My letter of recommendation for Jo Eckert as a Woman of Influence.

Jo Eckert is a community builder and economic development specialist with 25 years of professional experience in the fields of health care, education, city government, administrative affairs, and the startup business scene.

 She is a highly organized administrator who’s forward thinking views on technology in schools and the incubation of local businesses reflect pathways to opportunity and growth for students and future leaders in Iowa communities.

 Jo’s highly organized approach to customer service and relationship-driven knowledge building is reflected in her ability to manage multiple tasks simultaneously, and without sacrificing quality.

 Jo is instrumental in promoting both entrepreneurship and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) programs while also serving as a member of the Iowa Governor’s STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Advisory Council – South Central Region. Her specialties are providing leadership, management, guidance and support in environments that are conducive to service, care, education and learning.

 Jo’s role in West Des Moines’ department of community and economic development includes work to further the city’s growth by collaborating among a growing network of local, regional and state partners.  She is a highly effective communicator and correspondent whose responsibilities include representing the city on a regional and national level during trade shows and business expansion initiatives.

 The messages she crafts are intended to educate, inspire and assist the developers, builders, businesses, consultants, governmental agencies, and citizens who are engaged with the development, redevelopment and expansion in West Des Moines.

 Jo sits on the Executive Committee of the West Des Moines Business Incubator where she is influential in spurring growth, as well as administering the operation, with 17 client organizations currently operating in the entrepreneurial ecosystem on Westown Parkway.

As Assistant Executive Director, she recruits and trains entrepreneurs by providing mentors, connections, a professional office space, and materials to grow successfully. She works to develop strong mentoring systems that have been shown to improve success rates of small businesses – forming and utilizing skill development programs – along with the facilitation of networking opportunities for professionals throughout Central Iowa.

Jo is focused on establishing rapport and building positive relationships while helping to position Iowa's youth and businesses for future learning or expansion in the state. In 2013, the Technology Association of Iowa honored Jo with a Women of Innovation Award in recognition of the innovation and leadership she’s demonstrated in government and nonprofit sectors. She is well regarded among her peers as a connector – and her willingness to serve as an influential resource in the startup community statewide.

 Jo, who holds a Business Incubator Management Certificate through the National Business Incubator Association, earned a bachelor’s degree in public administration from Upper Iowa University. She is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma’s Economic Development Institute and Drake University's Women Entrepreneurial Book Camp. Jo attended Ellsworth Community College where she earned a Medical Secretary degree.

 She is a member of ASCENT, the Iowa women-owned businesses organization, as well as the American Business Women's Association (ABWA), National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO).

 Jo stays active and is constantly on the lookout for opportunities to volunteer in the community. In addition to serving as Secretary for the Valley Junction Event Advisory City Council Subcommittee, she is a member of ASCENT – Iowa women-owned businesses organization – the American Business Women's Association and the National Association of Women Business Owners.

 Her efforts and business acumen are centered on helping to grow local and regional economies in the state of Iowa by creating jobs and assisting individuals in fulfilling their aspirations of owning their own thriving, robust companies.

Sincerely,

Don Frazer

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