June 2, 2014

Women of Influence Selection Committee

Business Publications

100 4th Street, The Depot at Fourth   
Des Moines, Iowa 50309   
  
Dear Selection Committee:

I am pleased to join in nominating Cyndi Pederson of Des Moines as a Woman of Influence. I knew Cyndi professionally throughout her 13 years in state government work and our professional and personal connections have continued since then. While she served as Director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, one of her many significant accomplishments included launching Great Places, an Iowa economic development program established in 2005 based on the creative economy and helping communities with better planning and sustainability. Since I previously helped to implement the state's Vision Iowa program in 2000, I knew the importance of Great Places in taking the "vision" of Iowa as a "great place" to the next level. Cyndi was directly responsible for guiding this program, and her encouragement of others yielded an investment of time, talent and resources to accomplish a more significant outcome. Today, more Iowans and our visitors understand that Iowa is a great place from Dubuque to Sioux City.

I was able to join Cyndi in advocating for several policies that would both assist Iowa in rebuilding from the 2008 floods and supporting a framework for cultural improvement in all types of building efforts. One such policy involved improving historic restoration incentives. Cyndi coordinated the advocacy efforts of many stakeholders, and receives great credit for the historic rehabilitation that has occurred throughout the state since enhancements to the Historic Preservation Tax Credit program were put in place. As in all aspects of her life, Cyndi demonstrated unquestionable ethics throughout this advocacy effort.

When Cyndi agreed to serve as Interim Executive Director for the Center on Sustainable Communities in 2011-2012, I was a member of the board and executive committee so had the opportunity to observe firsthand her great ideas, passion for making a difference, and support of organizational excellence to accomplish a mission. During this time, Cyndi played a strong role in supporting community involvement in the Tomorrow Plan, which will have an impact on Central Iowa and beyond for years to come. Like many nonprofits following several recessionary years, COSC was facing fiscal and directional challenges. She also helped to give the COSC board and the organization's members the confidence and focus to continue, and the organization is even stronger today. She has accomplished the same while Deputy Director of the Salisbury House Foundation, and today as COO for the Des Moines Social Club.

In addition to Cyndi's tremendous career accomplishments, she has dedicated immeasurable amounts of volunteer time to supporting her passions: the arts and opportunity for young people, especially young women. For example, recent involvement includes being board president of the Young Women's Resource Center, vice chair of Arts Midwest, on the campaign committee for the Des Moines Social Club, and supporter of the After School Arts Program. Through these efforts and more, Cyndi has touched thousands of lives for the good, making a difference for today AND tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Susan Judkins, Project Developer