



Jodie Austin



Clark Bellin



Paula Brammier



Jeff Cordell



Helen Crunk



Michael Dixon



Joel Dougherty



Paul Fraynd



Todd Gillespie



Alan Hans



Amanda Harrington



Melissa Head



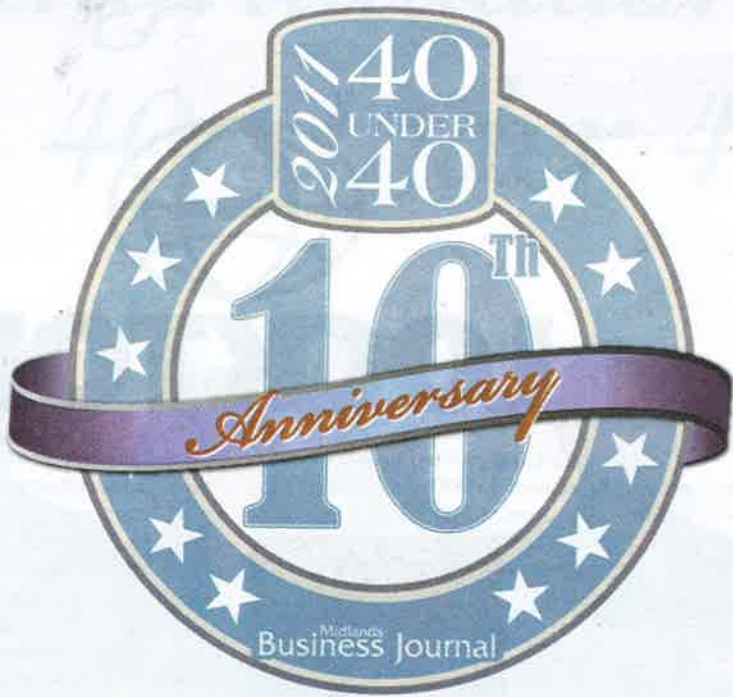
Kim Hillyer



Jennifer Honebrink



Jeffrey Jorth



Honoring 40 Greater Omaha, Sarpy County and Council Bluffs entrepreneurs, executives and professional men and women under 40 years of age.

# December 2, 2011

A special section prepared by the staff of the Midlands Business Journal

MBJ recognizes its 2011 Woman of Distinction, Kate Dodge, president of NEI Global Relocation. - Page 4

## Chris Hughes is MBJ's Young Entrepreneur of the Year for 2011

When the downturn hit in 2008, Chris Hughes, who had formerly served as a product manager with a tech startup, found himself working the phones as a customer service representative. During his time at the call center, he hatched the idea for what would later become a business achieving triple-digit growth in its second year. That growth, for 2011, doesn't even take into account the upcoming holiday season — Artifact Bag Co.'s business time of the year.



Hughes

Needing a lunch tote, but finding no products to suit his tastes, Hughes decided to design his own reusable yet stylish bag made of waxed canvas. From there, Artifact Bag Co. was born. The lunch bags, as well as larger utility totes, are handmade and manufactured using vintage industrial equipment. Such recycled tools and equipment has had the added benefit of containing business expenses, and Hughes has been in the favorable position of not having to secure outside financing to start or grow the business.

Hughes has also made a point of promoting that his products are American-made

out of his Omaha workshop — from the American-sourced waxed canvas and leather, to the labor employed to produce these bags.

In addition, Hughes and his team focus on using hand tools and equipment to recapture formerly popular manufacturing methods and to assure the quality of the products, which flies in the face of today's more common, albeit faster, automated processes.

The Westside High School and University Nebraska-Lincoln anthropology/sociology graduate is also contributing to putting Omaha's design community on the map, in that Artifact Bag Co. has been featured in several national and even global publications since its official inception in November 2009, including The New York Times, and the Singapore edition of lifestyle magazine Epicure.

Hughes had also been an artist with Omaha's own Saddle Creek Records since 1996, before starting Artifact Bag Co.

