To the Committee of 40 Under 40:

It is my pleasure to recommend Nick Ackerman, CP, LP (Certified Prosthetist, Licensed Prosthetist), for your 40 Under 40 award.

I know Nick well as a colleague of his, caring for amputees, at American Prosthetics and Orthotics (APO). Even before I knew Nick professionally, he himself was a patient at APO. Nick was only 18 months old when both his legs were amputated below the knees because of bacterial meningitis.

He never thought there was anything he couldn’t do, keeping up with his brothers and friends and pursuing outdoor activities like hunting and fishing. In high school, he became a champion wrestler and was recruited by Simpson College to join its NCAA Division III team.

By the end of his college career, Nick was the NCAA Division III champion, defeating the then national champion, who had won 60 matches in a row prior to the event. In 2001, Nick was the first athlete to become a national champion without the use of his legs. Since then, he has received many other accolades for his wrestling accomplishments, including induction in the Simpson College Athletic Hall of Fame.

His notoriety attracted the attention of other young amputees, who wanted to know how someone without legs can lead a “normal” life. This led Nick to change his mind about pursuing a career in forestry/wildlife management to becoming a practitioner in prosthetics.

Countless individuals have benefitted from his skills, compassion, and ability to share his life story, in particular those who need positive reinforcement in the face of impending amputation. Iowans of all ages have discussed their feelings with Nick before, during, and after their amputations. As an amputee himself, Nick is uniquely qualified to be a sounding board and to be a role model that life is not over after amputation.

In addition to his community outreach to amputees of all ages, including wounded military, he is leading APO patient care as Director of Prosthetics. On a personal level, he is a devoted husband and father to wife, Rachael, and three young sons.

Iowa and the cities around Des Moines (and Moline, Ill., where APO has an office) are blessed to have Nick. Many have benefited from Nick’s skills and life story, and many more will. I can think of no one under 40 who deserves this award any more than Nick Ackerman.

Thank you for your consideration.

Donald G. Shurr, CPO, PT,

Director of Education and Director of Special Projects for APO

North Liberty, Iowa