

To the Women of Influence Nominating Committee:

I am pleased and honored to nominate Jenna Ekstrom for the 2018 Meredith Emerging Woman of Influence Award. Jenna's tireless efforts and leadership in the area of affordable housing and neighborhood development make her a leader to watch not only in the nonprofit arena but also in the Greater Des Moines community.

As a board member of Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity (GDMHFH) for the past year, and a volunteer with the organization for much longer, I have seen first hand how dedicated Jenna is to ensuring everyone in Central Iowa has a decent and affordable place to live. Truly, I'm not sure how the organization could operate without her. She has achieved great success in growing fundraising efforts and diversifying funding sources for GDMHFH, which has been key to helping the organization grow the number of families served from 186 in 2015 to 272 in 2017. She also single-handedly started a Habitat Young Professionals chapter in 2011 to build a pipeline of volunteers and leaders to replace an aging volunteer base. The most recent addition to her list of ever-expanding duties is leading a newly formed advocacy committee aimed at increasing awareness and education around policies impacting affordable housing in our community, state, and nation.

Jenna is also an active volunteer, and I've had the pleasure of working alongside her on the board of Lead Like a Lady, a women's leadership group started in 2013. She was instrumental in creating a communications strategy and program from scratch, and has helped continue those efforts by serving on and leading the communications committee for all five years of the organization's existence.

While her achievements are impressive, it is her commitment and authenticity that I admire most about Jenna.

A leader who does what she says she will do is rare, and know I can always count on Jenna to follow through, professionally and personally. While others might rely solely on others to bring their vision to fruition, Jenna is in the trenches, helping to ensure goals are met and exceeded — no task is too small. It is this commitment that has helped her excel at GDMHFH and ensure the sustainability of the organization for years to come.

Above all, I value Jenna's authenticity. It is uncommon to come by someone who is as straightforward, genuine, and caring as Jenna. In today's environment, it is easy to pay lip service to lifting up the women around us, but Jenna lives that value out every day. She is always looking for ways to promote and encourage those around her, whether they are her direct reports, Habitat homeowners, or her friends. Jenna was one of the first in Des Moines to see my potential for leadership when she invited me to serve on the Habitat Young Professionals board seven years ago. Since that time, she has been a constant advocate of mine, opening doors for me to grow my skills, networks, and leadership. Jenna has encouraged me when I've faced challenges as a leader and in my personal life. I consider her a mentor, role model, and a dear friend, and there are many other women in the community who would say the

same. I know it won't be long before she is an executive director in her own right and that Greater Des Moines is a better place because of her leadership.

As you can probably guess, I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award than Jenna. Not only is she actively making Greater Des Moines a stronger and more inclusive community every day, but she is doing so in a way that inspires those around her to do better and live up to her example. Thank you for your consideration of Jenna for the 2018 Meredith Emerging Woman of Influence Award.

Sincerely,  
Alyssa Young

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alyssa Young', with a stylized, flowing script.

Board Member, Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity  
40 Under Forty Class of 2017