

(Date)

Dear (Commissioner),

The Northern Black Hills are an amazing place to grow up. But being a kid in a rural area like ours also comes with challenges. Our youth don't have access to nearly as many extracurricular activities - sports, art, music, and education - as children in larger communities, and this puts them at a disadvantage for success later in life. It also makes them more likely to leave our towns when they grow older.

A Community Youth Activities Director for Lead and Deadwood could help bridge this opportunity gap and create new ways for our kids to thrive and succeed right here in our hometowns. The benefits of hiring this individual would include:

- Providing one central point of contact to promote communication between facilities, teams/coaches, organization directors, sponsorship organizations, community decision makers.
- Improving communication between programming sources and parents/children
- Broadening the depth and breadth of programming and activities in the Lead/Deadwood communities
- Writing grants to help fund programming
- Promoting sports and activity tourism in the communities

Creating a vibrant and thriving community goes beyond how many outsiders walk through our proverbial turnstiles. Visitors are great, but the lifeblood of our communities are our citizens and they should come first.

I strongly believe the cities of Lead and Deadwood should combine resources to create this full-time, highly competitive paid administrative position with appropriate operating budget.

Funding a new position isn't a decision to be taken lightly, but investing in our youth is **one of the most important things we can do as a community**, and there are measurable short-term and long-term benefits. Students who participate in extracurricular activities:

- ...are 30-50% less likely to commit a juvenile crime. This means fewer court and law enforcement costs, and less property damage.
- ...have higher rates of community involvement and academic achievement.
- ...go on to be adults with higher salaries and better management skills.

At the end of the day, this shouldn't be a tough ask. And I understand that the first question will likely be, "how can we afford to do this?" But, my question to you will be, how can we afford not to?

It's not often that a community has an opportunity to make an investment that starts to pay off immediately **and** generates returns for generations. This is one of those times.

Together, we can help build a better future for our kids and promote the survival and growth of our communities in the years to come.

I appreciate your time and consideration on this matter.

Best Regards,

(Name)

Lead-Deadwood Youth Advocacy Group