

Dear Sir or Madam,

It is my great honor to write a letter of recommendation for Jack Owens to participate on the Arlington Public School Board's Citizen Advisory Committee on transportation for students. It is my sincere belief that your School Board would be hard pressed to find a student as perfectly suited to solving this complex problem as Jack Owens, and to find one as funny, kind, interesting and broad minded to solve a problem with would be even harder.

I say this as one who has watched him solve complex problems. I have known Jack since he was in the 3rd grade when I coached an Odyssey of the Mind team that attacked the balsa wood problem. For those of you who know Odyssey, you will know that the balsa problem is a beast where students create a structure that can bear weight and which is created with certain necessary specifications beyond weight and height. It rests on ping pong balls, it rolls, it comes out of a box, it has flashing lights etc, and beyond all this, the structure must figure in a creative skit that also must adhere to certain specs. The boys were 8 years old and I learned then that Jack can do just about anything. He earned the title "Go To Guy," because whatever you needed to figure out, Jack figured out. How to pipe in music with no speakers, how to get things to stand up, fall down, spin, dance, grow, shrink. He has a mind that does not seem to see problems as much as situations in need of another perspective. And among the great wonders of this boy is that he does this all with a happy grin on his face, always a great friend to his teammates, always kind, always gracious, always eager to listen to another point of view, always willing to give up his own idea in favor of a better one and always ready and able to look at a lot of different solutions and work on a synthesis that best achieves the goals of the mission. I coached him twice; he only got better with time. He was such a delight to be around, our families became close friends and my own son and Jack have maintained a tight relationship over these last 7 years. I have witnessed Jack's focus and skills in the area of problem solving grow in significant ways over this time. He has become an advocate for himself and his community, making his voice heard in his own schooling decisions and for his fellow students. He has participated with his mother at community and school board meetings since the beginning of the school year when the problem first arose and the community became active around solving the transportation issue.

Jack is your man. He is a problem solver; he is a natural leader with an easy and sincere way with others that brings forth the best ideas from everyone; he is an honest advocate for change who has been present in this discussion from the beginning with his family and the community; he has a deep and true intelligence that shines brightest when the problems are complicated; and he doesn't think like everyone else. He has his own very original perspective that will absolutely illuminate facets of the problem and avenues to the solution that others really may not have noticed. I say this with deep respect for everyone on this committee. Once in a while you come across a person whose contributions will be this helpful. I can promise you that with Jack Owens you have found that young man.

Sincerely,

Sujatha Hampton

703-421-1658

December 13, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the distinct pleasure of having John 'Jack' Owens as a student in my 8th Grade Teacher Advisory class and as a member of both the Yorktown JV Lacrosse and Lights Out Lacrosse U15 Teams. Over the past two years I have seen Jack grow as a student, athlete and young man. This growth was not just in the area of academics and athletics but in leadership, maturity and character.

Jack is the type of student that takes ownership of his learning and he truly knows himself as a learner. He is aware of what works best for him to understand topics covered in and out of the classroom. He is a hard-working student and athlete.

It is for these reasons that I offer high recommendations for Jack without reservation. His maturity and character will truly be an asset to your committee. If you have any questions regarding this recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Redican
Special Education Teacher
Williamsburg Middle School