

Episode 61

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Crooked Can Brewing, Hilliard Ohio, brewery with market, local food vendors, community events, downtown development, licensing agreement vs franchise, Winter Garden Florida, public-private partnership, walkable downtown, family-friendly business, race events, small business risk, real estate site selection, craft beer

SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Megan, Rob Fry, Ethan DeLeon

R

Rob Fry 00:00

People like beer, people like food, but give them a reason to come in as well.

E

Ethan DeLeon 00:05

Welcome to the Small Nation Podcast, brought to you by Coverlink Insurance, where people are more important than policies. On this show, we unpack lessons from entrepreneurs, break down development strategies, and do deep dives on small town success. Our goal is to provide value to our listeners by hosting conversations that teach, inform, and inspire. Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon and I'm here in the studio with the founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff. Today we are excited to have part of the ownership group of the Crooked Can from Hilliard, Ohio as guests on the show. So Megan and Ryan, or Rob, sorry, not Ryan. Welcome. Is your brother named Ryan?

R

Rob Fry 00:46

I don't, starts with an R though, you were close.

J

Jason Duff 00:49

I looked off my paper too soon there. It's okay. Rob, Megan, welcome to the studio today.

M

Megan 00:53

Thank you.

J

Jason Duff 00:54

It's great to have friends in town and then also a really one of the, my favorite businesses to visit and experience in Hilliard, Ohio, Crooked Can.

R

Rob Fry 01:04

Thank you.

J**Jason Duff** 01:05

Yeah, uh, recently the team and I, we always look for places to do team building and enjoy, you know, supporting other local businesses but also hanging out and having fun. So we recently ran in a race. Well, I say loosely, some of us ran. Uh, I did not run, I did the walk. But tell us What was special about this race that you guys hosted?

R**Rob Fry** 01:30

Uh, it was a partnership or a friendship that actually has developed from friend to friend, and we were looking to do bigger events. We have this great area with, uh, that encompasses all the city, and it's like, how can we— we do a lot of little events that are awesome, but it was one of those, okay, let's, let's try to find some big events. And it literally was inspired by Florida. Florida does big Oktoberfest, big St. Patrick's Day events. And it's like, okay, how can we do that? And friend Eric has a friend, uh, David, that runs M3S Sports. And we started talking, and the original conversation was, hey, can we— I was trying to find an avenue to get beer at the memorial. And like, what a great way to have everybody know about Crooked Can. And we went down an avenue with, uh, with the Blue Jackets. It's like, it's pay to play. Okay.

J**Jason Duff** 02:25

Pay a lot to play. I imagine. Big check there.

R**Rob Fry** 02:29

It's like, I don't know if that's the way to go. And so we had started having this conversation. He's like, well, that's going to cost you as well. And I don't know if I can get you in, but it's going to cost you. So why don't we look at doing a race? And it was down that avenue. Okay. Big event. Yes, absolutely. Let's talk about doing a big race at our place. And that's kind of how it started off. And we did the St. Patrick's Day one, very successful, did the Oktoberfest. We're going to make some tweaks because I think we, we thought the off week for Buckeyes was going to be a good idea. And it turned out that everybody in the world was doing their events on the off week for the Buckeyes game.

J**Jason Duff** 03:02

Don't learn until you try, right?

R**Rob Fry** 03:04

So now we know better. And maybe we were thinking next year we just incorporate it into one of the games and kind of make it all part of the weekend. But it still was a very successful event and turned out to be a great day. And that's kind of what the motivation was, though, was just bigger events to draw as many people as we can to downtown Hilliard.

M**Megan** 03:24

Awesome.

J**Jason Duff** 03:24

Well, and it was obvious to me. I mean, it was beautiful weather that night. That always helps with turnout. But how organized and how effective the marketing was too. I mean, the registration process was easy and friendly. You got emails sharing where you could park when we arrived on site. Parking signage was really clear. Then the process to— and just seeing how the community came together. You had the police force involved in setting up stops, and even neighbors and people in the town were setting out their lawn chairs to watch the walkers and racers that were going by. I think that is a definition of creating a community event.

R**Rob Fry** 04:06

That's the first I heard that. That's cool.

J**Jason Duff** 04:07

I loved it. I've shared it with other people. That it's a great model and example. And I think some of the things that stood out to me is the partnership that you mentioned with the professional company that helps organize the race.

R**Rob Fry** 04:19

They are professional.

J**Jason Duff** 04:21

Well, and that's the key. And then getting the community involved, I mean, seeing how people from the city were there and smiling and involved, and all the pets. There were a lot of dogs. Yeah. They're out and about too. It was that quintessential community event that wouldn't have been possible without Crooked Can and the leadership and organization that that you created to make it happen. And it probably was good for business.

R**Rob Fry** 04:43

It was great for business. And then the city was on board with as well, because again, it helps the other businesses downtown as well. There's so many people, they're going to walk around and see everybody else. Yeah, just going to be at our place. That's awesome. So, and the, the city was a little hesitant at first because they've never done a big race, they never shut down streets and never experienced anything like that. So to have those guys come in who have done races throughout the city and big races just made it so much easier and more comfortable.

J**Jason Duff** 05:10

Yeah, that's cool. And I want to dive in a little bit later in the show, a little bit about your partnership with Hilliard and everything like that. But for those of us who may not know, for the listeners, I should say, what is The Crooked Can? And can you give us some background on your business? Where did it originate? How long you've been doing it, things like that.

R**Rob Fry** 05:28

So the, the original is in Orlando, a suburb of Orlando. Winter Garden, Florida. Gotcha. And the, the— it was two friends, three friends, my good friend growing up and two other friends that they went on a vacation to Colorado and saw a similar type concept brewery with, with some extra food. But it wasn't quite the concept that it is today, but it was close. And they basically on a flight back said, why don't we try this? None of them have any experience in brewing. None of them have any experience in restaurant business other than one was in sales for food. The other one worked for Disney and my friend was in finance. So they had some experiences with things. Yeah, just not what they were doing. And so it was a, it was a huge risk, but they found an amazing location. If you ever get a chance to go down there, it is, it's like it's been there for 50 years and they just found this really cool spot. And we went to visit and within, you know, being there for 5 minutes, it's like, man, this is what an amazing concept that something this would work anywhere in that type of environment, a downtown walkable, get the family out. If you can find that type of environment, this is going to work. And they have really good beer. That was the other key point. And it was— I've always said, it's a good friend of mine. If you're— if his beer wasn't good, I would tell him his beer wasn't good.

