



July 17, 2023

To Whom it may Concern,

I'm writing to recommend Jack Gaffigan as a wonderful young person whose heart is dedicated to service. Jack has been involved with The Bowery Mission, of which I am now the CEO, for many years.

As a younger child he was part of his family's sock drives to help our guests experiencing homelessness to have dry and clean socks. He worked with his Church, The Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral to complete coat drives in the winter. Growing up in Manhattan, no child can be ignorant of the people they see on the street who may not have a place to sleep, shower or rest. But unlike many children, Jack turned the curious questions of a child into concrete actions.

In addition to collecting socks and coats and other items for our neighbors who are living on the streets, Jack and his family were frequent volunteers on Sunday night at our dinner service. We serve over 250,000 meals a year and could not do so without volunteers. The warm and nutritious food is of course essential, but perhaps just as important is the respect and dignity that our guests feel when being served by smiling volunteers and given choices and a safe and dignified place to eat rather than the street or eating out of a trash can. I remember Jack remarking about the sign on the wall above the food that says, "Serve like you are serving a King". From a faith perspective, we believe that when we serve our neighbors with love, we are serving God himself. But no matter your faith, you can imagine that this act of connection and humble service can truly spark hope in someone who has often been treated as if they are in the way and a problem, rather than a person of infinite value.

In 2020 Jack interviewed me for an article for his youth group's newsletter. He was surprised to learn that because of generous food donations and volunteer labor, it only cost us \$1.59 for each meal that we serve. \$1.59 was a number that even a teen could understand. Jack got excited and created an Instagram program called "#OneFiftyNine" where he solicited original artwork, poetry and songs from the other youth members. Since the pandemic meant he could not have a live gathering in New York City, Jack created a fundraiser where these different works were posted on Instagram along with an appeal to donate \$1.59. \$15.90, \$159.00 or more to help the Bowery Mission in exchange for the art. All in, Jack was able to raise the money and get a matching grant to provide enough for The Bowery Mission to serve 4,000 meals!

There are very few 8th graders who take the initiative to love and serve their neighbor as much as Jack has, and fewer still who are successful fundraisers before they enter High School. Jack has continued this model of servant leadership in the years since, and as I was reminded when Jack was serving at The Bowery Mission just a few weeks ago, he is an unusually generous and sincere person who truly longs to help those in need. I look forward to seeing what Jack will do as he grows, and I know he will always be a great friend to The Bowery Mission.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C Winans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end of the name.

James C. Winans
President & CEO
The Bowery Mission