May 21, 2015

Dear 2015 Women of Influence Nomination Review Committee:

This letter is written to support a nomination for Michelle DeClerck, President of Conference Event Management (CEM), as a 2015 Woman of Influence. My name is Mandy McWherter and I work for Michelle at CEM. Michelle has been a magnanimous mentor to me since I began working with her over a year ago. I have never met someone with so much room in her heart for others. Michelle is not content unless she is supporting goals and ambitions of others.

During my time at CEM, our Community Outreach Team has started two initiates under Michelle’s leadership. Michelle always makes time to give back to the community and support other women along her path. In September of last year, Michelle agreed to an appointment on the Lt. Governor Kim Reynold’s Executive Council for the Iowa branch of the national initiative – Million Women Mentors. Inspired by Iowa’s commitment to mentoring, Michelle wanted to find a way to mentor young women and meet the need of her numerous requests for advice over coffee and impact a larger audience. She founded Mentor Tank to meet with groups of young women and answer their questions relating to women in the workplace, entrepreneurship, and career skills.

Michelle mentors me by sharing her network and inviting me along to events to help build my communication skills and expose me to area leaders. She recognizes potential and does everything in her power to help women be successful. In addition to Mentor Tank, Michelle is moved by the efforts of local organizations helping people out of poverty, homeless and hunger. In spring of this year, Michelle again led the CEM Community Outreach team to launch a new project connecting our industry to the local community. The hospitality industry as a whole has an opportunity to donate large quantities of goods if only their there were an easy and inexpensive way to manage the logistics. The Iowa Hospitality Donation Network was born. Michelle organized a meeting of area hotel managers to discuss challenges and opportunities with donating and moving hotel product such as personal care items, housewares, furnishings, and even excess banquet food.

From there, we identified local charities willing to accept the different kinds of product and created an inventory for use by the hotels to connect them to donation opportunities and to track their contributions. This network creates a win-win for both hospitality partners by minimizing disposal expense and the local community benefitting from hotel renovations resulting in gently worn bedding and towels available donation and banquets with excess food to give to the hungry. Additionally, Michelle serves on the board of Matthew 25, an organization aimed at reducing hunger and homelessness in Iowa.

Michelle’s passion for giving is evident as she serves as President on the Board for Opportunity on Deck, which is an organization offering free sports clinics to children and families who could not otherwise afford to send their kids to traditional organized leagues. As a Woman of Influence, one must have a giving heart, willing to share her time and resources. Michelle would absolutely make a worthy honoree for this award and she has my full recommendation as a candidate for consideration. Please reach out to me directly to further discuss her immeasurable qualifications.

Sincerely,

Mandy McWherter, Marketing Coordinator