J**Jason Duff** 06:54

There you go. So we need people like that honest in our life, right?

R**Rob Fry** 06:57

It was like, man, let's find a way to do this. Yeah. They were in— and as we talked about it, because Megan and I would go down every year, visit. And John, who is the other local owner, we would go down on trips as well and visit the brewery. And it's like just that building over 3 years of how do we make— it became kind of a joke to How do we make this happen? This is too good not to try.

J**Jason Duff** 07:22

When did that switch flip for you guys?

R**Rob Fry** 07:24

I would say after about the second year going down. And then after the— they were open for 3 years, and we started having a serious conversation. But they were in this discussion with another company that wanted to actually buy 50% and take this kind of nationwide.

M**Megan** 07:41

Wow.

R**Rob Fry** 07:42

And it was very, very far along in the conversations. To where they were ready to sign some papers. And then the big company came back and said, 'Now we reevaluated you at this.' And they were like, 'No thanks.' And I think they thought they would cave, and they stuck to their guns and they basically said no. And within, I'd say, a couple weeks of that happening, Andy called me and said, 'Hey, let's, let's go for it.' Yeah, that's awesome.

J**Jason Duff** 08:09

And I love it. We've had previous guests on the show where we talk about the success of, you know, selling the business at the end. But I think also it's good to highlight that maybe that's not always the move for everyone. Want to. In fact, you can stand either profit more if that's your goal, but you know, for some people it's, it's more than just profit, but like to, to stay in your business and, you know, look into options of expanding. So you took that concept from Florida with your friends. What— can you talk a little bit more specifically about what the concept is? Um, you know, it's a brewery, sure, and walkable downtown, but like what's, what's special about it?

R**Rob Fry** 08:41

Well, the, um— and also just back to your point of— yeah, they, they knew they had something really good because they were making profit in the first year, and that's unheard of for a new— that's rare. Yeah, that's awesome. Well, how Why would— in 3 years, why are we going to give up what we have here?

J**Jason Duff** 08:54

Yeah.

R**Rob Fry** 08:54

If it's not the right price. Yeah. So yeah, it's, it's, it's, it's the open. Well, it's a little different for us because of where we're at, but in Florida it's a little less inside. It's a lot of market. So they, they started with 20 vendors and it's fun. It was food, retail, drink, dessert, a lot of variety.

J**Jason Duff** 09:15

All in the same place.

R**Rob Fry** 09:16

All in the same place. So what they did learn and what, you know, everything we did was just learning lessons from them. And so they started with 20, and now I think they have about 14. And it just was, who can survive? Who can be really a 7-day-a-week business and have product and sell? And, and as they started working through that, it's like, well, we, we can't support that many. Um, so that's why we started smaller, and that this is about the right amount to work with from, you know, how many varieties of foods do you need? Can certain retail places make it? Can they not? So that it's trying to encompass that food. And, and we, we wanted retail, but we discovered quickly the one retail we had, it just— it's a tough thing to do 7 days a week. Yeah. In a market. So it's, it's not that we wouldn't entertain that again, it's just what, what's the right concept that that can support that. So it's to that point, it's a brewery with market that has— we have 9 vendors now.

J**Jason Duff** 10:20

So you're intentionally not offering food from, from the brewery, but you're bringing in vendors to— local vendors to provide those things.

R**Rob Fry** 10:26

It's a variety of local vendors that run their own business. We lease the space, they run their own business. I know others will take certain percentages of profit. We run it as just a lease only, and it's your business, and we all try to work together to, to make sure— make it successful, but everyone does their own thing.

J**Jason Duff** 10:46

Yeah, well, there's a few nuggets that you can take away from that. It is— if you talk to— we've had many guests on the podcast that own bars and restaurants. It is like the holy grail of business models if you can figure that out and make a profit, because there is the idea of opening up from a passion project standpoint that a lot of people dream about. They think and experience— because restaurants are very attractive from the kinds of creative things that you can do, the relationships that you can have, the brands that you can build. But when you get on the inside and see how the meat is actually made, literally, it is a really hard business model to pull off. And what you look at, where the money side of it is, the business model— the alcohol and liquor generally is one of the most profitable items. I mean, sometimes in cases can be, you know, 2 or 3 times what, um, profit, uh, versus food cost. And the amount of money you make on food is usually really tight, but people can't drink, you know, a lot unless they have food. So you kind of need those two things. So yeah, me kind of looking from the outside in at what you have done is you figured out, hey, we, we're really good at brewing beer, we're really good at building a space environment and inviting in people that have their business model dialed in as restaurants and as specific food types or food kiosk vendors, whatever you want to put that label on. And that ecosystem that you create, it, it works and it helps everyone be successful overall.

R**Rob Fry** 12:26

Absolutely. And that's what it is. It's a group working together, because if you don't have the— yeah, you don't want one without the other. It's got to be good food and it's got to be good beer, and then people come for both reasons. Yeah. And we have that all the time where people come for the food. A group alone will come for— some will come for the food and some will come for the beer, and it doesn't necessarily have to be both.

J**Jason Duff** 12:47

And even if someone doesn't drink, they may walk over and buy some apparel or swag as a gift or pick up a gift card. And I also think the other thing that I'm so impressed, and maybe you can speak to this, sometimes with a bar or restaurant, you just see a certain age group or a certain type of clientele. Is your place different?

R**Rob Fry** 13:11

I think that's another thing we took from Florida was how do we promote family, because we're in a downtown, so you're going to have families. You want families. We're across from a park, so you, you gotta, you gotta embrace it, especially in Hilliard, right? Absolutely. And so, I mean, and dogs. Yeah. Yeah. So how do we take all that that they were doing and embrace it here too and, and emphasize that? So yeah, we, we like our young adults too, but, um, we, we definitely get a variety. And so we will throw events that try to focus and get more of the the young crowd into. But we know our core is our families and our dog people. So we try to focus on them.

J**Jason Duff** 13:54

Megan, tell us about how do you kind of fit into this building the business? And were you skeptical? Were you always on board?

M**Megan** 14:04

I was always in his ear.

J**Jason Duff** 14:06

Come on, come on. Okay, let's do this.

M**Megan** 14:09

Yeah. Which on my end was a little less— for him, he was thinking, okay, whoa, that is a huge commitment.

J**Jason Duff** 14:17

And I'm always the idea person, or, you know, whereas I say you're more comfortable with risk then.

M**Megan** 14:26

Yes, where he has to then like break all that risk.

