

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Extension and Outreach

**Iowa 4-H Youth Development**  
Extension 4-H Youth Building  
1259 Stange Rd  
Ames IA 50011-1002  
Phone: 515-294-1017  
FAX: 515-294-1047  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/4H](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H)

January 6, 2019

Business Record  
The Depot at Fourth  
100 4th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

To Forty Under 40 Selection Committee:

This letter of recommendation is in support of Melissa O'Neil's application for the Forty Under 40 award. It has been my pleasure to work with Melissa since I first hired her in January 2007, and I consider myself fortunate to continue to find opportunities to collaborate after our jobs and positions have changed. I have born witness how her vision and dedication have turned a fledgling program into a well-respected asset of greater Des Moines, how she can establish partnerships across the state of Iowa, and how she has garnered the respect of her peers across the nation. Most remarkable, she can replicate that ability again and again.

I'd best describe Melissa's as a professional relationship builder with a business mind, boundless energy, that isn't afraid to get her hands dirty. After launching her career as a coach and administrator in college athletics, she moved back home to Iowa where she reinvented herself. She has directed her energy into youth development, college and career readiness, and is now making an impact to help central Iowans that are homeless.

Melissa is a fully invested leader. She wouldn't ask another person to do something she isn't willing to do herself. She still acts and sounds like a coach, asks questions to dig deeper to the root cause, and treats all who encounter her with respect regardless of age, abilities or status. I admire most her ability to direct her talents toward causes that require empathy and a special connection.

Melissa cares about her community. She is a volunteer; she is involved with her children's school, and with her church. She embodies all that is what the Business Record highlights as qualities of the specific brand of professional we hope to attract and retain in Des Moines. Melissa is an exceptional individual with great talent, vision and work ethic. She's demonstrated she is a professional to watch in Des Moines and with enthusiasm, I'd highly recommend her for this honor.

Sincerely,



Andrea R. Nelson  
Interim Iowa 4-H Program Leader