

## **Mayor's Generational Leadership Award Jennifer Johnson**

Jennifer Johnson will be awarded the 2015 Mayor's Generational Leadership Award. Mayor Tim Reed created the award to recognize the importance of young leaders who make a community vibrant and dynamic. The physical award shows the creativity of the community and was created by local artist Heath "Tad" Bradley.

After graduating from Sioux Valley High School, Johnson went on to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in English at Concordia University, St. Paul. Following graduation and a short stint chronicling an archeological dig in Israel, Johnson landed back at Concordia University, St. Paul working as a Public Relations Specialist. Quickly advancing, Johnson ultimately ended up managing the university's comprehensive advertising campaign and headed up the Public Relations department. Marketing eventually won out over public relations and Johnson transitioned to Imagewerks Marketing, a full-service marketing agency based just outside of St. Paul, MN.



In August 2012 Johnson returned back to her Dakota roots to take the helm of the Brookings Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) at a transitional moment for the organization. In her role as the Executive Director of the CVB she is responsible for day-to-day operations of the organization, which acts as the primary sales and marketing agency for the City of Brookings as it relates to tourism and the visitor industry. In the past 3 years, the CVB has experienced 20%+ growth in new event recruitment, as well as accomplished the roll-out of major initiatives including the launch of a new visitor website ([visitbrookingsd.com](http://visitbrookingsd.com)), a year-round online marketing campaign, and new event development like Frost Fest and Downtown at Sundown.

Mayor Reed commented, "I first met Jennifer when she was interviewing for the Brookings Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) Executive Director position. A short time after her relocation back to the area I realized Brookings got a lot more than a CVB Director. She immediately was active in the community and has continuously promoted Brookings as a place to visit and live."

Randy Soma, Chair of the Brookings CVB Board commented in his nomination of Jennifer, "I cannot think of a more deserving person for this year's Mayors Generational Leadership Award. She is a positive, hardworking, talented individual who is always putting the Brookings community first."

Council Member Jael Thorpe commented in her nomination of Jennifer, "Her vision, leadership and innovation have elevated our community's brand."

Although Jennifer is responsible for visitor promotion she always makes herself available to help with all facets of marketing the City of Brookings. She has been active in the leadership of Connect 2140, a young professional committee of the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce. Jennifer also lead the

successful effort to create the outdoor summer music concert series, Downtown at Sundown in Brookings. Jennifer shares her talent with the region serving as the current Board President for the Glacial Lakes & Prairies Tourism Association.

Johnson lives in Brookings with her husband Andy, their two children, Makena and Colette, and their feisty West Highland Terrier, Finnegan.

The award will be presented to Jennifer on Thursday, October 29th, 2015 at the South Dakota State University Performing Arts Center from 5:00 – 7:00 pm. The event is open to the public.

The Mayor's Generational Leadership Award is given to a community member who has affected the community in the following ways:

- Positively changes how we think about our community and city
- Helps Brookings attract and retain young professionals and families
- Motivates new generations to be active in their communities
- Contributes to the advancement and wellbeing of the community through service in areas such as: education, sports, fund-raising, charitable and voluntary service, economic development, arts, and the environment.

Nominations open July of each year. Individuals must be nominated before their 36<sup>th</sup> birthday and all nominations will be kept on file and active for the award for three years.