J Jason Duff 14:29
Sure.

M Megan 14:29
So yeah, I'm the, the fun creative, and then he's the, the numbers and the—

R Rob Fry 14:37
okay, hence her being part in charge of marketing and social media.

J Jason Duff 14:40
Well, let me just say it takes a team. It does. And, you know, in relationships, oftentimes yin and yang attract. And, um, that's the relationship piece. When you're actually in business with your partner, significant other, husband, wife, like, that's even harder.

M Megan 14:56
Yeah.

J Jason Duff 14:57
And like, for you guys, like, did you know you were going to start a business together? Was that ever in the dream board? Like, or did it kind of—

R Rob Fry 15:04
no, no. And to that point, you know, what we were talking about earlier is, uh, It's just an opportunity came. And it's like, well, this is just too cool not to try it, or at least explore it. Yeah. Because yeah, that was never a conversation. It was— it never would have been a thought of, oh yeah, let's go out and— yeah, we really want to start a restaurant or brewery or anything like that.

M Megan 15:24
He was in robotics, I was in dental. I mean, he's still in robotics, but I was able to then get out and focus. And it It's definitely a full-time job for what I do.

J Jason Duff 15:37
So, so from day one when you came back and said, we want to do this in Hilliard, uh, what were some of the things stepping out of your comfort zone that you had to start doing to, to build the plant, to construct and build something new?

R Rob Fry 15:50
It 100% leaned on Florida.

J Jason Duff 15:53
Florida, okay, use that model.

R**Rob Fry** 15:54

I mean, again, uh, Andy is one of our partners as well. Yep. So that we'll get into that on the franchise versus—

J**Jason Duff** 16:01

Yeah, let's just, let's talk about that. You brought this concept from Florida, an existing, you know, profit rendering business, and you wanted to bring it here to Ohio. How did you go about doing that? You know, was it a franchise versus, you know, anything else?

R**Rob Fry** 16:16

Initial conversations were, how are we— how do we be partners? We didn't want to split it off. Yeah, Andy really didn't want to split it off, but the two other owners in Florida weren't comfortable owning something in Ohio. They didn't know us well enough. Andy and I grew up together, so— and he knew— he, John, and Andy and I all went to college together, so we all knew each other pretty well. We had, you know, it was— we met each other, but it wasn't like we were friends. Sure. So it was like, are we going to get into business with you guys? We don't know how they control things, run things. So how, how do we make this happen without being partners? Again, it was unfortunate we couldn't make that happen because since then Andy is now bought those two out and he's sole owner down there. So we could have been partners, but yeah, still. So how do we find a, um, an in-between? Yeah. And again, knowing Andy was going to be part of our group, um, and knowing we wanted to share ideas and, and, and do things still kind of together without being partners. And that's where franchise is more— here it is, take it and give us money. And with the licensing agreement, it's still sharing ideas, sharing recipes for beers. It's still kind of a partnership without having it on paper. We still have a separate LLC, but we do intertwine that way.

M**Megan** 17:36

And we had a little more flexibility too versus a franchise. We can still do things on our own a little bit, but still follow.

R**Rob Fry** 17:43

Yeah, that's a great point. We are still independent. We can do anything we want separate from Florida. We don't want to, but we could. We still have 5 core beers that they serve and we serve that are on tap pretty much all the time. But every other beer that is on tap at our place is made here and not there. And we share ideas. But if we decided tomorrow we didn't want to serve any of those beers, we could do it. So yeah, so it gives you that flexibility.

J**Jason Duff** 18:10

More independent, but some, you know, still maintaining that collaborative piece. I think we've heard from other guests on the show, you know, Winans Chocolates and Coffee, Wilson Rizer, you know, they offer franchises and they started, I think, as just company stores and then it moved to license agreements. The benefit that he kind of spoke to about franchises was that they're lending all of their business systems, their logo, their vendors, and they provide a level of control. This is kind of the positive side. Of making sure everyone is doing everything the same way, because that's part of the brand promise of what a franchisee and a franchisor's relationship wants to have. The challenges with that—there's a lot of cost, and sometimes the path is so rigid for entrepreneurs that maybe don't fit the mold or markets that might be different. I think that licensee agreement where you're still getting the benefit, like you said, of the marketing, of the logo, of the goodwill and the recipes that is working in Florida. But you have just enough flexibility to kind of do your own thing.

R**Rob Fry** 19:21

To your point, if they had 10 Crooked Cans, we probably wouldn't be a license agreement. Yeah, but since they only had one, yeah, it was easier to make that happen. And we do still pay a royalty fee or license fee. Sure.

J**Jason Duff** 19:35

To use the brand.

R**Rob Fry** 19:37

To use the brand. And, you know, it's, it's been a really good partnership. It's been successful. So, I mean, I wouldn't— yeah, I would rather have been partners, but I wouldn't— sure, I have no problem.

J**Jason Duff** 19:48

I appreciate you sharing that because I feel like a lot of people jump to either the partnership or they think it has to be a franchise, and they just, you know, don't know what other options are out there. So I appreciate you sharing that and hopefully educating our listeners a little bit more on that.

R**Rob Fry** 20:00

And honestly, if they didn't want to be partners with us, then maybe that was better too, right? Because we probably didn't want their control.

J**Jason Duff** 20:07

Yeah, maybe didn't know what we were doing. Yeah. Yeah, that's a good point. So when you were kind of getting this model up and going in Hilliard and actually I kind of have a unique perspective because I was interning with a coffee shop there locally in Hilliard when the construction was kind of getting started and things like that. And I heard this, this awesome brewery is coming into town and changing everything and I'm like, oh, they're going to be building that building, that the building's going to be that whole block there. Like, So talk to us a little bit about that process, uh, getting connected with Hilliard and then maybe finding your vendors. Uh, how did, how did you go about doing all of that?

R**Rob Fry** 20:40

Um, well, the first thing was, as you kind of point out earlier, Florida kind of set the tone of this is, this is kind of the framework of how you lay it out and what you're looking for. And when we started talking How do we kick this off? It's— well, I went out and found a— Robert Weller was the real estate group that I connected with. I actually called a few and no one else returned my call.

J**Jason Duff** 21:09

So, wow, that's an important lesson.

