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**From:** "State Bar of Michigan" <no-reply@wufoo.com>  
**To:** <csharlow@mail.michbar.org>, <webmaster@mail.michbar.org>  
**Date:** 3/6/2016 5:37 PM  
**Subject:** Unsung Hero Award [#1]

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<b>Name of Nominee:</b>	Tessa K Hessmiller
<b>Title:</b>	Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Office of the U.S. Attorney of the Western District of Michigan
<b>Firm or Organization:</b>	Office of the U.S. Attorney of the Western District of Michigan
<b>Address:</b>	United States Attorney's Office, P. O. Box 208, Grand Rapids, MI 49501
<b>E-mail:</b>	tessa.hessmiller@usdoj.gov
<b>Name of Nominator:</b>	Erin Doyle Toburen
<b>Title:</b>	Attorneys
<b>Firm or Organization:</b>	Dematic Corp.
<b>Address:</b>	507 Plymouth Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505
<b>Phone:</b>	<u>616-987-6788</u>
<b>E-mail:</b>	<u>erin.toburen@dematic.com</u>

**Explain the merits of your nomination, submit any supporting materials for your nominee by e-mail, fax, or mail. Give specific examples.**

It is our privilege to nominate Tessa K. Hessmiller (P79845) for the Michigan Assembly's Unsung Hero Award. Ms. Hessmiller's professional practice and personal commitments embody the highest standards of the legal profession and demonstrate a commitment for the benefit of others. An Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Michigan, Ms. Hessmiller is a trial attorney in Violent Crimes Unit with a focus on crimes against children. Her dedication to improving the lives of others does not end at sentencing, rather Ms. Hessmiller enthusiastically serves the community improving the lives of all those she touches. For the following reasons, we encourage the Representative Assembly to award Ms. Hessmiller the Unsung Hero Award.

#### I. A Career Benefitting Others

Few will professionally accomplish and help as many people in the course of a career as Ms. Hessmiller has accomplished. A graduate of Georgetown University Law School, Tessa enlisted in the U.S. Army Judge

Advocate General Corps. From 2009 through 2013, Tessa served as a Captain in the JAG Corp. Tess graduated from the Army's Basic Airborne Course and then was stationed in South Korea. In the JAG Corp., Tessa prosecuted 14 court-martials as a trial attorney and worked inside two military prisons where she providing legal advice as part of the wardens' senior staff. First stationed In South Korea, Tessa led a twenty (20) person legal team at five training sites to ensure international law compliance and received the Korean Defense Service Medal. Ms. Hessmiller was then stationed in Fort Leonardwood, Kansas, until 2013. Tessa also received the Army Achievement Medal and the Army Commendation Medal x 2.

At the end of her Army Career, Tessa and her husband Joshua, also a State Bar of Michigan Member, began looking for a State to call home. Michigan was the very fortunate state that the Hessmillers chose to call home. In December of 2013, Tessa began serving in her current position of assistant U.S. Attorney for the Office of the Western District of Michigan. In her position, Tessa works with the FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, and other federal agencies to investigate and prosecute violent crimes in the western half of Michigan. Tessa primarily prosecutes crimes committed against victims of human trafficking and victims of child pornography. In this position, she comes face to face with the most heinous crimes that few in our profession would have the stomach to handle. In her past three years as an assistant U.S. Attorney in West Michigan, Tessa has, among others, stopped a grandmother from acting as "john" for her minor grandchild, stopped a radio D.J. from engaging in further unspeakable acts with children, and empowered a teenage boy to speak-out against his attacker on the witness stand. Tessa works tirelessly to reach justice for those children who have been wronged and truly obtains justice for them.

As a prosecuting attorney, Tessa only brings the highest of ethical skills to the trial table. Tessa works on a daily basis with local and federal law enforcement throughout Michigan to ensure that she has obtained all of the facts necessary prior to prosecuting an individual. Her honesty, work ethic, and candor are her greatest attributes; attributes which were recognized by Director of the FBI this past December.

Not only does Tessa "wow" a jury on a regular basis, she also takes her trial skills to younger Members of the Michigan Bar. A teacher at the Hillman Trial Advocacy Program, Tessa teaches trial and advocacy skills at this Three-Day Trial Seminar held each year in Grand Rapids. She is an active member of the Federal Bar Association and the Grand Rapids Bar Association.

## II. Unsung Hero Benefitting the Community

At the end of each workday, Tessa kicks-off her trial heels and steps into her community service work boots. Tessa volunteers for numerous organizations that benefit children. Tessa not only fights crimes against children, but in her free time she is found educating the community on how to stop crimes against children before they start.

First, Tessa is an advocate for and a board member of the Kent County Children's Assessment Center. The Center provides a safe haven for children who are the victims of sexual violence to be assessed and

supported in recovery from such traumatic experiences. Tessa and the Center take a proactive approach to the problem of sexual violence against children by educating the community on how to recognize and prevent such heinous violence against children.

