To whom it may concern,

I would like to nominate Johanna Armstrong for the Dave Pyle New Journalist Award. Since joining our newsroom in March of 2019, Johanna has shown exactly what editor’s look for in new journalists: Dependability, integrity, great work ethic and a nose for finding news stories that may go unnoticed.

After teaching in China for four years, Johanna made the switch to journalism and has flourished. While some new journalists would be hesitant to dive into controversial stories or go out of their comfort zone, Johanna is unafraid to take assignments that delve into unfamiliar topics. One of the many stories I remember is when a controversial speaker came to town. The man in prior news stories had been described as polarizing. Without issue, Johanna presented a story that addressed the concern but was fair to the speaker and those that had welcomed him into the community.

Johanna has also tackled interesting historical topics in our community. In an article about a tornado that struck Fergus Falls in 1919, Johanna spoke with two women that were alive during that time. It was a fascinating story that showcased an interesting perspective on a historic town event while also highlighting what happened. Another story that has human interest was on a lady from Japan that may have met the soldier that helped her survive during World War II. The Japanese woman is a resident of our local veterans home and she met a man that volunteers. Through discussions, it was discovered that her story of survival and his actions on Okinawa may have coincided.

Another aspect of Johanna’s work is column writing. Although her column appears in the lifestyle section, Johanna has excelled at bringing though inspiring columns and interesting topics to the forefront. When U.S. President Donald Trump told senators to “go back where they came from,” Johanna took a dive into discussing when it was OK and not OK to criticize the government. She has also given perspective on esports, “Game of Thrones” and her mother’s struggles and triumphs leaving her home country to come to the U.S.

Far from polished, Johanna has picked up AP style writing and I continue to see improvement in each of her stories. One of the areas of improvement was her introduction writing. At first, her writing was missing flare that can take a mundane story that readers will look over and turn it into something engaging. With practice and development through coaching, Johanna’s intro writing has taken a basic weekend event or new hire story and created an interesting piece for readers.

While writing is her main responsibility, Johanna has also developed as a page designer and photographer. Having limited experience with page layout, Johanna’s hardwork allowed her to become out lifestyle editor after only a month on the job. Her photography was on par with most journalists, but while focusing on ways to make her stories more appealing she found her artistic flare adding angular shots and creating different points of emphasis that helped her story “pop.”

Lastly, she isn’t short of ideas. While not being the lead writer on a few stories, she has provided insight and ideas to fellow journalists. This has made her the go-to for creating a more interesting paper.

In closing, I recommend that you chose Johanna Armstrong for this prestigious award. She is without a doubt someone that will be nominated for many awards in the future.

Sincerely,

Zach Stich,

Managing Editor

Fergus Falls Daily Journal