R**Rob Fry** 21:10

Return your calls. I mean, I don't know that— I know there's a lot of people out there looking for commercial land, but I was surprised that only one person called me back. So I started working with these guys. They were great to work with. And we just started. They made a map of where could we possibly be. We started with Dublin and Hilliard because we know those areas, we've lived in those areas. Not that we weren't looking at other suburbs as well, but we were most familiar with those two. So they— we just started going around looking at, at properties, and, um, there was a few that were potential, but nothing was jumping out. And the closest thing we found was in Dublin and we started actually, we signed on the lease or signed on the lot and started making some progress with it. Yeah, going down the road. And we, but we had met with Hilliard, we'd met with Dublin. We absolutely would wanted to work with Hilliard. We really liked their group. Dublin is just more formal. Hilliard was more personal and Dublin's just, this is how it's done. You walk through these steps and as we started walking through those steps, it was like, oh, this is, this is getting to be too much.

J**Jason Duff** 22:19

There's a lot of steps.

R**Rob Fry** 22:20

There's a lot of steps and there's a lot of money being spent to necessarily have it be approved. So that's where we were a little scared of.

J**Jason Duff** 22:27

I mean, to interject here for your community leaders that may be listening, how easy is it for entrepreneurs to come in and get what they need to get approved, to get started? Is, is the process easy or is it, you know, is it— yeah, we talk a lot about friction points. The, the other thing, if you look at you know, both the communities that we're mentioning are suburbs of Columbus. Yeah. And Dublin and Hilliard have both had massive growth, but Dublin in particular because they're a little more established and they have, you know, better demographic numbers, their proximity to Columbus is closer. They've been able to set the bar a lot higher. Absolutely. Which could be a good thing or viewed as a good thing. But for, for those of us that are just building something or starting out, we may need different resources or different price points or cost, or our brand may not resonate with that level of whatever label you want to put— sophistication. Yeah, you know, wealth, whatever. And so a lot of people are looking at the Hilliards of the world And there's, there's many of them in these kind of what they call tertiary markets outside of the major cities as the new frontier. But, you know, where I applaud you guys is that it had to take some courage to leave Dublin because Dublin is probably because of the reasons it's more well-established, well-known versus going to something very new, which is You know, for a lot of people in Columbus, they kind of called Hilliard, oh, you mean the cornfields? Because at the time, even if you live in the city and you don't drive out to the suburbs, you're maybe not aware that there's actually— that's the future of where all the growth is going. Now today, you guys are— you look brilliant because now, you know, Hilliard's one of the fastest growing suburbs. Yeah, trends in the Columbus markets.

M**Megan** 24:26

Well, and talking to vendors, potential vendors, and trying to sell them the concept on paper We can't tell you how many times we got, "Hilliard?"

J**Jason Duff** 24:35

What?" Is anything up there?

M**Megan** 24:37

Yeah, people are like, "We don't see it. Hilliard, we don't see it." Yeah.

R**Rob Fry** 24:41

I won't name it, but the first person Megan and I approached, because we like this place and we would love to have had it in there. He's like, "No, people won't buy my food in Hilliard." Wow. What? We live there. We're going to buy your food. What are you talking about? He may have second guesses at this point, but at the time that was the mindset. Yeah, um, that— yeah, and that was— well, I'll let you go into that, but just real quick on the Dublin, it wasn't necessarily Dublin either. It was the space we chose, and it— any other probably suburb would have the same problem. We had to build a parking lot, we had to build a turn lane into the area. Wow. And we we would have had to build a retention pond. We—

J**Jason Duff** 25:27

I mean, it was at your expense.

R

Rob Fry 25:28

At our expense.

J

Jason Duff 25:29

Absolutely at our expense.

R

Rob Fry 25:31

Because as you said, Dublin's established. They don't need to pay for those things for you. Right. And that's where Hilliard, as we got into it, Hilliard did help us on some things. But it was— yeah, it was the numbers just started stacking up of, okay, we can handle this much, but this is getting to a point where this is just going to be too risky. Yeah. And that's where we went back out and said, Hillary, we really want to work with you, but the places that we've seen so far— tell me there's something else. Yeah, is there something city-owned that you can, you can, I guess, get off of or, or try to sell? And it, it sparked a, gosh yes, we wanted them here and we really like this concept, but, um, I don't know where we put them. They had plans for where we're at, they had plans to extend the park. And that really got them thinking. They went to the point of sending one of their city developers down to Florida to see the spot. And he called from there and said, you guys got to do this.

J

Jason Duff 26:27

He went down there by himself without you guys.

R

Rob Fry 26:28

He said— I tried to set him up with people and he's like, no, I want to see it as is. I don't want to be treated any different. I just want to see how this place—

J

Jason Duff 26:35

you want an authentic experience.

R

Rob Fry 26:38

Absolutely. I don't want to, you know, smoky mirrors that this is better than what it is. So it was the first day, and talking to people in the city now, it's like the first day he called back and said, you better find a way to do this.

J**Jason Duff** 26:50

Well, and, and, you know, just like I opened up the segment about this, you know, 4K, 5K race that we did, um, the parks, so the walking trails, the, the, you know, taking old abandoned railroad tracks and actually making them walking and bike paths. And then for those of you that have not been to Hilliard, my niece and nephew think it's one of the best places to go for the splash pad that's there. Yep. Because when you go there, they've got angled steps that you can sit, and they've got a, you know, public restrooms. They have their planter boxes, and the grass is well maintained and curated. That is not normal and you shouldn't expect to see that in every city. So there is intentional investments and planning and work that had to be done far in advance of actually seeing that project happen. So it's neat to hear behind the scenes. And this is— this just goes to show you where you've got to have that public-private conversation that maybe none of that— we don't— I don't know, and maybe you guys don't even know that maybe none of that would have happened unless there was an investor or a business or a brewery that said, hey, we're going to do this. So this is the time the city then gets, you know, ponies up and makes that investment too.

R**Rob Fry** 28:11

And that's what was— as you said, there was indicators of how we felt Hilliard would work. And they already had that park there, they had the splash pad there, they were doing concerts on Thursday nights that were well attended. And it was. And there's a couple businesses came in, Local Cantina Legacy opened their barbecue place, and it was like you could see some momentum building. And especially with that, with the events, the Thursday events, and, and however— I mean, they're up to 45 events they throw over the year.

J**Jason Duff** 28:42

Wow.

R**Rob Fry** 28:42

At that park, which is just natural business for us. Yeah. So we'll get into how we, we work a little bit together on that with them, but back to That led in— once we actually got the spot, then it was how do we find the vendors? And again, I give Florida props because to say, hey, this is our concept, we've never done this before, come be a vendor for us. Yeah, I don't know how you sell that concept. They at that point had a virtual tour on their website of what the market looked like. So Megan and I would go when we thought of people. So who works in small spaces? They didn't have as many down there as we— we have a lot of food truck places. That's not a big thing in Florida. So they just went out finding vendors, whereas we focused on food vendor or food truck vendors. So we would go and just, hey, we think this one would be cool.

