

**Nomination of Jeri Le Henry
2013 Women of Influence Award**

Business Record

Submitted by: Laurie Phelan, President/CEO, Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (iJAG)

Judging Criteria:

Please accept this as my official support for the nomination of Jeri Le Henry, Vice President, Director of Institutional Service & Trust Operations at Bankers Trust, for the Women of Influence Award. It is a true honor to share my thoughts regarding this amazing woman.

Involvement with civic and non-profit organizations

Jeri Le has been a member of the iJAG Board of Directors for five years. She came to the organization indicating to me that she had never heard of iJAG but understood that we went the extra mile to help students to complete high school, but to also give them hope. "I've never heard of iJAG prior to a call from a colleague suggesting I join the board. It sounds like the type of program I would like to know more about and help in any way I can to make a difference." This was the quote from Jeri Le the first time I met her to discuss the possibilities of her becoming a board member. Within months she not only joined the board but she became our Treasurer, connected me to various organizations to help get our "success story" out, and made a personal financial commitment to the program.

Jeri also served on the Development and Marketing Committee and helped to launch the first iJAG Walk Across Iowa. This walk mobilized over 1,000 iJAG Students from 31 various iJAG Program locations. We realized a tremendous increase the awareness of our program and students needs statewide thanks to this effort. Jeri Le was asked by the Board Chair to speak at the culminating event on the capitol steps and share why iJAG is important to her. She shared that while she had not known challenges in her life like those of the student in iJAG; however in coming to know the students she realized that from that day forward her life would never be the same. Jeri Le committed to the students that she would do everything she could to help unlock their potential. That year we had an anonymous donor provide a college scholarship for a student to go to college; provide funding to help students with clothing needs, and make a significant personal contribution to the organization. The personal contribution became an annual event.

She set a new standard for board membership – one of active engagement and "walking the talk". Jeri Le asked to go with me to visit program sites, to speak with students, and volunteer at student statewide and local events. She was quickly moved by the work of the iJAG teachers and needs of the students in the program. Jeri Le, in hearing the struggles of our students decided that if more people heard their stories they too would be moved to help. At her Leadership Institute Alumni dinner keynote address Jeri Le told the story of an iJAG student, a young woman who grew up with no reason for hope and found it through a connection with a caring adult. She called for the audience to not forget the importance of reaching just one. She mentored the student she spoke of at a distance through high school graduation.

Jeri Le is tireless in her efforts to help iJAG staff and board educate the legislature, the Governor's Office, national organizations, businesses across Iowa about the importance of this program and its proven results. She even makes time to mentor the CEO over coffee on early mornings. As you all may know, working in a non-profit requires a lot of mentoring, hand-holding, and coffee. Regardless of how many things she has on her plate, she remains that calm and collected guiding voice when needed and the cheering champion when needed too.

Success in their chosen field

I am not sure how or why Jeri Le got into the field of work she is in, but I'm sure that I would not have guessed that it would be to make a difference in the lives of those around her. But, I have learned that she has made it her job to assure she is modeling for her staff and co-workers the most important aspect of work, "do unto others..." Really, I am just amazed by her ability to stay positive, calm, and motivate others to be the best they can be. I applaud Bankers Trust for having a position called "VP of Institutional Service and Trust..." and that they found the right person for the job. Jeri Le is completely about service and trust.

Lasting Impact on the community

One of the qualities I value most about Jeri Le is her ability and willingness to make connections for others. She often invites me to events that are far above my social standing just so I can share the iJAG story with others who may want to help. I know I'm not the only one she mentors in this way. She has also connected the organization with new board members that have also followed Jeri's model of leadership on our board. She has high expectations for herself and others when it comes to supporting the students and staff in this non-profit.

Being a role model through their achievements and high ethical standards

Jeri Le Henry is not the person in the room that would take up all the air, nor is she one that you would ever feel pressure to do one thing or another. She leads simply and simply leads. I am 52 years old and on many days feel I cannot learn one more thing, then this amazing woman calls me for coffee to see how everything is going or share a new idea...I grab a pen, open my mind and head out to meet Jeri Le. She is a blessing to this organization, our students, staff, board, and me. Her achievements are big but not told boastfully and she lives her ethics. One last story, one day after many weeks of work to raise money for the organization I got a call from Jeri Le. She asked me to come to her office she had something she needed to share. I'll admit I was tired and not in the best humor. In my job there are many days you wonder if you are making a difference and the only way you know to prove that you are is work harder...and that removes me from the opportunity to connect with many students.

Anyway, I drove down to the Ruan Building, struggled to find parking, now late for the meeting and more stressed than before, I came into Jeri's office. She asked about me, listened to my struggles, and then there was a knock at the door. A handsome young man came walking in and she asked if I knew him. The face was familiar but I couldn't recall. Then Jeri Le introduced him, Skylar was hired by Bankers Trust as their first individual in a newly created Leadership Development program. Skylar was an iJAG student. As I listened to his story of how he got from a very challenging life in Eastern Iowa to completing a college degree, becoming a full time employee at Bankers Trust, and volunteering with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, I could feel Jeri Le's face beaming with pride...for Skylar and for me.

Jeri Le is one of those rare people who are on the planet doing really big things in really small ways. She has influenced many lives, through this program alone...especially mine. Regardless if she is selected for this recognition, you can know we are better because she is walking the face of the earth.

Thank you for this opportunity to share.

Laurie Phelan