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January 10, 2019

To: The Forty Under 40 Selection Committee

With this letter I am writing to provide my strongest possible nomination for Crystal Harris to be selected for the 2019 Des Moines Business Record Forty Under 40.

Throughout my time as Crystal's colleague at the World Food Prize Foundation, it was clear how committed, dependable, and deeply trusted she is by the staff, volunteers, Laureates and anyone who has worked with her. She is the kind of person who's always lifting others up, behind the scenes, and beautifully making things seamless and impeccable. In her various roles within the organization Crystal took on each responsibility with sincerity, diligence and a positive outlook, no matter the task.

These attributes have made Crystal an esteemed member of the World Food Prize family and is complementary to her volunteer work benefiting many who may never personally know her.

Over the course of her lifetime as an Iowan, Crystal has continually supported and improved upon the Central Iowa community through her leadership, compassion, and mentorship. Her commitment and diverse influence across various programs makes Crystal a solid pillar in our community.

For the past six years, Crystal has served on the historic board of the Des Moines Area Hunger Hike, an annual event that raises funds to be used by non-profit agencies and programs to help alleviate hunger in both Iowa and abroad. In addition to her responsibilities as a member of the board, which include organizing and distributing the funds raised, Crystal has taken the additional initiative to reorganize the internal process as well as preserve and archive the organization's fifty plus years of history.

Mentorship is at the center of what drives Crystal's professional and personal aspirations. Through her experience as a member of the 2013 Class of the New Leaders Council, Crystal recognized a great need for mentoring and supporting the next generation of young leaders. Since 2015 she has served as a committed mentor at Edmunds Elementary School through the TeamMates program. Each week she meets with a fifth grade student to play games or work on homework with the goal of ensuring the student has a consistent, supportive adult in their life.

Crystal has furthered her passion for mentorship through the direct management of two unique youth internship programs at the World Food Prize Foundation. As leader of the George Washington Carver Internship program for the past five years, Crystal has recruited, managed, and supported nearly 200 young college student leaders in the Des Moines Metro who have since pursued careers creating positive, lasting impact. As the new director of the Borlaug-Ruan International Internship, Crystal provides guidance, support and professional development to 24 high school students each summer as they conduct agricultural research projects in seventeen different countries around the world.

Crystal has also partnered with the Mitchellville Freedom for Youth office to organize crock pot classes for elementary school students in the community. The intention of the crock pot cooking class was to instill young people with a sense of pride and comfort for feeding their families, as well as practice important life skills including safe cooking practices.

In addition to her leadership through mentoring, Crystal has taken opportunities to share her knowledge of food security challenges and Iowa's great humanitarian history to inspire others to take action. While she was director of the Iowa Hunger Summit, she was invited to speak at the annual conference of Phi Theta Kappa—the Honor Society for Two-Year Colleges. During that speech, Crystal spoke about food insecurity in Iowa and the steps anyone could take to help alleviate hunger in our state.

In 2017, she was selected as a speaker for Drake University's TEDx conference where she took the opportunity to highlight the legacies of Iowa's many agricultural heroes and our history of feeding the world. She shared the stories of individuals such as the founder of the World Food Prize Foundation and recipient of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize, Dr. Norman Borlaug; the founder of 4-H, Jesse Field Shambaugh; and the agriculturist and inventor George Washington Carver, who received his first degree from Iowa State University and was the first African American student, graduate and faculty member. It was Crystal's hope to not only remind others of our great history, but to encourage students to find their passion and further strides in global humanitarian efforts.

Finally, through a trip Crystal personally organized in 2017, she became acquainted with the Sehgal Foundation, a Des Moines-based international nonprofit that supports the empowerment of rural regions throughout India. Via her travel with the Sehgal Foundation, Crystal further refined her mission for empowering others. Since her return, Crystal has continued to dedicate her time, talent, and heart to assisting the Sehgal Foundation including their annual fundraiser.

While she is not the kind of person who boasts of her accomplishments she is most certainly worthy of recognition and is an excellent example of what the Forty Under 40 award represents.

I am certain that Crystal Harris would be an excellent candidate for the prestigious recognition of the 2019 class of Forty Under 40.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Libby Crimmings', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Libby Crimmings  
Vice Principal Community Placemaker  
McClure  
Forty Under 40 Class of 2018