January 11th, 2017

To The Judging Panel; Des Moines 40 Under 40 2017 Class

I am writing to you to provide a letter of recommendation for Paige Connolly. A member of the Des Moines community that I believe would be a great asset to this year’s class. Born and raised in Des Moines, she clearly has deep roots in Des Moines. She returned here after art school in California where she has opened her own business and settled into this community where she has committed herself and her art to making Des Moines a better, more beautiful place. To say that Paige is simply a photographer is putting her on the same plane as someone with a smart phone and a few photography apps. Paige stands out not just as a true artist, finding beauty and joy in a singular moment that she can capture with her camera, but as someone who believes her art can inspire, inform and impact her community. She willingly lends her talent to any number of causes that she believes worthy of her time.

She worked with the Des Moines Police department to craft the images of our first responders for The Guardian Project. She gave our law enforcement faces, hearts and made them just like us.

 She put the face of bikers that protect abused children front and center with her photos for Bikers Against Child Abuse (BACA) Des Moines. Through her images the hardened faces of some of the roughest people you would see around town were softened when you realized their story and how they fiercely protect the most vulnerable in our community.

I have watched as she solicited stories from her own clients to take photos of someone most deserving – not because she needed to, but because she felt a drive to provide a memory for those most in need. The recipient was a family whose mother was battling a terminal disease. Who after her passing, now has those cherished photos to remember a wife, mother and grandmother that is no longer there day in and out.

On addition to the art of photography and all the hours that go into that endeavor, let us not forget that she is a businesswoman. Running her own business she is CEO, accounting, sales, marketing and production line. A business she has built from the ground up and while giving her time to just a few of the groups mentioned above, she still maintains an active role in providing brides, grooms and growing families treasured photos of a moment in their story that cannot be duplicated but can be remembered with a glance at her work.

I know Paige is not a typical candidate for the 40 Under 40 class, but I encourage you to give her serious consideration. She wants this community to be the best version of itself. She works tirelessly to ensure her business can reflect that and the stories she brings forward with her photography are a small glimpse into all the good that makes Des Moines such a unique, compassionate and forward thinking place to live and grow.

Thank you

Meghan McConville

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