



January 12, 2018

Business Publications
Forty Under 40 Selection Committee
The Depot at Fourth
100 4th St
Des Moines IA 50309

To Members of the Selection Committee:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of recommendation for Deidre DeJear, a nominee for the Des Moines Business Record – Forty Under 40. I have known Deidre for over 10 years and during that time I have had an opportunity to observe her work in a variety of capacities. In all cases I have found her to be a servant leader whose investment of time, talent and resources sets her apart and whose impact on our community and its citizens is felt each and every day.

A native of Mississippi by way of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Deidre made her way to Des Moines when she was accepted as a student at Drake University. Active in the community from the moment she arrived, Deidre landed an internship at Bankers Trust that led to a permanent role at the bank as she was pursuing her academics. As she worked to balance her academic and professional schedule Deidre found time to also engage actively in the community. Her desire to give back coupled with her passion for children and youth led Deidre and two of her Drake colleagues to found the Back 2 School Bash. (B2B) Now in its 12th year, B2B attracts 1200 people annually for an afternoon of fun, food, prizes, with each and every students leaving with a backpack full of schools supplies and excitement about their return to school!

A review of Deidre's resume will reveal a young professional that has woven her personal passion for "lifting" people and addressing their individual and collective needs, into professional opportunities that not only tap into her vast skill set but also create opportunities for impact. In her current role as Manager of United Way of Central Iowa's Financial Capability Network, (FCN) and Coordinator for the African American Financial Capability Initiative, Deidre has developed and implemented a collaborative initiative that targets low-income individuals and families. FCN gives its clients access to mainstream financial systems & products while also increasing their financial management knowledge and skills. Under Deidre's leadership, FCN reaches over 20,000 people annually. And as if this weren't enough, Deidre is also an entrepreneur and principal in her own small business, Caleo Enterprises. Deidre started Caleo in 2008 and specializes in developing marketing plans for the small business sector. Caleo offers project development and

implementation services for non-profit organizations and businesses, particularly those needing access to hard to reach populations. Since its inception, Caleo Enterprises has impacted over 110 small businesses and non-profits including the Oakridge Neighborhood who has been a client since 2014.

Deidre's active engagement in the community is nothing short of amazing. She has a heart to serve and it has manifested itself in opportunities to use her vast talents and incredible energy to actively engage in the greater Des Moines community. From the B2B to the I Have a Dream Foundation; the Des Moines Branch of the NAACP to Mentor Iowa; the MLK Prayer Breakfast to the Young Professional Connection, Deidre is active, present and invested in the people, causes and efforts that are making a difference on multiple levels in the Des Moines Metro Area.

My admiration for and appreciation of Deidre DeJear is deeply rooted in the pride I feel as I watch her work her magic. I am in awe of her talent and inspired by her passion for engagement and her true desire to "be present" in the community that she and her husband Marvin call home. The recent launch of her campaign for Secretary of State makes her the first African American since Almo Hawkins in 1998, to run for state wide office. This is no small feat and Deidre has effectively navigated the political landscape with the poise and prowess of a seasoned veteran. From fundraising to meeting, greeting, speaking and organizing an effective campaign strategy, I am in awe of Deidre DeJear and likely could be considered her biggest fan and cheerleader. I am anticipating a primary victory for Team DeJear and an equally successful campaign against incumbent Paul Pate.

As I think of the individuals who have been recognized as part of previous Forty Under 40 classes words like adept, enthusiastic, engaged and accomplished come to mind. In reflecting on these qualities as they relate to Deidre DeJear, there is no question that she is adept at balancing work and volunteer responsibilities, enthusiastic about projects and causes, engaged in making a difference in our community and accomplished in her personal and professional pursuits.

I can think of no one more deserving of this honor than Deidre DeJear and ask your serious consideration of her nomination. Her full potential is yet to be realized and I am anxious to watch her grow.

Sincerely –

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tere Caldwell-Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Tere Caldwell-Johnson, CEO
Oakridge Neighborhood and Oakridge Neighborhood Services