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To the 40 under 40 Selection Committee:

Annah Backstrom's accomplishments in the last year alone are formidable: driving The Des Moines Register's award-winning coverage of the 2016 Iowa caucuses, planning events that put Des Moines in the national spotlight and sparked community engagement, and embedding herself into community organizations that highlight leadership and the role of female executives in our state. She's a tireless and dedicated journalist, advocate for the community, and leader whose reach extends beyond the newsroom. For these reasons and more, Annah is worthy of recognition by the *Business Record's* 40 Under 40 Awards.

While serving as executive editor of The Register, I had the honor of working with Annah and watching her career ascent over the past three years. Her special talent is immediately apparent – she's the type of leader who engenders respect, can make tough calls and is capable of wrangling a cadre of 20-plus reporters to cover presidential candidates descending on the state for months (no small feat). Not content with simply supervising the news coverage, Annah was a key force behind The Register's push for community engagement to prompt civic involvement in our political process. She envisioned and organized a political trivia night that brought out city leaders and politicians, including presidential candidate Ben Carson; worked on the Register's political soapbox at the Iowa State Fair, which garnered national and international attention; was a key member of the Iowa Caucus Consortium, including playing an integral role in organizing the popular pre-caucus media party; and helped plan and execute a series called "Give a Damn, Des Moines" with the Des Moines Social Club that urged millennials to caucus and brought out hundreds of community members to its series of events.

When the news director position became available at The Register in November, we knew we already had the ideal candidate for the role: Annah Backstrom. That senior leadership role places Annah at the center of news decisions, high-level project work and innovation efforts. Annah also works closely with the USA TODAY Network, ensuring that The Register's high-quality work is spotlighted nationally, leading to more exposure for the city and state. And Annah has been recognized as a leader in parent company Gannett, where she's attended leadership training and served on committees that help journalists understand how to better serve their audiences. Most recently, Annah was selected as one of the company's 35 emerging leaders for a yearlong program that kicked off in December at the Poynter Institute in Florida.

Annah's accomplishments are innumerable, and I'm proud to support her for this recognition. If you need any additional information, I can be reached at anash@gannett.com or 734-845-7760.

Sincerely,

Amalie C. Nash

Amalie C. Nash
Executive editor, West Region
USA TODAY Network