**Executive Summary**

**40 Under 40 Nomination**

I am writing this summary from Rochester, MN less than two hours before the deadline. There are a thousand reasons why I almost gave up on getting a nomination submitted and I certainly never expected to write it myself. However, the reality is that this is my last shot because I turn 40 next year. I decided to just throw caution to the wind and submit it. As I stare down 40, I have been reflecting that my career and life has taken many unexpected turns and things maybe haven’t turned out like what I had envisioned. However, I can also say that I have made many contributions in the midst of the chaos.

Up until 2013 I worked for ING Financial Partners in the Compliance department. I started with ING after finishing up a clerkship in District 2. I was looking for an opportunity to use my law degree and was looking for an opportunity within the business community vs. a law firm. I actually found out about the job because I had organized a block party for our neighborhood and met the CCO over a beer. He asked what I did, I explained I was looking for a job and he suggested I apply for his compliance analyst position. I did and landed my first job within the securities industry. I didn’t know much about the financial services industry at the time, but later learned it was a natural fit for my legal background. I researched and responded to customer complaints and regulatory inquiries. I worked with outside and internal counsel to handle arbitration and litigation. I was given the opportunity to travel to mediations and also actually testified at an arbitration proceeding in NYC. I also had the opportunity to work on two complex fraud investigations. I worked my way up to eventually serve as Enterprise Manager of all the complaint handling teams, including the insurance and annuities companies. This provided me with valuable experience managing multiple teams, at several locations and across different business lines. I enjoyed my almost ten years at ING and was able to build a strong skill set. However, in July 2013 I decided it was time for a career change and I took a leap of faith.

An opportunity presented itself at Broker Dealer Financial Services, a smaller broker dealer out in West Des Moines. The opportunity was as VP of Business Development and Recruiting. I had never done either of those functions before, but what intrigued me was the opportunity to help advisors looking for a new firm and to help be part of growing the firm. It was daunting to move to a smaller organization and to perform a function that was outside my comfort zone, but it was also really intriguing at the same time. I was excited at the prospect of being off the cleanup crew and part of building something, so I decided to make the move. I have been in my current position with BDFS since July 2013 and have been loving every minute of it. I focus on working with prospective advisors to prove that through a strong partnership with our firm, we can help them realize their vision of significant and sustained growth. I believe that our unique culture, multiple channels, open architecture, and personal service are the leading factors that not only drive financial advisors to join us, but also maintain a long term relationship. I also partner with our existing financial advisors to ensure they have the support and resources they need to optimize their business strategy, better serve their clients and expand their practice.

When I joined BDFS, I decided that I wanted the opportunity to be part owner of the firm and I made the bold move to buy stock from two majority shareholders. It was an interesting process and there were times I questioned myself, but in the end I was able to become a 10% shareholder. I am now the first female shareholder and the first shareholder under 40. It was a bold move, but I wanted to have a stake in the organization I am working so hard to build.

In addition to recruiting, I have been leading a continuous improvement project team that was tasked with improving our recruiting and onboarding process. We have been working since October 2013 and are in the process of implementing the changes we developed as a team. A significant change to come out of our work is the decision for the firm to adopt Salesforce, in an effort to improve communication and efficiency. We needed a platform to not only bring all the departments and their functions together, but a way to improve our customer service and provide us with scalability as we grow. I am leading the implementation of Salesforce and am really excited to see how much it will revolutionize how we do business as an organization and how it will help us realize our growth goals. In addition to Salesforce, I am also proud to say we have been able to develop a new and improved recruiting/onboarding process that benefits both the new advisors and all of our internal business partners. We had representatives from each department on the project team and it was incredible the ideas that were generated once you looked at the entire process and how each department was impacted. We had some great discussions and it was so fun to experience all the innovative thinking that went on once we started asking questions and breaking down our current processes.

Outside of work, I spend my time with my toddler twins, Ava and Aidan. Motherhood is my greatest joy and I am so blessed to watch them grow each day. We found out at 18 weeks that Ava had a congenital heart defect, HLHS, which means only the right side of her heart developed. I had never really thought about CHD before that moment and then after her diagnosis I knew I needed to become an expert to be her advocate. Ava and Aidan were born at the Mayo Clinic at 36 weeks and Ava had her first heart surgery when she was only an hour and a half old. She then went on to have several complications and spent 4 months in the ICU. Aidan and I lived out of a hotel across the street during that time and spent our days with her in the hospital. We were able to come home for about two months and then returned to Mayo for her second heart surgery. She had additional complications and spent another almost 2 months in the ICU. We were able to go home just days before their first Christmas. Since then, we have had many ups and downs and moments when we really didn’t know what life was going to be like for Ava. I have had to educate myself about more medical terminology then I ever imagined and have had to balance being Ava’s mom with being Ava’s nurse. She is on oxygen, a feeding tube and a dozen medications. She is cared for at home by a nurse while I am at work and I am so thankful that we have Cathie. She is our business partner is raising Ava and is the most amazing her person. Going to work each day provides me with balance and ultimately makes me a better mom to Ava and Aidan.

Since we started this journey with Ava at 18 weeks, it was always very important to me to give back and help other families going through this as well. I created a blog about Ava’s journey for other mothers to follow (http://avagrace-lifewithanextraordinaryheart.blogspot.com/2012\_01\_01\_archive.html). My goal was to give them a glimpse of what this journey is like, to give them hope that their heart warrior can live a fulfilled life in spite of HLHS and to raise awareness in general about HLHS so that we can hopefully make advances in treatment options. I also attend our local Help-A-Heart meetings when I can and follow and contribute to several groups on-line dedicated to heart kiddos and their journeys. I am also in the process of finishing up a blanket project for Sisters By Heart and the cardiac unit at the Mayo Clinic. We are donating flannel blankets with a special message from Ava and myself that will go to fellow heart warriors recovering from surgery. Sisters By Heart will use them in the care packages they send to HLHS patients and Mayo will provide them to CHD patients on the cardiac intensive care unit where Ava spent so many months. The idea is to offer them hope, support and a little blanket to wrap their little one in and hold them tight during what is an incredibly stressful and emotional time.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my application for 40 Under 40 and thank you for reading my story. Life doesn’t always turn out like we plan, but my new philosophy is to enjoy the ride. My goal is to teach my daughter that we don’t have to be defined by our limitations, but that we can live boldly in spite of them and chart our own course. She serves as my constant inspiration to live each day to the fullest, stay strong, have faith and help others.