To whom it may concern,

I got to know Ryan Walsh when he came to work as an intern at Jackson National Life. I had just finished an internship myself at Kellogg in Battle Creek about 3 months prior to his start date. For that reason, even though I was a bit older and in a different life stage, I took personal interest in Ryan and our other intern, wanting to make sure that they had a good experience. I believe that interns should get special treatment, but then also have goals and expectations placed upon them that they would not be able to accomplish before they started. Ryan has been successful according to this benchmark.

From his very first day, Ryan has consistently exceeded my expectations with his willingness and desire to learn and improve at both everyday tasks and big-picture projects. Being new to the company myself, I often sent him in the wrong direction, asking him to do something that proved to not be as productive or efficient as I had originally thought. But as long as I continued to challenge and encourage him to do better, Ryan demonstrated that he was willing to do whatever he was asked to the best of his ability, often going beyond the instructions given to him to figure out a better way to build a spreadsheet or solve a problem. In the end, Ryan learned much from what we asked him to do and added to it through his own initiative.

While interns in other areas told Ryan at lunch about how bored they were, I pushed him to deliver value beyond the typical intern without constant scrutiny. Ryan asked appropriate questions when needed to continue making progress without needing to be hand-held while also rarely making the common mistake of wasting too much time on something that could be pushed along with just a little help. His contributions have consistently been valuable and our team has accomplished more because of his presence.

Much of the learning curve on our team in Jackson is technical. As a graduate student at Central Michigan University I took a class on SAS programming. At the end of the semester, most of the students did not even attempt the certification exam. Yet over the summer, without formal instruction, Ryan was able to pick up on the important basics that allowed him to be an effective programmer, and importantly, had the confidence to go and put it into practice. Ryan also improved greatly in his Excel & VBA proficiency, adopting methods I showed him but also doing his own research. Sometimes this even led to him improving on my suggestions and gave him the opportunity to teach me new skills.

All of this was possible because Ryan fit well into the friendly culture of our team. He has been warm and open towards the members of our team. Furthermore, I believe that we could all benefit from imitating the way he genuinely appreciated constructive criticism of his work. I am happy to assist Ryan in his future academic and career progress and would be willing to answer any questions you may have about him.

Sincerely,

Chris Umphlett
Work email: Christopher.umphlett@jackson.com   personal email: cau@gmx.com
Work phone: 517-367-3879   mobile: 517-898-1123