

To the Women of Influence award selection committee

Des Moines, IA

June 5, 2014

Letter of Recommendation for Ms. Henny Ohr

I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Ms. Henny Ohr for this award.

I have personally known Henny for the last seven years. From the very first time I met her, she stood out to me as the most energetic, visionary, witty, smart and passionate individual. Since then, she has been a friend, colleague, mentor, role model and business partner in serving the severely underserved and often forgotten refugees in our community.

Refugees are individuals who have been forced to flee their own country of origin because of persecution, war or violence. Iowa has a long history of resettling refugees and providing protection to this highly vulnerable group of individuals. Today an estimated 5000 refugees from Burma/Myanmar have made Iowa their new home. After receiving very limited amount of services from the resettlement agencies, these refugees are dropped in our community and expected to be self-sufficient with employment income. The needs of these individuals and families outweigh the services available to them.

Henny was extremely bothered with the lack of appropriate services to the newly arriving refugees from Burma/Myanmar that she left her very comfortable state job at the Department Human Rights in 2011 to find ways to help them directly.

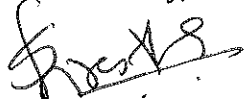
She worked for more than a year out of her kitchen table putting in countless hours applying for grants, recruiting and coordinating volunteers to fill in the gap in services and serve the refugees from Burma who come to the US with unique challenges of primitiveness, language, culture and more. She had a vision to create a non-profit organization not FOR the refugees from Burma but BY the refugees from Burma.

She created, established and started "Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center" (EMBARC), which is the one and only grassroots, all-volunteer, ethnic self-help organization in Des Moines. However, she never claims she did this. She always selflessly claims that this was created by the refugees themselves!

Long before EMBARC was officially launched with the receipt of a federal grant, Henny had already started a tutoring project for refugee youths, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for refugee adults and multiple large-scale donation drives serving over 1,000 individuals. For me one of Henny's legacies are the multiple 'Green Card Clinics' she organized helping as many as 700 refugees complete green card applications and receive them. This is service that is not available in our community. She knew she had to do it!

She is the hardest working individual I know personally. It is not unusual to receive emails from her at 2:00 or 3:00 am and she does this almost every day! Henny absolutely deserves a salute and recognition in our community and this award would do just that!

Most Sincerely,



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