Susan Stocum
6800 Ashworth Rd. #203
West Des Moines, IA 50266
515-240-6623
suselisto@gmail.com

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Thank you for the opportunity to support the nomination of my dear friend Mary Neubauer as a nominee to be a 2018 Woman of Influence.

I first met Mary in September 1992 as I interned at The Associated Press in Des Moines, where she was a newswoman. In the 26 years since, I’ve watched Mary give a voice to countless individuals.

Through her compassionate reporting and writing, she gave a voice to victims of crime (for example a gay pastor whose home was spray-painted with homophobic slurs) and their families, to attendees of the annual Donna Reed festival in Denison, to Iowa voters who needed her tenacity to ask the tough questions of those running for president, congress, and the governor’s mansion. To me, she was a mentor and a fair editor.

As she moved to the Iowa Lottery, she became a voice at the Statehouse for responsible play and ideas like supporting Iowa’s veterans through the revenues generated. She works tirelessly to advance the lottery’s mission, not just in Iowa, but through professional associations. Among the work that generates national and international awards, I know she loves to step back once in a while and hand out the big check to a beaming player whose dreams have come true.

Most recently, she gave a voice back to her late son, Sergei, who took his own life last September. Not willing to let another family go through the mental health system struggles that they went through, she collaborated with forces from all corners on legislation that would help potentially suicidal teens and improve the healthcare scenario in our state.

She was the voice of her dying mother, advocating for her care. And for dozens of just-off-the-track racing greyhounds, teaching them how to live and love in homes. And for her friends, a voice of reason through professional and personal strife.

Mary speaks—through her words and actions—with integrity, intelligence, and heart. You’d be hard-pressed to find someone who has had more influence, not just on those who call her a friend, but also on those she may never meet.

Thank you.

Susan Stocum