Nominated by Victor C. Padios



Melissa Hartman



Steve Heller



Nick Hogan



Megan Hunt



Kraig Kirchmann

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Patrick Ricketts



Marisa Ring



Mario Rodriguez



Christine Rupert



Janae Sternberg



Nichole Turgeon



Justin Wayne



Robert Wiebusch



Laurie Hellbusch Wolford

**Kim Hillyer, 31**  
**TD Ameritrade**

When Kim Hillyer started with TD Ameritrade, she was single-handedly responsible for the company's media relations within its communications department. Nearly eight years later she is director in the communications department and has a team of five employees.



**Hillyer**

After graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2001 with a degree in journalism, Hillyer became public relations coordinator for the Maids Home Service, a national maid service franchisor headquartered in Omaha.

She took her skills to TD Ameritrade, then just Ameritrade, in 2004, where she started as a project coordinator in the corporate communications department. As the sole person responsible for media relations in the department, she provided communications support for the company, promoting products, introducing executives to the media, building relationships with reporters, drafting communications to

support financial announcements as well as mergers and acquisitions.

Hillyer was promoted to manager in 2007 and director in 2010. Today she has a team of three in the department, plus two external consultants to help the company with its communications strategy.

In 2009, Hillyer led the communications strategy announcing the company's naming rights agreement with MECA for TD Ameritrade Park, the new home of the College World Series.

Today Hillyer and her team oversee all media relations efforts supporting TD Ameritrade's retail investor offerings. Hillyer is responsible for the overall media strategy, crisis communications, executive visibility, financial communications and measurement and analysis.

Hillyer calls the relationships she has developed over the years as her greatest career accomplishment. She is proud of the growth of TD Ameritrade and in knowing that her efforts have helped advance that growth.

**Nominated by Katrina Becker**



At the 2010 40 Under 40 Awards, from left, Midlands Business Journal's Jeff Hookie, advertising director and vice president of production, Lucky Bucket Brewing Co.'s Zac Triemert, Young Business Person of the Year for 2010, Methodist Women's Hospital Sue Korth, 2010 Woman of Distinction, and Jill Micek, MBJ's vice president of news.

**Nick Hogan, 37**  
**Flagship Restaurant Group**

Nick Hogan, CEO of Flagship Restaurant Group, oversees the financials, business decisions and growth of a company that has \$16 million in operations annually. The business includes five Omaha restaurants and one in Fort Worth, Texas.



**Hogan**

Blue Sushi Sake Grill and Roja Mexican Grill serve a combined average of 20,000 guests per week in Omaha and Fort Worth.

Hogan's vision for the company includes adding other restaurant concepts and more locations, in both Omaha and other markets. The company plans to double its size in the next three to four years. In the next year, one or two new restaurants will open. Opportunities are being considered in Denver, Des Moines, Kansas City and Lincoln. Flagship Restaurant Group has plans to bring a new concept and restaurant to the Omaha area in late 2013.

Hogan and the other four founding members of the business continue to work together approaching the company's 10th year anniversary.

The restaurants have received annual recognition for best sushi, best happy hour, best margarita and best martini.

Since Blue opened its first out-of-market location in Fort Worth in September 2010, it has received editorial praise including best martini and best sushi from Fort Worth Weekly. National online restaurant ratings and review site Yelp has listed Blue's Fort Worth location as highly recommended.

Hogan has a bachelor's degree in business finance from the University of Arizona, and a law degree from the University of San Diego. An Omaha native, he graduated from Creighton Prep in 1993.

**Nominated Megan Longo**



**Stinson celebrates 40 Under 40.**

- Omaha**
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- St. Louis
- Jefferson City
- Overland Park
- Wichita
- Washington, D.C.
- Phoenix

Business innovation calls for celebration. Stinson Morrison Hecker applauds Chris Hughes, founder of Artifact Bag Co. and Young Entrepreneur of the Year. We also recognize Chris, along with Jennifer Likes, general manager at Central States Petroleum, as Midlands Business Journal 40 Under 40 honorees. Congratulations to all the 40 Under 40 class of top entrepreneurs. **Omaha's future keeps getting brighter.**

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