



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

January 12, 2015

MBARI

ATTN: George Matsumoto

7700 Sandholdt Rd.

Moss Landing CA 95039

Intern-application@mbari.org

RE: Letter of Recommendation for **Jessica Whelpley**

I am delighted to serve as a reference for Ms. Jessica Whelpley in support of her application for an internship at MBARI in conjunction with the project "Monitoring changes in a deep-seafloor community using time-lapse photography". Based on my experience working with Jessie she has the background, interest and motivation to take maximum advantage of the educational opportunities offered by this internship. I am equally certain the overall project will benefit from her participation.

Jessie was selected to work as a short-term contractor in the Museum of Natural History's Department of Invertebrate Zoology to assist with a project involving the sorting, identification and databasing of an important collection of samples from the deep-sea hydrothermal vents. She worked under my guidance as part of a team of three individuals that also included a summer intern and a high school volunteer who shared responsibility for the success of the project, and as part of the larger group of museum collection specialists responsible for the national invertebrate collections. Jessie came to our project with previous work experience and she very quickly assumed leadership of the project team. She proved to be an excellent mentor to both the summer intern and the high school volunteer.

Jessie has been assigned a wide variety of collection management tasks. They include basic curation work, sorting samples and identifying the diverse assemblage of worms, snails and crustaceans, topping off specimen containers, and entering data about the specimens into an Excel workbook. During the course of her project Jessie learned how museum collections are organized and maintained. She has learned how to handle fragile, scientifically valuable specimens, and how to make the required dilutions of various preservatives in use. She has gained experience using MS-Excel. And, most significantly, she has learned to recognize a variety of marine invertebrates, including many taxa that are not usually studied in general biology classes or commonly seen in teaching collections.

It has been a pleasure to have Jessie working in our lab. She exhibits outstanding work habits. She arrives on time each workday and works diligently through the day. She works on most assignments independently, following general instructions from the collection management staff. Occasionally she consults with senior staff familiar with the idiosyncrasies of the hydrothermal vent collections and our databases. Regardless of whether she works on an assignment by herself, with her project colleagues, or with one of our senior staff, she works creatively and enthusiastically. She is equally comfortable working as a team leader or as a team member and is not reluctant to ask questions. She works comfortably not only with her student peers, but also with our small work group composed of long term “older” workers (40-70 year olds), and the many US and international visiting scientists we host in our lab.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have other questions or need additional information about her work here.

Sincerely,

Cheryl F. Bright
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