



NORTHWEST BANK

5700 Univeristy Ave. • Ste. 100  
W. Des Moines, IA 50266  
PHONE: 515.974.4400  
FAX: 515.974.4401

1700 SE Delaware Ave.  
Ankeny, IA 50021  
PHONE: 515.963.5040  
FAX: 515.963.5060

911 N Ankeny Blvd.  
Ankeny, IA 50023  
PHONE: 515.963.8033  
FAX: 515.963.8164

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Forty under 40 Selection Committee  
The Depot at 4<sup>th</sup>  
100 4<sup>th</sup> St  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Committee Members:

I am writing this letter of recommendation in support of Keshia Meissner's nomination for the 2017 Forty under 40 class.

I have had the privilege of working with Keshia over the last 3 years through Beacon of Life where she is currently the executive director and I am serving as the Board President. The passion that Keshia shows for her work and her community are a couple of reasons I would highly recommend her for the Forty under 40 class.

When Keshia took over as Executive Director at Beacon of Life in late 2011 the facility had an occupancy rate of 41% and a budget of \$275,000 while losing money monthly. Through hiring of the proper staff, restructuring the programming for Beacon clients, establishing a new curriculum for all classes and building relationships with partners within the community, Beacon of Life has become the premier provider of services to women re-entering society after incarceration. All of this has led to an occupancy rate of 100%, with a 3-4 month waiting list. That in turn has created a budget for 2016-2017 of \$405,000 and a positive cash flow.

In 2013 Keshia created Cake Gala which is the signature event for Beacon of Life. In the 4 years since its creation the event has raised over \$65,000. The last two years the event has sold out and caused the 2017 event to be moved to a larger location to accommodate the growth she has created. In addition to this event Ms. Meissner has established a yearly board member appeal as well as an annual donor appeal campaign that have generated an additional \$19,000 in donations over the last two years. She has established the identity of Beacon with a consistent logo and mission statement: "To Create an Environment that Empowers Women in Crisis to Achieve Positive Long-term Change." A new website has been created along with a donor database to ensure constant contact and communication with donors. Currently Keshia is working on the organization's first ever capital campaign to raise approximately \$430,000 for shelter renovations. As of today she has nearly 40% of the funds committed months before full campaign launch.



*Commitment you can bank on.*

MEMBER  
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The success of the Beacon of Life can be directly attributed to the relationships that Keshia has established. Through these relationships she has been able to reduce the overlap in services as well as assisting in the transitions into and out of Beacon to allow for continued success of the women that complete the program. These relationships are noted by her representation on the Polk County Continuum of Care Director's Council, the Greater Des Moines Partnership Board of Directors in 2016, 2016 President of the Board of Directors for the Des Moines Downtown Chamber, chairing the events committee as a Member of Lead like a Lady. Keshia also completed the Greater Des Moines Partnership Community Connect Program in 2015, is a Member of Rotary Club of Greater Des Moines and is a current participant of the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute (GDMLI) class of 2017.

Looking at the success Keshia has had in 5 plus years in turning a struggling organization into one that "Creates an Environment that Empowers Women in Crisis to Achieve Positive Long-term Change," it is without reservation that I would highly recommend Keshia Meissner for designation into the 2017 Forty under 40 class.

Sincerely,

Travis Simpson

SVP

Northwest Bank  
5700 University Ave  
West Des Moines, IA 50266

Board President  
Beacon of Life  
1717 Woodland Ave  
Des Moines, IA 50309



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