

Sages Over 70 Selection Committee  
The Depot at 4<sup>th</sup>  
100 4th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I submit this letter in support of the nomination of Vernon Johnson for the Sages Over 70 recognition. I have known Vernon for over 40 years and believe that he embodies the spirit and intent of this Business Publications' honor.

For his entire career Vernon has been an advocate for disadvantaged youth in this community and state. He got his start at Children and Families of Iowa where he was a foster care worker and later Director of their Residential Treatment Program where he made his mark by establishing Iowa's first African American group homes or residential treatment facilities for boys and girls. These facilities became national models and the prototype for residential treatment and later, under Vernon's watchful eye, group homes were also established in Council Bluffs, Newton and Lamoni.

In 1989, Vernon moved to Orchard Place where he was employed as Director of the PACE Program. Having served on the Board of Directors for Orchard Place/PACE, I had the opportunity to witness, first hand, Vernon's handiwork in crafting programs, creating opportunities and securing funding for programs for at risk youth. Prior to his retirement in July of 2008, Vernon had moved to the position of Senior Vice President and had managed to take a fledgling program serving 30-50 youth to a program serving well over 2,000 children and young adults annually. These youth, unable to stay in their home school due to behavioral problems, system involvement or related issues, were served through the many programs developed by Vernon and the PACE staff.

Vernon is well regarded in the community and the state and has played an integral role in shaping policy and programs that focus on at risk youth and minority over-representation and disproportionality. He recently completed his second and final term as a member of the Iowa Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning Committee and is frequently called to serve as a resource person to Polk County Juvenile Court, judges, probation officers and the like.

Vernon has consistently demonstrated leadership through the decades. His contributions to the betterment of the community can be seen in the policies, programs and people that he has impacted throughout his career. He has been a role model and mentor to others having groomed and developed human service professionals and child welfare advocates, many of whom are now nonprofit executive directors or program officers who are poised to carry on Vernon's work and vision.

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I am pleased to provide this letter in support of Vernon C. Johnson and am asking for your favorable consideration of his nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nolden Gentry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G".

Nolden Gentry