Second, Tessa serves as the Chairperson of the Kent County Human Trafficking Task Force (<http://stopthistraffic.org/>). The Task Force is comprised of local law enforcement, educational, and community leaders to provide resources to, including an emergency number, victims of human trafficking. In her role as Chairperson, Tessa teaches seminars where she educates community leaders on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking or how to recognize when someone might be a victim of human trafficking. Tessa works zealously to ensure that human trafficking is stopped before it starts.

Third, Tessa is a Board Member of the Grand Rapids Junior League. The Junior League is an organization of women volunteers "working to improve children's physical health by increasing access to safe, cooperative play for those children in situations or neighborhoods where it is needed most." (<https://www.juniorleaguegr.com/>) Tessa has educated the Junior League (who's members work in all aspects of the West Michigan Community) about the dangers of human trafficking and how each member can become an advocate in their daily lives for children's safety. In addition, Tessa is seen on a regular basis leading the League's efforts to build safe play areas for children, educating children on healthy eating, and further educating children on how to improve their overall health.

Ms. Hessmiller's resume will be submitted along with the signed letter from Mike and Erin Toburen.

**Optional: List news, magazine, radio, and TV features about the nominee's accomplishments (do not submit actual articles or DVDs). Feel free to include any hyperlinks to these stories, if they are still online.**

**State date/page and media e.g. 12/12/07, p. 12, Lansing State Journal, "Lawyer Begins TLC Program in Schools"**

Tessa appears in numerous publications for her professional service. Just a few of these publications are referenced below:

1. Federal Bureau of Investigations, Nov. 25, 2015: <https://www.fbi.gov/detroit/press-releases/2015/michigan-man-tyrone-smith-pleads-guilty-to-sex-trafficking-four-victims-including-one-minor>

2. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, September 29, 2015: <https://www.atf.gov/news/pr/kalamazoo-security-company-owner-sentenced-27-years-child-pornography-and-illegal-firearms>

3. Channel 95.7, September 14, 2015, <http://mychannel957.com/new-kent-county-human-trafficking-task-force-launches-red-flags-dotting-west-michigan-explained/>

4. Battle Creek Enquirer, March 3, 2015:

<http://www.battlecreekenquirer.com/story/news/local/2015/03/03/battle-creek-woman-sentenced-child-porn/24332085/>

5. U.S.A. Today, December 12, 2015: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/12/11/ex-christian-radio-host-gets-40-years-for-child-sex-crimes/20279987/>

# Michael and Erin Toburen

4712 Little Harbor Drive SE ~ Grand Rapids, MI 49512 ~ [erintoburen@gmail.com](mailto:erintoburen@gmail.com) ~ 616-987-6788

Ms. Carrie Sharlow  
 Representative Assembly Awards  
 State Bar of Michigan  
 306 Townsend St.  
 Lansing, MI 48933-2012

**SENT VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL**

RE: Award Name: Unsung Hero Award Nomination  
 Award Nominee: Tessa K. Hessmiller (P79845)

Dear Ms. Sharlow:

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## **I. A Career Benefitting Others.**

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### **III. Publications.**

Tessa appears in numerous publications for her professional service. Just a few of these publications are referenced below:

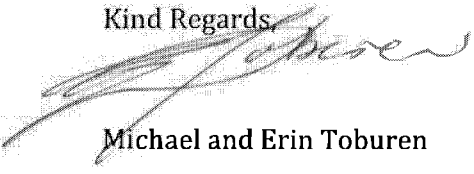
1. Federal Bureau of Investigations, Nov. 25, 2015:  
<https://www.fbi.gov/detroit/press-releases/2015/michigan-man-tyrone-smith-pleads-guilty-to-sex-trafficking-four-victims-including-one-minor>
2. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, September 29, 2015:  
<https://www.atf.gov/news/pr/kalamazoo-security-company-owner-sentenced-27-years-child-pornography-and-illegal-firearms>
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<http://mychannel957.com/new-kent-county-human-trafficking-task-force-launches-red-flags-dotting-west-michigan-explained/>
4. Battle Creek Enquirer, March 3, 2015:  
<http://www.battlecreekenquirer.com/story/news/local/2015/03/03/battle-creek-woman-sentenced-child-porn/24332085/>
5. U.S.A. Today, December 12, 2015:  
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/12/11/ex-christian-radio-host-gets-40-years-for-child-sex-crimes/20279987/>

### **IV. Tessa is a True Unsung Hero.**

Tessa does all of the foregoing and more with a smile on her face and without recognition. Tessa zealously prosecutes perpetrators of crimes against the most vulnerable in our society. She educates young lawyers on trial advocacy skills and works with the West Michigan Federal Bar Association. Tessa then continues to educate the community on how to identify when children might be victims of crimes and how to prevent such crimes. She inspires others (including the undersigned) to benefit the community, and her impact is truly felt.

We are happy to nominate Tessa K. Hessmiller for the Unsung Hero Award. She is an ideal member of the Michigan Bar and a true Unsung Hero. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael and Erin Toburen", written over the printed name below it.

Michael and Erin Toburen