J**Jason Duff** 29:38

Yeah, let's go try to give them an opportunity to have a brick and mortar and then watch.

R**Rob Fry** 29:42

And here, here's what the— here's what the market's going to look like. We didn't have to talk about it and describe it. It's like, just take the virtual tour. But it was still conversations that were interesting because no one was familiar with how Hilliard would be.

M**Megan** 29:58

Yeah, we kind of split off. Like, John and Stacy, they were approaching several people. We were approaching several people, and the amount of nos, and again, just, Hilliard? I don't think so. And It just, it all came together. And we actually had several vendors that were really close to the, like, final project, and then we had some people back out. So we had some hiccups along the way that were a little stressful.

J**Jason Duff** 30:24

Yeah, that you have to be able to pivot, right? Because, you know, things change, right?

M**Megan** 30:29

And then shortly after to finish, then COVID. So yeah, there was a lot of pivoting.

J**Jason Duff** 30:34

For those that are listening, I think your building is how large? 16,000 square feet and it was new construction. Yeah. Let's, let's do the, the, our show segment, the real estate deep dive real quick. Yeah, let's do it.

M**Megan** 30:46

All right.

J**Jason Duff** 30:46

Yeah. So we're— you're talking about this building, but it's a pretty big deal. Like I said, in downtown Hilliard, right across from the splash pad that we just said talking about. So can you tell us a little bit about what was the property before? You said you were looking at city-owned properties.

R**Rob Fry** 30:59

It was a NAPA Park building.

J**Jason Duff** 31:00

Okay.

R**Rob Fry** 31:01

That the city, once they closed, the city bought the property. And tore the building down. So it was sitting empty at that point with a plan to do, again, just an extension of the park. They were going to do additional parking, a playground area, and some other things. So there was a— there was— it was pretty set in stone that this was going to happen. And again, thankful, right time, right place, that they checked it out and decided, hey, maybe we should sell this.

J**Jason Duff** 31:29

So they sold you guys the land, right? And then so you were responsible for finding the contractors.

R**Rob Fry** 31:33

Yeah. Putting it together from there. The couple things they did help us with, like there was, there was some old sewage lines underneath. They dug that up and took those out. There was power lines that were going above the space that were way too low. So they, they took it on themselves to raise the power lines. And there was one other thing. But they were, again, just extremely helpful.

J**Jason Duff** 31:59

Yeah, true collaborative effort. So you have the site, you know, you buy the property, Zoning is one of the first things that you need to check and work with your city to make sure it's permissible. The next step is, is looking at that site prep stuff. So, you know, the utility lines, the sewer lines, um, getting water, gas, all those things. Like, you just can't assume when you buy a piece of property that all those things are there.

R**Rob Fry** 32:21

Oh, they had to reroute the gas line and electrics.

J**Jason Duff** 32:23

Reroute everything. And in some cases, that's a big applaud to your point. That's a big applaud to the, the municipality for taking those steps, because sometimes that can be the monkey on you as the developer's back to figure that out. So from there, then you probably had to find an architect or engineer to kind of— or a contractor to vision.

R**Rob Fry** 32:39

Yeah, we did. Well, we did a civil first. Like you said, we got— there could be an old gas station on that property that you're done. Yeah, well, not done, but you're going to spend a lot of money getting whatever under the ground out of the ground. Yeah. Or it's an old burial ground or something like that that you might just be shut down right then. But luckily none of that was the case. Um, and then, yeah, we, uh, so John's on the construction side of business. He actually, uh, sells heavy equipment for construction. So he has also worked on building buildings for his business. So he knew an architect, and, and we started there with, okay, how's this going to look, taking a lot of, again, what Florida had done and then try to adapt it to Ohio because they, they focus on outside we, we also want to focus on— we have a 7,000-square-foot patio, but we also needed to focus, focus more on inside when our weather's not good. So, right, yeah, that was the, that was the mission to combine those two things.

J**Jason Duff** 33:36

Yeah, which is not easy because imagine having individual food stalls and you've got some that have hoods, you've got overhead garage doors that may be open, may not be open, you've got Some days you may have 5 people in the venue. Other days you may have 500 people. So working— that's why finding an architect, an engineer to really study all those things so that the function and programming of that building is going to work and be economical. But what I love when I pull in there and look at it, you first are greeted by this beautiful turf patio. And some days it's loaded with kids and families. Other days there could be a concert happening out there. And then sometimes there are vendor fairs. Like, I've even been there on the Saturday where there'll be 20, 30 vendors that are popping up selling local t-shirts or handmade art like that. That, that's kind of like your front living room space for the community.

R**Rob Fry** 34:35

All right.

J**Jason Duff** 34:35

At this time, we're going to take a quick break to hear a word from our sponsors. Big city dining in a small town. Now that's The Syndicate. Join them for fresh steaks, pasta, or seafood for dinner, or stop in for Sunday brunch to experience one of their signature dishes such as chicken and waffles, and maybe even pair it with a mimosa flight. Located at 213 South Main Street in downtown Bellefontaine. Tired of gyms not being open when you want to work out? Then check out the region's best 24-hour fitness center, Anytime Fitness, in downtown Bellefontaine. They have all the equipment you need and the best trainers and coaches to help you get in the best shape of your life. It's truly your one-stop shop for fitness. Anytime Fitness is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

R**Rob Fry** 35:14

Yeah, it, it's People like beer, people like food, but give them a reason to come in as well. And it's— it— as we talked, it's family. It's anything you can do to get the family to come out that then benefits us as well. And that's where Megan and, and, uh, others in our place work on how can just as many events as we can possibly do. Yeah, because we just know it's— it's good for the community, but then it's good for our business too.

J**Jason Duff** 35:44

So that's what I was going to ask Megan, and maybe you can speak to this, is what efforts do you put in to make sure people continue to come back, bring the families, and, uh, you know, support everybody?

M**Megan** 35:54

Just, uh, creating new events, creating reasons for people to come out. Um, it can be as simple as, like, we have Santa pictures coming up, and, uh, that's fun, and everyone wants to see Santa. Yeah, so, um, I would We do Puzzles and Pints. I mean, there's just so many different events that we're trying to bring people in and, um, just enjoy our place, enjoy the vendors, because we do have that responsibility of making sure that we're bringing in traffic for the vendors as well, because they depend on that too.

