



Frank Ruggiero  
Director of Marketing & Communications  
Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation  
P.O. Box 129  
Linville, N.C. 28646

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To Whom It May Concern,

Grandfather Mountain is a nonprofit nature preserve and travel attraction in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina, known for its dramatic scenery, high elevations, fascinating animals and extreme weather. It's an extraordinary place, and it takes extraordinary people to help ensure its success. That's why I hired Linda Horn for the position of Communications & Marketing Associate in spring 2016.

As a rising junior at Johns Hopkins University, her résumé already spoke volumes. Her skillset, including fluency in the Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, social media, photography and even Spanish, was an ideal fit for the position. However, it was her approachability, friendliness and candor — her frank confession to avoiding shellfish despite residing in Baltimore, Md., was the veritable chive on the lobster roll — that sold me. Grandfather Mountain is a gold standard for customer service, and, as a result, our managers are exceptionally discerning when it comes to hiring. Put simply, Linda was one of our easiest hires.

When she started in May 2016, our staff members were already looking forward to working with her. Upon her arrival, she instantly demonstrated an eagerness to learn and grow as an employee, as well as a willingness to venture outside her comfort zone. Within her first week, Linda was already studying the AP Stylebook to start writing Grandfather Mountain press releases. During her second week, she was getting up close and personal with our resident rescue animals, including black bears, cougars and river otters, to film, and later expertly edit, video for our social media platforms. Her flair for creativity and attention to detail cannot be understated, as tens of thousands of viewers watched and shared her handiwork the world over.

As her knowledge of the park flourished, Linda grew remarkably comfortable addressing questions and concerns of all sorts, from face-to-face interactions with in-park guests to inquisitive calling customers and querulous TripAdvisor reviewers. These exchanges bolstered her already proven confidence and helped develop a working relationship with local and regional media, as she was able to adeptly answer inquiries and speak on behalf of the organization. Linda also proved to be an effective marketer, assuming Grandfather Mountain's voice and assisting in advertising initiatives in digital, television and print media. With much of my time spent in the field, it was a comfort knowing she was there to ensure that nothing would even come close to falling through the cracks. And I wasn't the only one to share this sentiment.

The park's communications department is housed in the business office, also home to donor development, volunteer services, accounting and general management. When time would permit, Linda would actively volunteer her services to those other departments, be it preparing donor materials, helping organize a volunteer luncheon or even donning a bear costume for an educational outreach meet-and-greet. My colleagues learned that they could always count on Linda — and I know that you can, too.

No matter the position, I'm certain Linda Horn would be an invaluable asset to your organization, briefly meeting and promptly surpassing your expectations. Without hesitation, I would have hired her back the following summer, were she not studying abroad in Spain, no doubt impressing her instructors — and admittedly avoiding shellfish. Should you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thanks for your time, and have a wonderful day.

Sincerely,



Frank Ruggiero  
Director of Marketing & Communications  
Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation  
(828) 733-2013, ext. 811  
[frank@grandfather.com](mailto:frank@grandfather.com)

