



May 23, 2018

Dear Women of Influence Selection Committee:

I am honored to know Jenna Ekstrom and to recommend her for the Emerging Woman of Influence Award. Jenna is a long-time Leadership Institute volunteer and former board member, a graduate of our Community Leadership Program, and a close friend and adviser. Simply being accepted into the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute's Community Leadership Program is a major accomplishment. But, what a person does with his/her time during and after the Institute are what truly defines dedication to our community and drive to develop as a leader.

Jenna has served on an Institute committee or board since her graduation from the Community Leadership Program in 2011. Throughout the last seven years, I watched Jenna thoughtfully plan some of the best experiences for our Community Leadership Program participants. She understood how to incorporate speakers who helped class members see the real issues in our community while introducing participants to those most affected by the issues. Jenna was also responsible for reorganizing our class project from one full-class project to five team projects to provide a better learning environment, to increase engagement for the class members, and to have more impact on our community. I know she felt like a fish swimming upstream, but this was one of the most needed, significant changes the program has undergone in a long time. She was tenacious and she persevered, and the results truly transformed the Community Leadership Program.

I was most honored to work with Jenna when she served as our Board Chair. Jenna continually challenged our organization to build our brand, fine tune our purpose statement, expand our funding sources, and plan for smart growth. Last year, we realized a goal she set into motion, rewording our vision statement. We now have a vision statement that reflects who we are and where we want to go: A thriving community for all, served by an endless source of civic stewards. It was Jenna's vision that helped realize our vision.

My utmost respect is given to Jenna because of her strong commitment to the Leadership Institute and because she exemplifies community leadership development. That is why I am thrilled to give a recommendation that could help Jenna be recognized for her contributions to the Institute and as a leader in Greater Des Moines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Jennings". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Amy Jennings
Executive Director
Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute