



South Pointe High School

Dr. Al Leonard, Principal

January 24, 2017

Dear SCSPA Journalism of the Year Award Committee Representatives:

It is my pleasure to give my support to Kayla Thomason's application to receive the South Carolina Scholastic Press Association's (SCSPA) Journalist of the Year Award. She strikes me as a very deserving recipient who exemplifies the lofty characteristics that this award symbolizes.

One of Kayla's contributions to our journalism department that will continue to have positive reverberations for years to come is the leadership that she has provided during the transition of *South Pointe in the News (SPiN)* from the newspaper format to that of a magazine. During our relatively brief history, the newspaper version of SPiN has become recognized as one of the best in the state, earning numerous awards for individual journalists and the paper itself. When the decision was made to convert, you could imagine the consternation felt by the staff in leaving the comfort zone to which they have become accustomed.

As this year's Editor in Chief, Kayla has been a solid and reassuring leader to those journalists who were more comfortable with the newspaper format as well as those who were new to journalism altogether. She has managed to keep the emphasis upon maintaining the standard of excellence with which our consumers are familiar. The result has been outstanding! SPiN News Magazine is very popular with our students, parents and the community. The quality seems to increase with each issue. It has won several SCSPA awards, including Best Cover and First in Advertising. There is no doubt that Kayla's background in graphic design has contributed to the magazine's aesthetic appeal. Her leadership in journalism is not limited to South Pointe. She currently serves as a member of the SCSPA board.

In spite of the fact that her role as Editor in Chief is quite time consuming, Kayla contributes to the school in other capacities. She is an active member of South Pointe's Junior Civitans and Beta Club. In addition, she is a very strong student, having been designated as a Principal's Scholar for her academic performance.

Kayla is indeed a worthy candidate for this prestigious honor. I feel fortunate to have her as a part of our journalism department. I recommend her to you highly and without reservation.

Sincerely,

Al Leonard, Ed.D.
Principal

strong journalism program as well as her focused interest in developing her other marketable talents.

Kayla's speaking and writing skills, as well as her organizational and leadership talents, led her to try journalism in our state- and region-recognized program. Now a senior and clearly in command of her staff, Kayla is leaving a mark on our school through her journalism work. She is the editor-in-chief of *South Pointe in the News*, the student newsmagazine. She ushered the publication through the transition from a tabloid to a magazine with remarkable skill and with striking visual results. Her publications have diversity and variety, and she has actually rekindled my interest in student-led journalism because the articles have meaning in the real world.

She and her staff have earned a remarkable degree of independence and now guard their journalistic rights – rights that Kayla knows by heart – with a sense of ownership and pride. It is truly a student-run enterprise, and without Kayla or some rare person of her talent, it couldn't be. I know of her journalism work both as a reader and as an insider: my wife is the advisor.

Kayla works hard in her academic classes. She succeeds at a challenging level of work despite her other activities. Her peers look to her for certain kinds of leadership, and she can provide it. Personally, I also like that Kayla understands the perspective of working people. She herself holds a job at Office Depot even as she runs the print journalism program. Under her guidance, there are no “invisible voters,” so to speak, who will turn the self-referential tide by sudden surprise. By that I am not creating a code for a conservative but *expressing that Kayla does not reside in a liberal or conservative bubble. Beneath her lavender eye shadow she sees everyone with acceptance and value. She comes from their neighborhood.*



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A Tradition of Excellence Begins...

Al Leonard, Principal

February 14, 2007

Dear Selection Committee:

I teach Kayla Thomason IB English and have known her for an academic year. She is a clear writer and an independent thinker, and she keeps a multifaceted life of varied responsibilities, though journalism is the over-riding passion of her academic days. I recommend her because of her involvement and leadership in a strong journalism program as well as her focused interest in developing her other marketable talents.


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I recommend Kayla as a strong leader with her own ideas and as a young person of good character. I certainly am pleased to have her at my school, and I am sure you will be just as pleased with her as a representative holder of your award.

Sincerely,



Joe Koen
English teacher
803-980-2100



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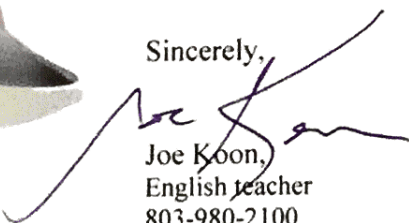
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