



# South Pointe High School

*A Tradition of Excellence Begins... ..*

Al Leonard, Principal

February 6, 2017

Dear SCSPA Journalist of the Year judges:

Please allow me to give Kayla Thomason my highest recommendation for SCSPA Journalist of the Year. I taught Ms. Thomason when she was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade (in Journalism I) and asked her to take Journalism II the next semester, despite the inconvenience of a schedule change. I wanted her in editorial leadership training for the print version of the student newspaper, and I was right. She became the obvious choice for editor in chief of *SPiN* news magazine during her junior year because of how she had to step up during a difficult semester when the senior editor in chief had health and personal issues that prevented her from doing her job on the last two issues of the year. Ms. Thomason went on to take Journalism III first semester this year, and then Journalism 4 Honors, and is editor in chief of the print newspaper, which I advise. She was elected to the state South Carolina Scholastic Press Association board as the newspaper representative, and she helped to plan the fall Conference and Awards Day held October 3 at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. At the conference she presented at a session on editorial leadership and using authoritative sources for opinion pieces. She also attended the winter SCSPA board meeting, helping to plan the spring conference and offering to teach a session in magazine design.

As editor in chief, Ms. Thomason manages reporters and photographers, who value her creativity, energy, and skills as a leader. She gives good advice, shares technical expertise about photography and the Adobe desktop publishing software InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator, and has excellent organizational skills. She coordinates coverage with the online newspaper editor-in-chief—they have a daily lunch meeting—empowering the publication’s transformation to a true magazine, while the online version of the student press assumed the role of newspaper, as it should, with completely different content. Ms. Thomason continues the rapport with students, parents, faculty, staff, and administration established by her predecessors to ensure *SPiN* remain an open forum, First Amendment high school publication that does not submit to prior review. That level of power and responsibility for a high school student is very rare in South Carolina. She communicates well with her peers and motivates them to rise to a high level of creativity, achievement, and journalistic integrity. She has a great willingness to help others and a dedication to getting assignments done well and on time, a great role model and a servant leader whose energy is contagious. Because of her leadership and creativity, the newsmagazine reached its potential this year after last year’s rough start and has attracted advertisers and new readership. A greater number of students are signing up for Journalism 2 for next fall to continue the development of this glossy, full-color magazine, a revival of a dying print newspaper that direly needed to be reinvented.

In addition to her being editor in chief of the newspaper, she works hard in Advanced Studies classes and has a part-time job at Office Depot. She is learning valuable time management skills. She is true to high journalistic standards in leadership decisions, some of which involve ethical dilemmas. She embodies the Stallion ideals of community, excellence, and integrity. She has already been accepted to the University of South Carolina, where she plans to study Criminal Justice and Forensics, where her journalism training will come in handy. Please choose Ms. Thomason as Journalist of the Year.

Sincerely,



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