10. Sample Character Reference Letter: Volunteer Coordinator

Date

The Honorable (name of your judge)

United States District Court Judge

(Name of your judicial district)

(Address of your judicial district)

City of your judicial district, state, zip

Regarding: U.S.—v—Your name and case number

Dear Judge (last name):

My name is [name of coordinator] and I am writing this letter on behalf of X. I have interacted him socially and professionally since 2005. I met X while he was volunteering as a baseball coach at Buckley High School, where my son is a junior. During this time, I have discussed in depth all stages of his case with him. I believe I have a firm grasp of his character.

Besides serving as a volunteer coordinator, I have owned my own dental practice in Encino for the past 29 years. I am also a member of the clinical faculty at the University of Southern California School of Dentistry.

As the government’s case progressed against X, it became apparent that the professional and personal damage to him could be devastating. It would have been easy for X to shut down emotionally, or act as if he were a victim of the system.

That never happened. In fact, the opposite is true.

X fully acknowledged the poor decisions he made. He pledged to work toward making things write by cooperating fully with the government. He never diminished the seriousness of his crime and the pain his poor decisions had upon his victim. X is quick to blame himself for the problems he has caused, and the sanction that he must endure.

Legal representation has been financially draining for X. One would think that he would take advantage of any professional opportunity to alleviate his financial stress. Yet that hasn’t been the case.

Early in our relationship, I asked X to represent my wife and me in the sale of our house and the purchase of a new property. The transaction would have brought X more than $100,000 in commissions. Certainly, he needed the money. Yet instead of taking the easy opportunity, he advised me to wait a year, when I would be 55. Despite knowing that he would likely be incarcerated then, and miss the commission, he wanted me to benefit from tax advantages that would not be available until I was 55.

X made a seriously flawed decision in his career, and he knows it. He also knows that a victim lost money because of his lapse in judgment. What impresses me most about X is his personal responsibility. He has sold all of his belongings and voluntarily given those proceeds to the victim. He has volunteered hundreds of hours to help young people.

The results of his actions will be with him for the rest of his life. But I don’t have any doubt that he’ll spend that time working to prove worthy of the many blessings that he still has.

I hope that you will take these thoughts into consideration as you think about the appropriate punishment for his crime.

Respectfully,

[name]