

January 14, 2016

Re: Forty Under 40 Nomination Letter of Support for Eric Olmscheid

Dear Nomination Review Committee:

I am writing in support of Eric Olmscheid's nomination to be considered for the 2016 Business Record's Forty Under 40 awards. I have directly reported to Eric in my role with Des Moines Performing Arts for the past five years.

Under Eric's direction, Des Moines Performing Arts' arts-in-education and community engagement programs have expanded from a mid-size school matinee series to a robust slate of programs with a national reputation for excellence. It has been richly rewarding to be part of the team that has helped make this growth come to fruition. In addition to the impact we see these programs make directly on more than 70,000 Iowa students, teachers, and community members each year, the joy I find in my work is deepened daily by Eric's approach to leading our efforts. To me, Eric is much more than a supervisor or boss. He is a colleague and collaborator. He is a visionary and mentor.

When I think of what Eric has taught me, I am often reminded of a quote by Henry David Thoreau, who wrote, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

From the beginning of our working relationship, Eric has encouraged me to dream of bigger castles – to imagine grand possibilities that utilize the arts to serve students, community members, and artists in corners of the sky Des Moines has not yet explored. Through his optimism, support and continuous example, he has helped me resist my natural inclination to get caught up in the perceived limitations of a challenge or big idea before exploring it fully.

Just as important, collaborating with Eric on program design and development has deeply shaped my understanding of what is needed to put the "foundations" in place beneath those dreams, breaking down the perceived barriers, and allowing those dreams to become reality in ways that are both high quality and sustainable. Researching national best practices and also seeking input of local community partners consistently helps Eric develop a vision for the program's design that meets the needs of our unique community. Holding onto those unique goals, maintaining a commitment to artistic excellence, and thinking through the nuance of how each piece of the program affects the participant's experience, creates meaningful programs for those involved – whether students, artists, or community members – where they feel valued and personally invested. Furthermore, by including his team members and seeking their input at all stages of this process, he has instilled a sense of ownership in these programs beyond himself, building caretakers that will see to it that the programs continue to grow and deepen community impact into the future.

Eric Olmscheid's leadership continues to make an indelible mark on the arts and cultural landscape of central Iowa, both through the opportunities that he is bringing to the citizens of our state, but also through the quieter ways that his leadership impacts the practice of those who work with him. I feel very fortunate to be a member of his team and to have a voice at his table.

Thank you for considering him for this honor. If you have any additional questions about his candidacy, I would be happy to speak with you further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karoline Myers". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first and last names being more prominent than the middle name.

Karoline Myers
Education Manager
KarolineM@DesMoinesPerformingArts.org | 515.246.2356