



Minnesota NOW Presents the 2020 Feminist of the Year Award To Bri Sharkey-Smith!

Bri Sharkey-Smith is the current Co-President of MSP NOW and the Legislative Coordinator of Minnesota NOW. She is nominated for the Feminist Of The Year Award by MSP Co-President Elisa Becker, PAC Chair Grace Anderson and Minnesota NOW Secretary, Kate Fitzgerald.



A Short Introduction by Elisa and Grace:

[Elisa] We've got a hot take for you – the 2020 election is a big deal. I know, this is probably the first time you've heard about this – you're welcome. We're very insightful.

[Grace] All kidding aside, we know that everyone here has known about the gravity of this year's election since November 8, 2016. In fact, that single event is the reason why many of us are here today and got involved in politics in the first place, including me and Elisa. Besides voting and the occasional phonebank or rally, neither of us were involved politically before 2016.

[Elisa] And that's what we want to talk about. We know that 2020 is a big deal, but the work didn't start in January of this year.

[Grace] The work towards 2020 started many, many years ago, as fearless pioneers fought for our right to vote.

[Elisa] The work towards 2020 kept going as second wave feminists worked to ensure all women could access the healthcare we need and deserve.

[Grace] The work towards 2020 kept going as the dedicated women in this room and beyond worked endlessly to build a world where folks like us have the rights to live the lives we choose instead of the lives dictated to us.

[Elisa] The work toward 2020 began for a new group of women after the 2016 election and today, we have the honor and privilege to highlight the work of one such woman, as we present the Feminist of the Year Award.

[Grace] This year's Feminist of the Year has been working tirelessly towards building a world we deserve to live in since 2016. Like many of you, I like to take the approach of "find one problem, solve that problem" – after all, we have limited energy, so let's focus it. But what if you have endless energy, like this year's award winner? Well then, you identify many problems and then get to work fixing all of them.

[Elisa] Some examples include recognizing the need for community after 2016, and roping me in to revive the defunct Uptown NOW chapter and build it into the thriving and engaged MSP NOW chapter.

[Grace] Or recognizing the need for better representation in elected officials outside of the Twin Cities, and jumping in to run a House campaign and then a Senate campaign because she knew she could.

[Elisa] Or recognizing the need for coalitions in this work, and connecting with partners like Indivisible MN, Women’s March MN, Watch Your Reps MN, and Unrestrict MN to amplify our voices.

[Grace] Or recognizing the many needs around hosting the National conference last year, and contributing her uncanny energy and organization to coordinate an unforgettable conference.

[Elisa] Or recognizing the need for more diverse representation in her neighborhood, and getting elected to her neighborhood board to begin enacting change that impacts all women AND working with female candidates from her area to keep that representation going.

[Grace] Or recognizing the need for broader education and engagement around Minnesota politics, and not shying away from my very strange idea, and jumping in with both feet to launch the Renegade Feminist podcast for our chapter.

[Elisa] Clearly, this year’s award winner has taken a page from Hermione Granger and her time-turner, because she does all of this and her day job.

[Grace] She has an uncanny ability to connect with anyone and make them feel welcome, which has helped so many new people get involved with the work towards 2020, including me, AND is the reason she has a mental rolodex of the innumerable badass women in Minnesota politics.

[Elisa] She has a tireless level of enthusiasm and outstanding ability to make nearly every situation funny.

[Grace] She can take an idea and create a beautifully designed postcard out of it in 3.2 seconds, ready for print and mail.

[Elisa] She does not shy away from calling out the bullshit where she sees it, especially if it comes from folks in power.

[Grace] She has the biggest heart and is a walking example of the phrase “empowered women empower women.”

[Elisa] She embodies everything about the Feminist of the Year award and more, which is why it is our pleasure to bring up Bri Sharkey-Smith –this year’s Feminist of the Year.

- - - Wild Applause!!! - - -

And another short nominating speech from Kate Fitzgerald

The Feminist Of The Year Award was established in 1984 to honor the commitment of grassroots NOW members who struggle daily towards NOW's goals. The award is given annually to a NOW activist selected by the MN NOW Executive committee and is presented to one of the thousands of feminists who work on the many projects and issues which comprise our feminist agenda.

I first met Bri Sharkey-Smith at her initial MN NOW State Conference, about four years ago. I was president of the Minnesota Valley NOW Chapter and as such was asked to give a short chapter status report to the conference. I stood in front of the group and improvised as my chapter members reminded me of our accomplishments from the audience.

Our report was followed by the report of a brand-new chapter, MSP NOW. This chapter consisted of young women with hyphenated last names, master's degrees, and each one was professionally dressed. Bri gave a power point presentation of what their chapter had already done and what they would do in the near future. We were thoroughly impressed. More accurately, we were blown away.

Bri and her chapter have done a tremendous job with MSP NOW, creating the *Run Like A Girl* 5K fundraising event, offering many issue forms on topics from the ERA to precinct caucus training, lobbying our legislature at events like Rally for Reproductive Freedom Lobby Day, and keeping the group together with fun events like Feminist Date Night. Check their website to keep up with all for MSP NOW's activism, its inspirational.

In addition to all of the Chapter work, Bri was instrumental in coordinating our local team that hosted the National Conference last year. She'll probably tell you she didn't do all of this on her own; that she has a phenomenal team of activists helping her along the way. While this is true, it takes a great leader to bring together an impressive team, delegate to team members, and to know when to lead and know when to get out of the way.

And Bri has only just begun. I predict many more extraordinary things from Bri and her activism. We are so fortunate to have her in our organization.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm proud to present the Feminist of the Year Award to badass, renegade, feminist Bri Sharkey-Smith!

--- EVEN MORE THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE!!! ---