



Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

September 19, 2011

To whom it may concern:

Please accept this letter of recommendation for Iris Barnes. I had the great pleasure of working with Ms. Barnes while she served as a staff member at the Havre de Grace Maritime Museum.

I met Iris when the Maritime Museum was selected by the Maryland Humanities Council to participate in the Museum on Main Street (MoMS) project. MoMS is a collaborative project of the Smithsonian and state humanities councils that engages small museums and rural community organizations in a rigorous process of exhibition and public programming development to support a traveling Smithsonian exhibition. I worked with Iris as the museum hosted our "Between Fences" exhibition and conducted a wide variety of local programs.

Iris brought her love of museums and history and true dedication to her community to the project. But, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to watch Iris display qualities of professionalism and human grace that go far beyond what we typically see with our small museum partners. Just months prior to the debut of "Between Fences" in Havre de Grace, the Maritime Museum experienced an institutional trauma – the untimely death of its director. This is something that would send an organization of any size reeling and, particularly for a small museum in the middle of a major project, could be potentially crippling. But, Iris was not about to let that happen in her community.

It was a pleasure to watch how Iris responded to such adversity. She carried the institution forward, not only managing the installation and opening of "Between Fences," but also completing the installation of a new local exhibition. Iris did much more than host our exhibition. She made it a local event that received significant attention from the press. She recruited volunteers of all ages and a variety of interests, representing a cross-section of the community. At every turn, she brought confidence to the project. And, in the midst of something that was tumultuous, she managed the project with creativity, focus, grace, and good humor, impressing me and my colleagues here at the Smithsonian every step of the way.

It is my pleasure to recommend Iris. I look forward to her continuing what I know will be a long and fruitful career in museums.

Please feel free to contact me at 202-633-5335 or by e-mail at davispr@si.edu if I may answer any questions about this recommendation.

Sincerely,

Robbie Davis
Project Director, Museum on Main Street

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