

## **Natalie Ryder's Dave Pyle New Journalist Award recommendation**

To whom it may concern,

When I hired Natalie Ryder, I knew the risk I was taking by getting a rookie reporter who didn't have a lot of experience coming into the job. But I saw in her a willingness to learn, a passion for journalism, and a love for the power of stories in the written word.

In her writing, she has learned how to string words together that can move, entertain, and enlighten our readers. She's found the angles that work and the details that enrich a story. She's careful to get things right in shaping her story, from the small details to adding context and background to a story.

But as we know, writing is only a part of being a journalist, and I'll let her clips speak for themselves.

Journalism is also finding story ideas, a task at which Natalie jumped into full-throttle. She always comes to the table each week with unique story ideas, from enterprise to features to digging into city council issues more in depth. She has investigated apparent racial issues within our school district with care and persistence, worked to find answers on a curious growing number of moratoriums in a city, and gracefully wrote about how people with special needs are in need of reliable and affordable transportation to their jobs.

Her photography skills bring out the best of the stories she writes and events we cover. She also has learned from scratch and done extraordinarily well in an entirely new skill for her: layout and design. And she has done so with enthusiasm, willing to also help others when needed.

She has put forth such energy and enthusiasm into the job. She is always willing to learn and grow, taking critique of her work with acceptance and grace; willing to take assignments that may not be her regular beat or list of typical duties with planning and fervor; and willing to try new things, like column or movie review writing.

Natalie has become an exceedingly skilled journalist in just a year on the job. She has embedded herself in the community, building relationships with mayors, principals and teachers, business owners and every-day citizens. She represents the face of community journalism to the public with grace and compassion, honesty and integrity.

She embodies the best of the future of community journalism: somebody who cares deeply about the community of which she reports, and somebody who cares deeply about journalism itself and its purpose in our society.

For those reasons, I would strongly recommend Natalie receive Minnesota Newspaper Association's Dave Pyle New Journalist award.

Sincerely,  
Hannah Davis  
*Managing editor, Forest Lake Times*