



January 7, 2010

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter as a recommendation for Proud Theater. I wholeheartedly support this group in our community and greatly appreciate all they have done for students.

As you know Proud Theater is a group that tackles some of the more difficult issues faced by our young people. Through the development of skits related to their experiences, they face these issues squarely. As they improve their acting skills, many youth are able to explore multiple aspects of their identity and develop alternative ways of responding to life's challenges. Through their productions to the larger community they gain self confidence and self-respect. They effectively and sensitively present their view of LGBT issues to the public showing their understanding of the nuances and absurdities of life. Often they are even able to find and show the humor that exists within some of these difficult situations.

I am especially appreciative of how Proud Theater has been able to assist me in my job. First, they very willingly perform for groups of educators who have been participating in staff development on LGBT issues in education. After these performances the young people stay to answer questions from the teachers and support staff. Their enthusiasm and openness about their lives has been transformative for many adults. In the evaluations from the class, the Proud Theater performance is always mentioned as a highlight. Secondly, the troupe has performed in some of Madison's high schools. Beyond the obvious financial costs on limited resources, these shows present several additional challenges. The students need to negotiate getting excused from their own schools and making up the hours of class time they miss. The adult mentors and technical supporters need to do the same negotiations with their day jobs. Some students have had to confront the fact that they were performing in front of their own school, possibly, a very public coming out. They have to face those same classmates the next day. Yet, in spite of the many challenges, Proud Theater is able to present powerfully and act as an additional change agent with their peers.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to attest to the astonishingly positive influence Proud Theater has had on the lives of the participating youth. I have been honored to be able to watch the growth in every student I've known going through a year with this organization. This growth is a direct result of working with the remarkably talented and committed adult mentors, receiving support and friendship from each other, and experiencing success through the amazing process of developing a major theater production. This is not a process that can easily be replicated in all schools and I am grateful for the existence of this opportunity for our youth.

I unconditionally support the work done by Proud Theater and thank you for your consideration of providing additional resources for them.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Augusta  
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Resource Teacher