

April 17, 2018

To whom it may concern,

Madeline and I worked together as program coordinators at Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE), a non-profit organization in St. Paul, Minn., and our designated work site through the AmeriCorps Promise Fellow program (2015-2016). We coordinated and led culturally-appropriate academic and social support programs for girls and young women who were immigrants or refugees.

In this work, Madeline demonstrated strong collaborative and organizational skills—building relationships with school contacts, developing program goals built around students' needs and managing volunteers with ease. In her interactions with students, I witnessed her ability to build trust, to listen genuinely and to support young people in whatever way they needed it. Madeline always put forth extra effort to reach out to the hardest-to-reach students, advocating for each girl and young woman's right to education and opportunity.

Madeline was adept at both planning lessons and improvising when adaptations were needed to maximize student learning, or to reach another goal. She showed insight and reflection in constantly evaluating these larger-picture goals, attentive to our girls' realities as young women negotiating two or more cultures and languages. The content she developed worked toward a range of objectives which she could explain best, but from my non-teacher perspective included literacy in English; transculturation and socialization; self-confidence and self-advocacy; exploring sense of self via creative writing and art; and many goals related to academic and career preparedness.

When I joined Madeline at WISE, the organization was struggling with retaining key staff, including a program manager to supervise and guide our work as AmeriCorps members. Madeline demonstrated resilience and emotional strength through this stressful time, despite a much increased workload and lack of support. She overcame these challenges to stabilize and then expand the programs she led, driven by dedication to her students and internal motivation towards her own personal growth.

As a person, Madeline is profoundly kind and considerate. By "considerate" I mean more than superficial politeness; Madeline considers people's lives, stories, identities, feelings. She considers a person's humanity—both simply and compounded with the cultural, racial and economic influences in their life. She has a tough-and-tested work ethic and she engages effectively with people, both students and coworkers, of diverse ages, experiences and backgrounds. She loves dogs and writing, and she lives with a sense of humor and a fighting hope for the future.

It is my pleasure to wholeheartedly recommend Madeline Matthews to your school or workplace. Her passionate dedication to young people, multicultural awareness and collaborative spirit would benefit any organization working to improve education and the wider world for our young, yet rising, generations.

Sincerely,

*Sara Kennedy*

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