October 13, 2016

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to recommend to you Emily Smith for the Ernest and Sarah Butler Awards for Excellence in Science Teaching.

I have known Mrs. Smith for a little over 3 years. I first met Emily in my role as mentor foster parent. My wife and I worked with Mrs. Smith and her husband to train them to become foster parents. As I watched her interact with my own foster children, I saw the enormity and depth of her love for all children. She was patient and kind with children who were lashing out at the world because of the pain that they had suffered far too early in their young lives. She showed them compassion and understanding, showered them with love, and helped them to overcome emotional difficulties that would cripple many adults.

The following year, I accepted a job as an administrator in the school district in which Emily was then employed. Even though I was at the elementary campus, due to the small nature of the district, I was able to witness Mrs. Smith in action as an educator. In this role, I watched her mentor and educate high school aged children. While she loved them and joked with them on a different level then she did the younger foster children, she also challenged each and every student in her classroom to achieve to the very best of their abilities. I saw her push Gifted and Talented students to new heights as they worked on difficulty physics projects. I saw her pull recalcitrant students into a begrudging enjoyment of her subject matter. I saw her connect with students who challenged authority at every turn in a way that made them want to work for her, made them want to learn for her, and made them want to succeed for her. Then, I was able to witness as she showed them that the work that they thought they were doing for her was really for themselves. Thusly, she was able to take extrinsic motivation, which we as educators know is short-lived, and turn it into the much more powerful and longer lasting intrinsic motivation. I saw these rebellious teenagers who thought they would just “get through high school” turn into college bound young adults due to her influence on their lives. I have witnessed how they look up to her and continue to ask her advice as they move into young adulthood. I have seen her cry with and for her students in the face of adversity, then pick them up, dust them off and help them move forward.

I have been an educator for over a quarter of a century. I have worked alongside hundreds of teachers in six different districts. In that time, and in my experience, Emily Smith is easily in the top 1% of teachers with whom I have worked. Her depth of knowledge, ambitious nature, competitive personality, and love for her students push those students to achieve at levels they never thought possible. Of all the teachers with whom I have ever worked, none deserve this award more than Emily Smith. It is truly a privilege and an honor to be asked to recommend her for this recognition. If you would like more information about Mrs. Smith, feel free to contact me at any time!

Sincerely,

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Assistant Principal/Director of Bands

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