Letter of Recommendation for Ellen Nelson as a Woman of Influence

Intelligent, empowering, encouraging, empathetic, thorough, organized, kind, gentle and humble – all these adjectives describe Ellen Nelson. I first got to know Ellen when she was President of the Junior League of Des Moines. She learned through the League that well trained volunteers do make a difference.

Ellen is the owner of Funding Solutions which is a fundraising consulting business. Many of the Greater Des Moines non-profit fundraisers have been successful because of Ellen. Although she does not ask for money directly, I have watched her train novice volunteers. She schools them in fundraising etiquette (including writing thank you notes for any solicitation meetings), provides background information on the person or company to be solicited, suggests a target ask amount and then role plays with them until they are comfortable making the call.

I have worked with Ellen as she helped Zach Mannheimer develop a realistic budget when he was starting the Des Moines Social Club. Then she guided him in selecting prospects for funding and in tailoring an approach appropriate for each prospect.

 I am aware of similar work she did for Iowa Legal Aid …as a recipient of a fundraising ask. And yes, we donated.

I also worked closely with Ellen in raising over $2,000,000 to complete the Jester Park Nature Center. She provided me with detailed information prior to each of my calls and stayed in contact and encouraged me along the way. Ellen says she did not raise the money for the Nature Center rather the committee did – but we would not have been successful without her support, organization and follow through.

One of the reasons Greater Des Moines is thriving today is that Ellen is always in the background seeing that worthwhile efforts have a plan and well-trained volunteers to raise the funds they need. Ellen Nelson is deserving of being named a Business Record’s Woman of Influence.

Allison Fleming