January 8, 2014

Re: Letter of Recommendation for Kerry Gumm, 40 Under 40

Kerry Gumm is a passionate community leader, who wants to create opportunities for all to succeed in Iowa’s growing financial services economy. Kerry has utilized her skills as a leader in human resources for a fortune 500 company, to help be the voice for Iowans who are under-skilled and under-employed, and need a better opportunity to find a career path that allows them financial stability. Kerry is like a life coach for the hundreds (??) of people that she meets through her work at Principal and her volunteer work with Central Iowa Works and United Way of Central Iowa.

As the chair of the financial services workforce partnership, Kerry led a group of high powered financial services business leaders in Iowa to determine which skills training needed to be created and made aware to the public in order to fill workforce gaps at Principal and in the sector overall, and also to help identify the best individuals to seek out the training. United Way’s involvement in the financial services workforce partnerships allowed us the opportunity to see Kerry’s leadership in motion. We quickly realized that her talents of eloquence, passion and clear communication style, would be very well suited for the Iowa Capitol. We knew she would be a great spokesperson for United Way’s legislative agenda, which in 2013 was very much focused on creating opportunities for Iowans to skill up and gain self-sufficiency.

During the 2013 Legislative Session, United Way asked Kerry to testify in front of several legislative committees, as well educate Iowa’s legislators about Iowa’s economic demand for skilled workers. Middle skill jobs make up the majority of the jobs in the state’s labor market. Yet, only 33 percent of working Iowans likely have the skills and credentials for these types of jobs. Kerry did an excellent job in communicating the need to legislators in these high profile settings. She framed Iowa’s skills gap as an opportunity for legislators to improve Iowa’s economy for all and to understand that many low-skilled Iowans to gain new skills for an in-demand trade and to earn a better living. Public policy that helps employers and Iowa’s citizens is a win-win, and Kerry was the perfect person to embody that request.

United Way attributes much of our success during the 2013 legislative session to business leaders like Kerry – leaders who can make the case for why this policy would help improve Iowa’s economy and help low-skilled individuals to advance their careers and seek out higher wages. Kerry is a passionate, focused, leader and clear communicator, poised to make Iowa a place of opportunity for all people.

 Sincerely,

Elisabeth Buck

Chief Community Impact Officer for United Way of Central Iowa