J**Jason Duff** 36:27

Yeah. And because you do a lot of the marketing, what are some of the things that you have found that have worked? I imagine like with point-of-sale systems like you're trying to capture email addresses is maybe an important thing.

M**Megan** 36:39

Definitely getting a lot of our messages through social media is a big social media for us. Um, so yeah, and then we, we actually have a rentable space too that we focus on. Um, and Stacy, our other owner, she, she works really hard with making sure that we get a lot of our rented events as well.

J**Jason Duff** 36:58

So what are some of the types of events that you host?

M**Megan** 37:02

Like the rented or the like just the fun stuff that we do?

J**Jason Duff** 37:05

Probably the rented stuff. So we're, you know, reason I bring that up, I'm hearing a lot, you know, there might be listeners, uh, that are developers or they may have towns that have empty buildings and they don't know what to do with them. So they've got this great space, it might be right next to a brewery or might be down the street from a restaurant. Like, tell us about the kind of events that I mean people are renting for.

M **Megan** 37:27

There's corporate, there's birthdays, there's anniversaries, we've had a wedding, we do a lot of rehearsal dinners. I mean, there's so many different types of events. We'll do a lot of charity events as well. I mean, that's— it's been really, really successful with graduation parties.

R **Rob Fry** 37:44

Yeah.

M **Megan** 37:44

Oh yeah, the graduation parties. Yeah, who would have known?

J **Jason Duff** 37:48

That's cool. Yeah, that's really cool. And then what you're doing, obviously, you're, you're helping your revenue, but then you're also providing a meeting space, a gathering space to build community, uh, while also hopefully bringing people to those other businesses and just bringing up the overall economic development, right?

M **Megan** 38:07

One of the things we stay true to, too, is for those, uh, rented events is to work with our, um, all of our vendors. We don't allow outside food to kind of protect them and make sure that, that that business is coming to them as well.

J **Jason Duff** 38:22

So yeah, even though you guys aren't serving food, still supporting everyone. But that's really cool.

R **Rob Fry** 38:26

Yeah. Yeah, that was definitely the main goal is because if they're— they need to be successful. So yeah, how do we make them as successful as possible? So everyone's staying. And I would think that's, that's also one thing we're very proud of is everyone in there has another place. And I'd say over half of them have started their second place. After that. Ours was the first, you know, we won't call it their brick and mortar, but it's a brick and mortar. It's not a food truck, it's not jumping around to other places. So it's their first permanent home, and they've taken the success there and started another place.

J **Jason Duff** 39:01

So congrats, that's awesome.

R**Rob Fry** 39:03

We're very proud of that. Yeah, as I say, real quick on that too, of what Megan and the group do is we find something that works, we find something that people like, and then we try something similar because it's like, well, obviously if they liked coming out for that, well, maybe we'll try the puzzles. We're doing the gingerbread house tonight. It's a group activity. They clearly like doing group activities. Let's do more of them. Let's find other group activities they can do.

J**Jason Duff** 39:27

Well, I think a lot of people look to you and I have referenced your business to a lot around the food hall concept. So a lot of what we do as entrepreneurs is rip and duplicate. And you shared traveling to Florida, finding something that you love, and recognizing back in your own local market that doesn't exist. So we want to take it, rip and duplicate it, but make it better. And I think that's something that you have done really well. But that food hall concept is the diversity of options that you have instead of just working off one menu. I mean, can you just shout out some of the types of food offerings that are available right now at Crooked Cannon Hilliard, Ohio?

M**Megan** 40:05

Yeah, um, and that, that is one thing we try to make sure that we're— each vendor is not competing with each other. So we try to make it so intentional. It's— yeah, like a good variety.

R**Rob Fry** 40:16

So, or with others in downtown too, we specifically tried to stay away from—

J**Jason Duff** 40:20

yeah, the locals.

M**Megan** 40:21

Yeah, that's great. Um, we've got Dumplings of Fury, we've got an Asian option. Um, Meatball Mafia, bean pizza, meatballs. We've got, um, Hot Mess, which is like American flair, so burgers, chicken, salads. We've got Pita-bilities, so they've got pitas, salads, rice bowls. Bakes by Lo, she's got all her cookies and baked goods. The Cheesecake Girl. We've got Coffee Connections. We've got a new one coming, it's about to open in a couple weeks. Hopefully, maybe sooner, probably sooner. But Norwich is—

J**Jason Duff** 41:03

Rob going to be baking?

R**Rob Fry** 41:05

I was hoping to give the announcement today and I didn't get the word back because it's close. The date, the soft opening has happened.

M**Megan** 41:12

But Norwich Grocery, so they've got a little area to shop for some local items like Al's Delicious Popcorn's in there, Bellisari's, several different things to purchase in there. But then also they have a deli within their grocery.

J**Jason Duff** 41:28

So just in hearing this, I'm getting hungry now just thinking about this. But the diversity that, that your business has now brought to, uh, a suburb of Columbus that didn't have any of these options, but it wouldn't have been possible without the investment and, you know, setting the stage for that to happen. And some of those have been there from the very beginning, I know.

R**Rob Fry** 41:53

So how is your, like, retention Like we've just recently had to leave and it was before for reasons like Al's Delicious left. They're still going to be in. They left us, but they're not really leaving us. And it was because they— we didn't have the space for them to make popcorn. Yeah. And they're home. They came in knowing this wasn't truly what they wanted to do. But again, this is another example of this was their second place. They have now opened 3 more places since.

M**Megan** 42:18

Yeah.

R**Rob Fry** 42:18

And they all make popcorn. And that's kind of their thing is, well, you smell the popcorn, you can buy the popcorn. And they couldn't make the popcorn at our place. So it was, we didn't look at it as it wasn't successful because they were making money. They just wanted to focus on places that had more space and they can, they could do manufacturing, we'll call it. So, and again, we still have them. So it's not really, the other one was Legacy who they wanted to have a different concept from what they had down the street. So it was still a local vendor and just doing more of a Tex-Mex than their barbecue. And it was, it was, I think, a good partnership. And then their restaurant burnt down and it just kind of threw off kind of what they really were wanting, how they wanted to proceed. Yeah. And so it was a year and a half before they could get their restaurant back open. And so by the time we did that, they, they really had focused on their, their catering and the catering had really taken off because they didn't have, didn't have the restaurant anymore. So once the restaurant opened back up, it's like, well, our catering is so good, our restaurants here maybe this is the time to close this one down.

