

December 30, 2013

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100 4th Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear "Forty under 40" selection committee,

I was honored to be a member of the 2012 class and I have witnessed firsthand the talent of this prestigious group. This year I am writing to strongly recommend a very deserving candidate, **Chris Connolly**, for the 2014 Class of the Business Record's "Forty under 40". Chris is one of the greatest assets to join our community in the past three years. Chris is phenomenal to partner with, an individual that I am proud to work with, as well as to call a friend.

Since arriving in Des Moines in 2011, Chris has changed the game. Chris is one of the best general managers and operators I have ever seen. He is also one of the youngest to oversee properties as large as the Iowa Events Center. Under Chris' leadership, over one million visitors came through the doors of the Iowa Events Center this year! That number is the largest in the history of the properties. Whether he's negotiating with the producers of concerts such as; Pink, George Strait, Jimmy Buffett or giving a tour of Wells Fargo Arena to an elementary school class, Chris is fully engaged and collaborating in a way that makes everyone feel great.

Chris regularly takes the lead on RFP's for events such as the NCAA championships. These RFP's are typically 75-150 pages of in-depth analysis, data and responses. In 2013, Chris was the key man in securing the NCAA wrestling championships. The event was sold-out for every session and produced >\$15MM in economic impact to Central Iowa.

Chris was the primary driving force that brought hockey back to Des Moines. The negotiations were no easy or simple task. Our community lost out on hockey twice in the past and this time the building had a new tenant with the Iowa Energy. Though at times the negotiations were heated and Chris was put on trial of public opinion, he was resilient, always positive and his overarching belief that this was the best move for our community led him to ultimately getting the deal done. Now we have one of the highest attended AHL hockey teams in the country!

Chris is a connector. He works closely with the Polk County supervisors, the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the downtown redevelopment committee, to name a few high powered groups. Chris is often the mediator and calming voice when compromise is needed. I've been with Chris in Washington DC and witnessed how he lobbies for sports and entertainment for our city. He has led many discovery trips to other cities to learn about new opportunities and bring new ideas back to Des Moines. He is the leading force behind the vision to bring an entertainment district to Des Moines...think Kansas City Power and Light.

The two things that impress me the most about Chris are:

1. His passion and advocacy for our city. In a very short time (<3 years) Chris has fallen in love with Des Moines. He demonstrates or expresses that love with every interaction he has. He is constantly telling the Des Moines story and advocating on behalf of the city.
2. The way he has developed his team. Chris oversees a team of 60+ members. I have been to many properties throughout many cities in the country and his team is the most talented, engaged and committed I have seen. His team loves working for him and they will always go out of their way to please

Chris Connolly is a star in this community, one of the best property managers in the business and we're all very fortunate to have him in Des Moines! Chris is the perfect example of what the Business Record's "Forty under 40" embodies. It is my pleasure and honor to recommend Mr. Connolly for this year's nomination.

Best regards,



Tony Dickinson
VP of Marketing
Wells Fargo Bank

Together we'll go far

