

January 31, 2017

Karen Loucks  
1080 Meares Street  
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Re: Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit/Association of the Year Award

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to provide a testimonial about the difference Lifetime Networks has made in the life of my daughter, and in turn myself and our extended family.

My adult daughter lives with a complex set of special needs and mental health issues. We have watched her struggle since about the age of seven. She is now twenty-one years of age but the worries don't end for parents of these special young people when they turn nineteen and enter the "adult world." While excitement, working towards careers, and finding "paths to success" may lie ahead for most neurotypical young adults, the "adult world" does not meet the needs of our special young people very well at all. Without skilled and appropriate supports young adults with special needs often feel isolated, marginalized, they may live in poverty, and are at increased risk for serious mental health issues including depression and suicide.

As a mother, I worried about my daughter as she approached her high school graduation. I wondered what difficulties might lie ahead for her. Would she find a job? What would she do with her days? Would she have friends? How would we provide the structure and companionship she so needs? Would she be able to find ways to continue to learn and grow? Would she be safe "out there?" As it turns out, my daughter's involvement with Lifetime Networks (LTN) has put to rest these concerns in meaningful ways that gladden my heart. I am so impressed with what Lifetime Networks offers. My daughter benefits from a lot of one-on-one support in her social interactions with peers, her community, and potential employers. She can be challenging to work with but the staff always seems to see the best in her. The staff at LTN are consistently kind, competent, energetic, and committed to my daughter's best interests. They will go with her to a volunteer opportunity week after week to help her obtain the skills she needs to become employed. They will help her prepare for a job interview, ensure she wears job appropriate clothing, and offer coaching and guidance.

In addition to one-on-one support, my daughter participates in amazing group opportunities through LTN several times each week. A concert I recently attended exceeded any expectations I may have had for the evening. The participants shone, and the hard work of the musical leaders and everyone involved was apparent. The participants had been given the opportunity to write the score, develop a song, and then perform an original tune. The messages for the audience were amongst the most heartbreaking – and heart warming! – I've ever heard.

Just last week, my daughter had a job interview with the support of staff at LTN, and begins her first paid job in just two days. I cannot tell you how excited she is about this opportunity to develop skills, contribute to her community, work toward her personal goals, and earn her own money. This all aligns with my daughter's Personal Care Plan, which she creates annually with support, and then presents to family members. Witnessing her plan as a family is an opportunity for us to hear, explore,

and support what she really wants from life in a structured format that is a clear and easy reference for her and the LTN staff.

Finally, I want to say that I feel my daughter is living life more fully now than in any of the last 15 or so years. I attribute this in great part to the skilled, practical, emotional, and heartfelt support offered to her by the programs and staff at LTN. As a mother, this means that I do not feel anxious about her during her days which are filled with engaging and meaningful work, and interactions with others. I can rest in the knowledge that she is well supported by people who care about her, and who have the skills needed to do the vital work of supporting special adults, who also have special needs.

Sincerely,

Karen Loucks