

Leslie Ringen  
English Teacher at Boulder City High School  
Letter of Recommendation for Carson Grover

When Carson Grover invited me to his LDS mission ceremony after graduated from high school (with Honors and as Senior English Student of the Year), I could not have been more astonished. Although I worked with Carson in AP Literature his senior year and AP Language his junior year, nothing he wrote, discussed, displayed, exhibited indicated his reverence for and commitment to the Mormon Church. As I told him at the time of said invitation, I would have been less surprised if he had declared himself a transgendered transvestite. How could I have enjoyed and admired a student so thoroughly without having a clue to his identity and about his ideology? Then it came too me: His ability to avoid judgment and to embrace diversity was one of Carson's greatest strengths and strongest gifts.

Throughout high school, Carson never played the role of self-righteous demagogue. Although aware that I was an old hippy, proud of her '60s defiance and stubborn about my secular humanistic vision, stances that can run counter to the teachings of his church, Carson never judged me. In fact, we continue to keep in contact (hence this recommendation); he recently took the time to visit me at school in order to introduce me to his girlfriend. Although our different perspectives (of which I am now aware) could easily divide us, we instead have discovered and embraced our common ground: satiric senses of humor, acceptance of polarizing viewpoints, dedication to learning ("I love to learn" he told me) and to the written word, and a fierce belief that we are, indeed, our brother's--and sister's--keepers. Instead of inviting confrontations, we share connections. And my affection, respect, and admiration for him continue to grow. I assume that he will include me in his wedding reception even though I am not LDS, and he has not been a student at BCHS for some time. It is in keeping with his character that Carson is defined by his kindness and consideration.

In retrospect, it is obvious that Carson's high school endeavors contributed to his sensitivity and boldness. He was and athlete (wrestling, football, track, swimming) where he learned determination, particularly when he was told he could not participate due to an injury, an order he ignored; an altruist (Link Crew and Interact, both service organizations); and an employee (lifeguard and construction worker). Carson was admired by his teachers and adored by his peers (he came in second for Senior Year Class Cutie, an honor I am certain he mocked with good humor).

But it was Carson's mission after graduation, which cemented his ethics and standards. Besides being named missionary trainer and Zone and district leader, he was forced to face adversity on the field by not only eating food he defined as that which "you wouldn't feed a dog" and grappling with "discipline and a plethora of rules" but also standoffs with citizens who declared that he was "going to hell" because he spread the LDS doctrine. And what did Carson take from this catastrophic yet gratifying rite-of-passage? He discovered a "ton

about attitude and the importance of gratitude" and that we all have the "power of personal choice while "battling internal struggles." His mission enabled Carson to grasp the essence of existence, "confidence, boldness, directness." He clearly was a fine student: "My motto is the same as my blood type. B positive." Pure Carson Grover, cleverly bittersweet.

I stand by the words that I chose when presenting Carson with his English Award at the Senior Ceremony: "This loveable scamp has transformed into a student who asks perplexing but engaging questions and produces papers and projects that both challenge and delight, all the while maintaining his playfulness, as he morphs from creative imp to respected scholar." I stand by Carson Grover. An engaging thinker, passionate missionary, loving son and buddy, Carson will never let family, friends, future employers ... or grumpy ole lady teacher ... down.