TO: Jason Swanson

FROM: Jann E. Freed

DATE: May 24, 2018

RE: Women of Influence Nomination: Leisha Barcus

I am re-nominating Leisha Barcus as one of the Women of Influence 2018. In addition to this nomination letter, I have several new letters of support that speak to how Leisha has success in her field, a lasting impact on our community, involvement in civic and not-for-profit organizations, and is a role model for other women because of her high ethical standards.

The more I get to know Leisha, the more I realize the influence she has had on the community over a long period of time. One of her greatest strengths and passsions is her ability to take large community projects from start to finish. I continue to be impressed by her willingness to take risks in order to make things happen. Her impact is significant and her footprint is much larger than I even imagined because she has been actively involved long before I knew her. While Leisha’s resume nicely summarizes her accomplishments, I am going to highlight some specific projects I find most interesting and important as evidence of Leisha’s abilty to ***make things happen***.

Leisha’s most recent influence is in the area of cardiovascular disease. She is the chair of this year’s Go Red for Women Campaign event. This has involved working collaboratively with leaders and advocates in our community to raise funds to support awareness, research, education, and community programs to benefit women. Several of the letters of support speak directly to Leisha’s influence in making this event successful.

Leisha’s most current challenge, adventure, and influence has been as the Director of the Comfort Health Center for Women. She was hired to lead this project from start to finish and that is exactly what she did. This Center will impact women now and well into the future. Many people will benefit from Leisha’s efforts in making this Center a reality. There are letters that address her influence in this life changing project.

In addition to these recent events, Leisha was influential in making things happen long before I knew her. Several examples are provided below:

* **Bravo of Greater Des Moines:** Leisha was the first Executive Director who launched the formal organization and hired MD Isley. When you think of the impact of Bravo on the community today, Leisha was a catalyst. In fact, I could not even buy a ticket because they were sold out and the general public could not even buy tickets!
* **Hoyt Sherman:** Leisha was the Director of Hoyt Sherman Place Foundation during the renovation of the theater and art galleries. Every time I go to events at Hoyt Sherman (which is often), I think of how Leisha led the initiative for this beautiful venue to be used and appreciated by many people. So many artists comment on how they enjoy performing in such an acoustically wonderful building.
* **Downtown Events Group:** After the departure of Mo Dana, Leisha was hired to provide interim leadership to this group. While I never knew Mo, I know her shoes would be tough to fill. So the hiring of Leisha speaks volumes.
* **Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines:** Leisha worked for the Foundation during the 2008 Iowa Disaster Fund project—Embrace Iowa—was created. She worked with Fred Hubbell and Barry Griswell to raise and distribute $8 million for the flood victims of the state

As I said, Leisha is not afraid of taking risks and I admire her courage. As a result of serving on the Planning and Zoning Commission for Des Moines, Leisha ran for City Council. While she did not win, she learned from the experience and has taken her influence in all kinds of directions. Leisha served as the President of Nexus Executive Women’s Alliance. During her time on the Executive Committee of Nexus, Leisha spearheaded an initiative that resulted in the creation of the EPIC Challenge now under the management of Iowa Women Lead Change (IWLC). While there were several Nexus members involved in this effort, in my opinion Leisha was the fearless leader who was determined to help “move the needle” for women in Iowa.

Thank you for considering honoring Leisha Barcus as one of the Women of Influence 2017.