



December 17, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

The Des Moines Business Record's 2019 list of Forty Under 40 would not be complete without the inclusion of Emily Kessinger. She embodies a strong combination of professional accomplishments and diverse involvement with civic, non-profit, and philanthropic organizations that make her an outstanding candidate.

While her resume speaks to her impressive career trajectory, it is her passion for innovation and entrepreneurialism in the arts and culture sector that compels my letter of support. In January of 2017, Emily started Yellow Door Gallery, a contemporary art space that provides the creatives of Des Moines a place to share their work with the community. She organizes monthly events rooted in arts and cultural experiences, bringing in creators from across the state of Iowa, as well as across the country. Her curation of shows involves visual artists, musicians, poets and writers, chefs, and performance artists. For 2019, Emily has established partnerships with small businesses across Des Moines and will continue to curate art experiences in people's homes and businesses to expand the impact of this unique gallery.

Continuing to make an impact through her support of art and culture, Emily joined the Bravo board in the summer of 2017. She has served on Bravo's Community Investment Committee since, reading close to 100 grant applications over the last two years. Currently, Emily is the youngest member of the Bravo board and brings an enthusiasm and unique perspective to the group. Her nomination, supported by Sharon Krause, was due to her personal involvement and leadership in the arts community, her experience working in the art world in Chicago, and her founding of Yellow Door Gallery.

In summer of 2018, Emily joined the After School Arts Program (ASAP) board, an organization providing quality arts enrichment for underserved students in Des Moines Public Schools. Rooted in her passion for art and education, ASAP offers programming in 23 schools across the metro area, 126 programs, and employs 56 arts professionals through their impact. Emily is working to expand ASAP's supporting base, by educating others on their mission and calling on them to support ASAP's programs.

Although there will no doubt be an impressive list of nominees for this year's Forty Under 40 class, Emily Kessinger must top the list. Recognizing her in this way will reinforce her efforts to make our community an even better place for the arts to thrive and will surely inspire others to follow her exceptional lead.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Dix". The script is fluid and cursive.

Sally Dix
Executive Director
Bravo Greater Des Moines