



March 21, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

I managed Jenni when she was a Lead Teaching Artist from January 2020-June 2020 for an intergenerational storytelling program as well as October 2020-August 2021 for an environmental arts program at ArtWorks for Milwaukee. ArtWorks merges professional development and the arts through paid internships for high school students where I have served as Program Manager for nearly four years.

Part of my role at ArtWorks is to hire Lead Teaching Artists to supervise our teen interns and their creative projects, and I was delighted to hire Jenni for two roles that fit perfectly with her abundance of experience. Jenni stands out as one of the most successful and professional Teaching Artists I've managed in my tenure of nearly four years at ArtWorks. Her business-mindedness and drive as a creative professional was a huge asset to our programs and an excellent example for our interns. This allowed her to juggle both the creative and administrative aspects of her position, a requirement which has proved to be difficult for others in the same role. Jenni facilitated program activities with care and intention, making thorough agendas, staying on track with the unique demands of her role, and focusing on the students' job and art skills equally. More than any other Teaching Artist, Jenni welcomed members from the community to share their experiences with the

interns, introducing them to career fields and educating them about important topics that extended beyond the standard ArtWorks curriculum.

I saw Jenni's greatest qualities as a professional when our programs came to an abrupt halt in March 2020 when COVID-19 shut down the city, only a month after I hired Jenni. She initiated an innovative approach to the storytelling program by developing a new theme and model for our creative output. Despite losing 75% of our interns due to the pandemic that March, Jenni remained committed to the growth of those who stayed with us. I rehired Jenni for a second program set to begin in October 2020. When caseloads eased in summer 2020, we planned to work in-person that fall, but yet again, COVID-19 forced programs to transition to virtual shortly after this second program started. And yet again, Jenni accepted and adapted to the challenge.

I am so grateful to have had a Teaching Artist like Jenni during the challenges that COVID-19 created in our programming. Despite needing to reroute projects (and essentially her entire role) several times, Jenni was flexible, persistent, communicative, and calm. I appreciated Jenni's focus on the outcomes and impact of the program, staying accountable to our funders' and partners' expectations - another very unique quality of hers as a Teaching Artist, given her years of experience at nonprofits. I also appreciated and admired Jenni's honesty. She was curious, asked questions, made suggestions, and contributed in ways that showed she deeply cared about the students' and program's success.

Jenni was understanding of the struggles that I faced, managing several programs that were completely uprooted due to COVID-19. She was immensely helpful with her organizational skills and her readiness to fulfill tasks that were not in her original job description. This speaks to Jenni's abilities in leadership, teamwork, and collaboration; she provided support to me, the program partners, the students, and ArtWorks with positivity.

In the storytelling program, I hired Jenni for her talents as a performing artist, but when programs transitioned to virtual, the easiest art form to use in a remote format was visual arts - a form with which she was not necessarily comfortable, but she was more than willing to adapt to it. She exhibited those same qualities in the environmental arts program, which also required skills of a visual artist. When we were able to meet again safely in person in May 2021, Jenni worked under very tight deadlines and led fearlessly. I wholeheartedly commend Jenni in completing one of ArtWorks' largest projects to date - a 256 square-foot mosaic composed of 15k+ plastic bottle caps that she helped collect from the community; she also led the creation of ten water-themed benches, all within three months. I admired Jenni's courage and persistence to seek guidance in arts media with which she was less familiar and to share her growing knowledge with the young people looking up to her. Everything she led and created at ArtWorks was an enormous accomplishment.

I am so happy to recommend Jenni. Her skills shine in community arts facilitation, arts education, performing arts, nonprofit/business management, and outstanding professionalism. Any organization would be incredibly lucky to have her!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Leitner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Leitner
Program Manager
ArtWorks for Milwaukee