

May 23, 2019

Greetings:

I am writing in support of the nomination of Kay Neumann-Thomas for the Women of Influence 2019 Award. The headline "Kay Neumann-Thomas Leaves Behind Legacy of Kindness, Positivity" from a blog posted by the Iowa Association of Business & Industry (ABI), says much of what I have experienced in my decade-long association and friendship with Kay. She says the quote from her Mother, "Always act with kindness," has served as her direction on life. I can attest that this is the case both when people are looking, and more importantly when they are not.

Kay served as the ABI Foundation vice president of programs for 20 years. It was her desire to have a meaningful and positive impact on individuals, the community, and state that led her to this position. I believe anyone that knows Kay would say she has made a meaningful contribution to supporting all three. Managing the ABI Foundation programs allowed Kay to connect with impressive people from high school students through working adults. She feels both great responsibility and satisfaction from making meaningful connections between the thousands of people she comes in contact with. I know of examples where her introductions have led to non-profit organizations securing volunteers that turned into board members, business start-ups, employee hires, student internships, civic projects, etc.

Business Horizons is a leadership program for high school students. Kay has served as a positive role model for high school students throughout her 20 years leading the program. She worked hard to connect these student participants with industry advisors and amazing volunteers to help the students see their path to a bright future.

Leadership Iowa University was introduced by Kay over a decade ago. She saw a gap in leadership development between Business Horizons and Leadership Iowa and worked with key volunteers to establish this program. Students learn about careers, industries, and the opportunities available in Iowa. Most importantly, they are matched with a mentor to help students navigate the transition from school to career. Kay has served as a mentor to many students over the course of the past 10 years.

Leadership Iowa is the flagship program that is now in its third decade. With over 1,100 program alumni, Kay has a strong relationship with most. As stated earlier, Kay sees her connection with these leaders as a responsibility to help connect them with people and opportunities that will fuel their passion and drive and make a positive impact.

Kay saw another opportunity to strengthen the leadership pipeline by supporting the Young Professionals of Iowa organization. Again, the goal with this group is to connect young professional organizations and individuals to advance a statewide network, educate young professionals on the importance of their involvement in the growth of their communities, and engage young professionals with opportunities across the state of Iowa.

Working with leaders of all ages, companies large and small, non-profit organizations, communities, schools, etc. can be very challenging. All come with high expectations and personal priorities. Kay navigated this challenging landscape with grace, honesty, common sense, kindness and positivity. In some cases the answer may be to “agree to disagree” but all with the knowledge on both sides that all options had been considered and this was the best outcome.

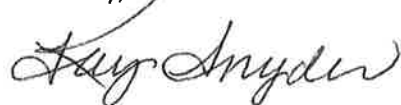
Kay’s role with the ABI Foundation was much more than a 40-hour work week. Many times it would be 12-hour or more hours and much travel consuming her time to keep all of the programs moving forward. I am not sure of all the boards she may have served on. I would say that as a good volunteer, she believes that service is in the doing. Instead of amassing a long list of boards to serve on, she spent more of her time supporting the advancement of her vast network by connecting and mentoring them into positions of success.

One of the initiatives Kay has a commitment to and passion for is Mary’s Meals. This initiative delivers daily meals in schools in the Irrawaddy Delta region in southwest Myanmar. This effort means so much to Kay, as she believes supporting these children with food and education can be a key to a better future for them. I also know that Kay has a long history of involvement with her church, including the music programs. Her strong faith is another force that guides her life and fuels her passion to serve others.

I feel like I have done an inadequate job of explaining why Kay Neumann-Thomas is an exceptional candidate for recognition of this nature. I can tell you that I have heard time-and-time-again, “I would do anything for Kay,” and then they go on to explain how she had impacted their life. While I am not providing a long list of offices she has held and boards she has served on, I can say with certainty that she has had a meaningful and positive impact on people of all ages statewide and beyond, who in turn are leading their communities, thriving in companies, supporting non-profit initiatives and leading our state and beyond. While none of her efforts and focused specifically on women, she has certainly been a positive role model for girls and women of all ages. Civic engagement and servant leadership are terms that are used in many of the leadership conversations. Again, both are key traits demonstrated by Kay. She has made it her career to support, uplift and shine a spotlight on others. I submit this letter of support in hopes that this time a spotlight can shine on this very deserving woman.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kay Snyder". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Kay Snyder, Director of Marketing & Communications  
Iowa Area Development Group

Leadership Iowa Alumni and Leadership Iowa Board of Governors