

I Have a Dream Foundation

DES MOINES, IOWA



To: Meredith Emerging Woman of Influence Award Jury

From: Emily Westergaard, Executive Director, Des Moines I Have a Dream Foundation

Dear members of the Meredith Emerging Woman of Influence Award Jury,

Danielle Hermann's commitment to strengthening her community through her work on the I Have a Dream board of directors make her an exceptional candidate for recognition through the Meredith Emerging Woman of Influence Award.

Danielle joined the I Have a Dream board of directors in 2011. She has helped guide our organization through a complex strategic planning process, and provided leadership in developing and implementing an entirely new program model aimed at ensuring more at-risk students in our community stay in school, build the tools necessary to be successful, and pursue education after high school.

I Have a Dream works to make sure more kids graduate from high school with the tools they need to be successful, and helps build a strong culture of college and careers so that every student leave high school prepared for the workforce or to pursue post-secondary education. Without I Have a Dream's intervention, 40% of at-risk students in Des Moines are in danger of dropping out before they complete high school. With I Have a Dream, that drop-out rate plummets to 5%. When Danielle joined our board of directors, our organization worked with 50 students. While data showed our work to be tremendously impactful, our board of directors understood the need to Dream Big and identify ways to support even more students. Danielle's leadership helped I Have a Dream create a new model that expanded our organization's scope – we grew from working with just 50 kids to nearly 500 kids.

I am recommending Danielle for the Meredith Emerging Woman of Influence Award for the following reasons:

- Her leadership and collaborative approach has helped I Have a Dream expand its programing and become the first affiliate in the nation to launch a whole-school model for educational intervention;
- Her commitment to community building and understanding that to strengthen our community, we need to identify ways to leverage existing resources and build sustainable programs that address immediate and long-term needs of at-risk students and their families;
- With her guidance, I Have a Dream has incorporated programing to address housing needs, food security and family financial capacity building into our core work – all things that have nothing to do with education, but have a profound impact on students' educational success;
- Her advocacy for the architectural and building trades professions – through Career Day activities that highlight architecture, books on the careers available in the sector, and by being an active member of our board, many more students are learning about education and careers in architecture and construction.

Danielle is one of our most engaged and committed board members. Her leadership has helped I Have a Dream expand and grow, and is making a transformative impact on the lives of hundreds of at-risk students in Des Moines. Please consider her for this award.

Sincerely,

Emily Westergaard, Executive Director