January 11, 2017

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing to support the nomination of Emma Christianson for the Forty Under Forty recognition.

Emma is truly a leader in the effort to help young homeless people become independent, self-supporting adults. She instinctively understands the barriers these young people face in developing and reaching goals. She works tirelessly to develop ways and the resources necessary to address the reduction and elimination of barriers.

At Iowa Homeless Youth Centers, where Emma is the Development Director, barriers for each young person are addressed on an individual basis but certain themes emerge so processes can be developed to address similar problems faced by many of the young people. Emma has been a leader in understanding and explaining the various barriers faced as she speaks to numerous groups in the community to raise awareness of the issues surrounding youth homelessness.

Emma has also become a leader in the community, specifically with her involvement with Soroptimist International of Des Moines. This is an international professional women’s organization that promotes better lives for women and girls locally, nationally, and internationally. Shortly after Emma joined the organization she became a leader in organizing projects designed to help women and girls lead more independent and satisfying lives. She brings information and ideas to other members of the organization and takes a leadership role in getting projects accomplished. In the past years she has been a major player in implementing a Soroptimist project to help women at the Lighthouse cook and serve meals once a month. She is a key player in developing local projects coming up in 2017. For 2017, she is Vice President of Soroptimist of Des Moines and, in this position, is responsible for developing programs and implementing projects. Emma has also become involved at the regional and district level of the organization.

Emma has been the primary organizer for Iowa Homeless Youth Center’s Reggie’s Sleepout and the annual Golf Tournament, both of which require a high level of attention to details and the ability to work well with a large number of diverse individuals. In addition to the specific projects mentioned, Emma is a key player in raising funds for Iowa Homeless Youth Centers’ projects and for raising awareness in the community. Emma certainly deserves recognition of being one of the Forty Under Forty in Des Moines who are making things happen and making a difference in the lives of young homeless individuals in our community.

Sincerely,

Mary Oliver, IHYC Board Member and Volunteer