M**Megan** 43:23

Yeah.

R**Rob Fry** 43:23

So it wasn't like a, you know, a bad leaving. And, you know, they're still down the road from us, still friends. It's just, it just opened up that space now to have— we have deli sandwiches instead.

J

Jason Duff 43:34

Yeah, that's awesome. And I feel like some, some turnover is inevitable for whatever reason. But that's awesome.

R

Rob Fry 43:39

It was just nice to know it wasn't because they weren't successful.

J

Jason Duff 43:42

Right.

R

Rob Fry 43:42

It was just those were just circumstances.

J

Jason Duff 43:45

Yeah. Do any of your food vendors, do they sell on DoorDash or Uber Eats? Do you allow that? Or permit? That has that been— yep. Has that been—

R

Rob Fry 43:53

all of them do, all of them can do it.

J

Jason Duff 43:55

Yeah, can do it.

R

Rob Fry 43:56

And the city actually put in, uh, some Uber Eats spaces, and that's kind of leading back to the COVID time of— sure, we, we were able to do to-go food. So how do we get people to do to-go food? And they, at their, at the, um, uh, parking lot, they, they made spaces for them to come in and pick up food.

J

Jason Duff 44:13

Is to-go a big portion of that?

R

Rob Fry 44:15

I would say so.

J

Jason Duff 44:15

I was curious.

R

Rob Fry 44:16

Okay. I mean, it happens for sure, but I wouldn't say a big portion.

J

Jason Duff 44:19

It's more dine in and grab a beer. Absolutely.

R**Rob Fry** 44:23

Okay, got it. Or some come and take to go out, but it's not necessarily a DoorDash situation.

J**Jason Duff** 44:28

Yeah. Cool. For economic development listeners, how would— like, can you give some advice on how you've been able to maintain that relationship with the municipality? I mean, it sounds like you guys have had a very positive interaction throughout the years. And I think that's— I mean, Jason, you can speak to this pretty— no, pretty uncommon, but sometimes it is very uncommon. So what are you guys doing? What's, what's the magic there?

R**Rob Fry** 44:52

I would say, back to that point, because Dublin was so structured, we know we wouldn't have had that kind of relationship with Dublin. It would have been— yeah, you talk, I'm sure you talk to people, but it wouldn't have been the type of relationship we have with this group. And it started from the beginning that the one that threw a wrinkle and we were a little scared was when they went from a mayor to a city council.. And we had full support of the city development and the mayor. And it's like, all right, we're heading down this road. And then all of a sudden we're going to have a city council and they may not be on board with what we're doing. But luckily all of them are. And a lot of them are actually customers. So that's a good thing. Yeah. But the more the city people we deal with on more on a day-to-day basis, again, we've dealt with from the very beginning and to your— I think you said it earlier, they look at this as more, as much success for them as for us. So they're very proud of it and they talk of it that way. So whenever we're talking about city events, we always interact and say, okay, kind of what can you do for us? Or, you know, vice versa. It's, it's that easy communication of what's, what's good for you is good for us. Yeah, both ways. So it's, um, it's been a great, just absolute great relationship that way. And it's, it's not just one person, it's, it's 10 people in the city that we to on a, you know, and again, on a regular basis, the city people and the rec people and the parks people. It's, it's all of them. And they, um, they just been— it's just been— I don't, I don't know if we would have had that type of relationship with any other suburb. We might have, but who knows. But right, we know this is probably an exception.

J**Jason Duff** 46:31

Yeah, that's awesome. And that's, I think that's a very healthy culture between municipality and, you know, the business. And that's something we're trying to encourage and cultivate with, with clients or listeners to the podcast is you know, to, to figure out successful ways to have that private partner, private-public partnership. And then just if you were to like, from a 10,000-foot view, what do you think the economic impact has been of your business model in downtown Hilliard?

R**Rob Fry** 46:59

Ooh, good question. Other than I know we have— it's over 100. I think I counted at one point it was about 120 employees. Between all the vendors and our brewery. And I think that's a, you know, it's a pretty good-sized place to have 120 people at. Yeah. And we've— another thing we're proud of, our staff has been pretty consistent. Talk about retention. We've retained a good portion of our staff from the very beginning. And I think also the vendors, I wouldn't say they're as good as us, but they're still pretty good. It's harder to find people to cook food than it is serve beer. So, but they also still have been. Pretty good about keeping employees because it's a good place to work. So I think, uh, I mean, I think that's why also the city loves us because we do bring a lot of people downtown. Yeah. So it, it is beneficial all around.

J**Jason Duff** 47:52

Yeah, that's awesome. I know that's kind of a hard question to answer, but well, I, I can tell you as a customer and also, you know, I live in Dublin, so I live in the, the neighboring community, but if I have a choice, like, I, I love to go to Hilliard.

M**Megan** 48:04

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 48:05

Um, and because I've met some really great people that are also now starting businesses and investing there. Um, and they credit— I mean, that's the thing that sometimes as a business owner, you take the flaming arrows, you hear all the negatives, and you don't take time to, to appreciate and celebrate what you have built and accomplished. But when people bring up Hilliard as a point of pride, Cooked Crank Can, is one of the top businesses or things they want to talk about on the list. And, um, I, I think that is something too for those that are listening. When I do consulting and work with a lot of other towns, one of the businesses they're hoping to recruit or start or see is a brewery. And, um, I think your model and, and what you guys have built is a, is a great example for them to, to look at and see.

R**Rob Fry** 48:57

Yeah, we would Yeah, when the time is right, I think we would like to do it again. Time and place. Yeah, it'd be the right place too. But yeah, I mean, it'd be fun to do it again.

J**Jason Duff** 49:07

What is next?

R**Rob Fry** 49:08

But maybe to your point, yes, maybe look at that as some of the success. There's probably been 7 or 8 businesses that have opened since, since we have. So I think that's— it probably is. You know, won't take full credit, but it is springing on other entrepreneurs. Yeah, for sure.

J**Jason Duff** 49:24

So speaking of that, what is next for you guys? What's on the radar? Things you're excited about?

R**Rob Fry** 49:29

Uh, that's a good question.

M**Megan** 49:31

I mean, what next as far as projects? Don't really know yet. But as far as Crooked Can currently, um, just continue to plan more events, um, bring families out. Um, we've got some really fun events coming up, and, um, we do a lot of family— like, we have a lot of kids that come by. So, um, we know that, um, you know, if, if the kids have someplace to go and the parents know that they're going to have a good time, they can have a good time too. So it just provides a space that the family loves.

