Barbara Eckstein, Stefanie Bowers, and Blake Rupe.

Looking ahead, we are planning Night of 1000 Dinners 2022 and the new Katy Hansen High School Essay Contest.

I send all best wishes for the Holiday Season and 2022.

COP26: The Issues and the Results

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Earth's temperature will rise by 5 degrees Fahrenheit, even if the Paris agreement is fully implemented. These pledges must be renewed every few years, and it was hoped that these pledges would be significantly increased at COP26.

Where does the world stand now on climate change?

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has declared a "code red" for humanity, stating that now it is "unequivocal" that humans are responsible for climate change. Now, 99.9% of scientists agree. We must make immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions to limit the warming to 1.5 degrees Centigrade (2.7 degrees F) or there will be massive repercussions. We are losing 25% of all species in our own lifetime. This is not Jurassic Park, Schnoor noted, where the species can be brought back, but the warming can be slowed down.

There are long time lags in the climate system, but we need action now to have results in a few decades. Island nations, such as the Maldives, are already moving people out due to rising oceans. Crucial issues include such questions as whether every loan from the International Monetary Fund should have an attached carbon statement, one that would stop countries that release excessive much carbon from getting loans. Why should we keep building pipelines when we are trying to phase out what is flowing through

them? Can't we just leave the coal and the oil in the ground (called stranded assets)?

Schnoor predicted that COP26 may turn out to be even more important than the Paris meeting. John Kerry, chief U.S. delegate to COP26 calls this "the last best hope for humanity"; Kerry notes that what we need is a 26% decrease in fossil fuel production, but instead we are heading for a 16% increase. We really need China to be involved in this, but Xi Jinping was not expected to attend COP26.

What are some possible solutions?

So where does the future lie? Schnoor suggested some possible climate solutions. We need electrification of everything, using wind, solar, and even nuclear to achieve it. We need work on batteries and storage for the electricity generated. We need to weatherize our homes. We need massive reforestation projects, such as reforesting the Sahara Desert.

We need to pay more for fossil fuels with a carbon tax. We need to pay the REAL cost of a gallon of gasoline, which is around \$15.00 a gallon, including things such as healthcare costs, to encourage the use of wind and solar. We need to pay more if our vehicles (or our companies?) give off a lot of carbon emissions.

In Iowa, we need more diverse crop rotation, no tillage farming, cover crops, and managed grazing. We need cleaner air, which will

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make people healthier; even a small decrease in the number of particles in our air could save 75,000 lives a year. We need to figure out how to prevent the once 100-year floods from happening every 25 years.

We need to avoid the tipping points: permafrost melt will release methane; ice sheets will be lost in Antarctica.

Finally, we need to listen to each other. We need to realize that the people who suffer the most from climate change are the people who did the least to cause it. We need policies that will bring about social justice and social equity and the ecological well-being of the planet.

Schnoor suggested that only the UN can bring us together enough to accomplish these goals.

What happened at COP26?

In a late November telephone interview with Jim Olson, Schnoor stated that COP26 did not go far enough, but there was some progress. COP26 pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions are inadequate to meet the Paris target of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Next year's COP27 will review specific national policies to fulfill earlier promises.

On the positive side, 100 countries agreed to cut methane emissions by 30% by 2030. Schnoor also cited the Glasgow Financial

Alliance for Net Zero, a coalition of 450 financial institutions pledging to adopt policies to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. If these pledges are fulfilled, the Alliance could be a major private initiative to supplement and encourage governmental action.

Schnoor underscored a point he made on October 20: the COP process, as slow and cumbersome as it is, is the only mechanism for global multilateral action to address the climate emergency. The public must demand real progress through the COP system as well as making personal lifestyle changes and supporting public policies and private-sector initiatives to halt and reverse the warming of the planet.

Housing an Aging Population

by Jerry Anthony

On October 1, the JCUNA and several partner organizations hosted a virtual observance of the International Day of Older Persons, organized by Mercedes Bern-Klug of the UI School of Social Work. The theme was "Housing Insecurity and Human Rights in Johnson County." The following is a summary of remarks by Jerry Anthony, JCUNA board member and a faculty member in the UI School of Planning and Public Affairs.

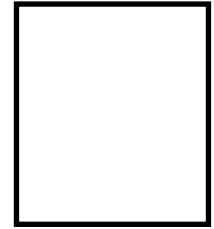
America is aging. In 2034, for the first time in U.S. history, older adults (aged 65 or more) are projected to outnumber children. By 2060, population projections show

that there will be over 94 million older adults, almost twice the 2016 number of 49 million.

Housing plays a crucial role in the lives of older persons. The location of housing affects access to services and amenities required for a healthy, productive lifestyle. These factors are crucially important for older persons. Older persons' housing has to be accessible for health and safety reasons. Yet, most of the current housing stock is not. Proximity to stores, services, and transportation options enables older persons to remain active and productive members of their communities, meet their basic personal needs, and be active socially. Unfortunately, most housing developments today

are built in greenfield sites, with few stores in proximity and poor access to transportation options other than private, self-driven cars. Growing disconnects between the locations of housing developments and healthcare facilities are causing premature institutionalization among older adults with disabilities or special care needs. Furthermore, the cost of housing, be it owned or rented, has increased significantly, reducing options for older persons that quite commonly have fixed incomes. Nationally, over 50% of older persons pay over 30% of their income for rent or mortgages; at the same time, only a third of the national population spends a similarly

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high amount on housing. For low-
income older adults, rising housing
costs are forcing them to cut back
spending on other necessities such
as food, undermining their health
and well-being. All-in-all, the coun-
try is in the throes of a significant
housing crisis for older persons; and
as the number of older persons in-
creases, this crisis will worsen,
threatening the health, safety, and

welfare of a growing proportion of
the nation's population.

Many federal programs help alle-
viate the housing problems older
adults face. These include the pub-
lic housing program, the Housing
Choice Voucher program, Commu-
nity Development Block Grant
program, the HOME program, and the
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
program. Yet these programs are
funded well below the amounts

needed to dampen the crisis signifi-
cantly. Older adults living in John-
son County face a more dire hous-
ing situation than those living else-
where in Iowa because housing
costs in Johnson County, as a pro-
portion of personal income, are
much higher than in most other lo-
cations in Iowa. Within Iowa and
Johnson County, new policy
measures backed with local funding
could help address housing needs of
older adults that are unmet by feder-
al programs.

UNA Membership Renewal Form

Please be certain your membership is up to date!

(Your membership will expire on the date shown on your address label.)

Membership Rates: \$50 Regular Member, \$25 Introductory Member, no dues for youth 24 and younger by
joining on line at unausa.org. Please return the information below with your check **payable to UNA-USA**.

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Make check out to: UNA-USA

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