Christine Branstad – Katharine Massier – Nathan Olson – Teresa Pope

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Dear Jason:

I am writing to recommend Anita Norian for the Women of Influence 2019 Award. Through her work at Kemin Health, her creation and sustaining of multiple nonprofit organizations, and her time spent as a mentor in business and life, Anita’s influence ripples through the Des Moines Metro. Her dedication to her profession, to her personal development, and to her community set Anita as an ideal candidate for the Women of Influence 2019 Award

Anita is a life-long Des Moines resident, growing up in the Roosevelt neighborhood and ultimately living next door to her childhood home for a number of years.[[1]](#footnote-1) A public accountant by trade, Anita’s business development insight quickly became apparent as she worked with her numerous clients as a CPA, and as Senior Finance Manager with Pioneer in Johnston.

In 2010, Anita transitioned to Kemin Industries as a Vice President Global Sales and Marketing. Anita achieved a swift business turnaround by first building culture and leadership, getting the right people in the right seats, establishing the right structure. She used her influence to align people with her vision. Her insight, leadership, and hard work paid off. Kemin Health quickly advanced. Following this success, Anita internally rose to become President of the Human Nutrition and Health Division in order to assist Kemin to grow its business while streamlining operations. Since 2014, Anita has led a team of professionals within Kemin Health set, achieve, and reset higher goals through sales, quality, and customer satisfaction. Her secret? High engagement with all members of her team and clear statements of goals and paths forward to enlist all hands in the shared vision.

While Kemin seems to take up a huge chunk of Anita’s time, she somehow finds time to give back to the community. Anita has served on many nonprofit and civic boards in her career including: Bergman Academy, Young Presidents Organization, Ballet Des Moines, Greater Des Moines Partnership and numerous others that reflect a range of community involvement that is unusual for someone of any age. Anita was instrumental in building Bergman Academy into the educational institution it is today, The small private school was busting at it seams in its old location on Polk Boulevard Anita, then organized fundraising, volunteers, and parent votes to successfully move the school to its current location (commonly known as the Old Science Center). Anita remained active with the Bergman School Board for a number of years following the move, helping to turn Berman into the school it is today, a K through 8 private non-religious school (the only in Des Moines or central Iowa) which produces students who consistently test in the top 5% on standardized testing in the state.

Anita also envisioned a greater presence for performance art in Des Moines, and set out to bring a ballet troupe to the Des Moines Metro Area. Her vision was achieved with the formation of Ballet Des Moines under the instruction of Serkan Husta. With Ballet Des Moines, Anita wore many hats: Board Member, Board President, fundraiser, doting parent (her daughter Athena trained with Ballet Des Moines and went on to train with the Houston Ballet) ticket holder, and even land-lady, opening her house to numerous members of the ballet from around the country and world during their stays in Des Moines. Anita’s myriad contributions allowed Ballet Des Moines to flourish in Des Moines (by all accounts, a smaller market than many) in a relatively short time.

Anita is a true servant leader, meeting regularly with individuals seeking advice regarding success within Kemin or in their chosen professions. She meets with young adults looking for a path to a particular profession, people who want to change jobs and try “something new,” and those who are looking for ways to improve and hone their skills. She always has ideas on how to approach these things and she is especially good as identifying opportunities among industry trends. One reason she is so influential is because of her ability to learn from different teaching styles, follow from different leading styles and lead all types of personalities ranging from novices to experts, and quick decision makers to thoughtful critical thinkers. Anita ability to influence follows from the quality of her advice. She encourages both candor and collegiality.[[2]](#footnote-2) Another reason she is so influential is that she always follows through on her commitments.

The attached summary of accomplishments does an excellent job detailing Anita’s background and business achievements. It speaks to the results of her influence in a business environment, her ability to assess and select talent, and lead a team in any area. Anita’s voice is one of the strongest among her peers, her giggle is contagious, her drive to succeed is unstoppable, and her commitment to her friends and allies is inspirational. I am pleased to nominate Anita for the 2019 Women of Influence of Award.

Respectfully,

Christine E. Branstad

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1. A home which she herself helped to re-shingle. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. One of Anita’s favorite pieces of communication advice in tough situations is to write an email that is critical, go back and read it at a later time, and if you could naturally add the words “you idiot” to the end of the email, the message should be reframed with more constructive language. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)