R**Rob Fry** 50:05

So one, one that Megan started will be coming up, and again, this will probably air after it, but, um, New Year's Eve. So not New Year's Eve, but Noon Year's Eve for the kids. And it started as something fun to do.

J**Jason Duff** 50:17

I love that name.

R**Rob Fry** 50:18

Yeah, we probably had what, maybe 50 people show up for the first one. We, uh, we probably had 500 for the last one. People had to leave. We, we tried— we had people sitting on the floor. I mean, it was—

J**Jason Duff** 50:33

so their activities kind of walk us through what's happening.

R**Rob Fry** 50:35

Yeah, I'll let her set this one up.

M**Megan** 50:37

So, well, and then there's that fine line too of, okay, promoting an event. Did I promote it enough? Did I not? Like, there's that battle of social media and how many times did we post it? Did we boost it? What do we need to do here? And every year it kind of grew. And so last year we probably had 300, like, hats, blowers, necklaces for the kids. I mean, we did it— we, it's— we made it so simple. We put on the TV a ball drop. We put balloons in the rafters and did a balloon, a balloon drop. We offered, um, sparkling white grape juice for the kids as a New Year's Eve cheer, or, um, cheers.

J**Jason Duff** 51:19

My kind of drink.

M **Megan** 51:20

Yeah, I just—

R **Rob Fry** 51:21

I love that.

M **Megan** 51:21

I mean, it's so simple. Coloring sheets. Um, and then all of a sudden we were bombarded, and it was madness. And it was a great problem to have, but it was also okay. So like, now going into planning of this, it's like, okay, how do we have this event again and it not be madness. Because sometimes you just — yeah, you just never know how many people are going to show. It was a— it was absolutely amazing. But you also have some people that were frustrated because everybody did have the same idea, and it's like, sorry, you came out with everybody, like everybody decided to come. But, um, we're, you know, planning this year to make it better, make it more strategic, and, and just have it not be as, as crazy. But sometimes you just don't know. Yeah, you know, you've got that stress of, are enough people going to show up? And then you have the other stress that is, what if—

J **Jason Duff** 52:17

yeah, in planning parades, that's always like the thing too. It's— and, and what's the weather going to be? Because sometimes that can impact it. Or like, is Ohio State playing that day? Like, it's all these things.

R **Rob Fry** 52:28

We were so close last year of the— it was warm enough But it rained. Oh, it's like all these extra 50 people that showed up probably would have sat outside, but it was raining, so we couldn't—

J **Jason Duff** 52:40

we couldn't— they couldn't even say that.

R **Rob Fry** 52:41

But it literally just doubled every year. And it's just one of the— it's an example of you pick something and it works. So let's do that, and let's try to find other things that are like that, because clearly everybody loves it. So yeah, let's try to build on that.

M **Megan** 52:54

The cool thing too is like the city, um, we've kind of chatted with them and we've talked about making it like a bigger city event and saying, hey, next year maybe in the park we have one of the, um, Hilliard Schools help us kind of make a ball. Yeah, to drop, and then have it at the city.

J **Jason Duff** 53:15

You can have all of Columbus coming out.

M**Megan** 53:17

But there's just like small events, like who's doing, who's doing it? Just be creative. And you don't have to spend a lot of money to bring people out.

J**Jason Duff** 53:27

Do we have the Crooked Can Rage Room yet? Literally, I am getting asked all the time, when are you— when's the town gonna get a rage room? So have you heard of this?

R**Rob Fry** 53:35

No.

J**Jason Duff** 53:36

So it's basically putting stuff in that people can break and to bend. We may have just coined this for adults or kids, collaboration for both. I've seen both. Like, literally, they want something because people need things to blow off steam or take rid of stress. So I, I, I get some credit for if the Crooked Can Rage Room pops up in Hilliard. I got to get some credit for that.

R**Rob Fry** 54:00

Yeah, we, we can figure that out.

J**Jason Duff** 54:02

Okay, see, there we go. There we go.

R**Rob Fry** 54:03

We got cement floors and they, they break easy on us. There we go. There we go.

J**Jason Duff** 54:08

Okay. All right, as we kind of round out the episode here, what is one professional development resource that was impactful for you guys along your professional journeys?

R**Rob Fry** 54:16

Oh, wow.

J**Jason Duff** 54:18

Could be anything. I always say a book, podcast, mentor, you know, professional development group.

R**Rob Fry** 54:25

I mean, just again, because the way ours worked out, I mean, working with the guys in Florida made life just so much easier.

J**Jason Duff** 54:32

Yeah. Do you say you kind of mastermind with them too?

R**Rob Fry** 54:34

So we've, we've brought up that concept like a lot on the podcast about finding people that you can share vulnerably with and share ideas and strategies like like, there's a great example, um, because we were taking ideas from them for a while, and then it turned, and at one point they started taking ideas from us. Yeah. Um, like, we did better merchandise, we did some events. It's like, oh, that's really cool, we should do that event. And, you know, we— so both ways. So like, I was going to say the break room, that'd be really cool. We do—

J**Jason Duff** 55:05

I'm actually going to follow up with you on that. I think there's something—

R**Rob Fry** 55:07

we do silent disco. And everyone loves Silent Disco, and that's one we took from Florida. And when we did it here, it was pretty, you know, not a lot of people had heard of it and everybody loves it. Yeah. So now the Break Room might be the new thing. So yeah, it's— that's really who we've leaned on. Yeah. Over the time.

J**Jason Duff** 55:25

So it's— so for you having that, that first brand established and people that you can have that open dialogue with has been— I mean, I think that's a great—

R**Rob Fry** 55:32

always going to be second.

M**Megan** 55:34

Yeah. And we're always asking patrons too, like, what do you want to see here? What do you want to— what do you want to do next? So, um, at events we're always talking about the next event, asking, and we get some ideas from the patrons too, which is kind of cool.

R**Rob Fry** 55:48

So, and you mentioned a couple things like coming up, a good example was the, uh, lighting of the tree. And yeah, one of those events they throw across and that we then took on. It's like, okay, let's let's also promote this thing. Yeah. And it just, it's blown up. So it looks like Sunday, it's a Sunday, and it looks like it's going to be good weather. It was an amazing turnout last year. I mean, thousands of people come down for this lighting of the tree. So it's just one of those collaborations with the city that is really cool. But I guess when this comes out too, we'll be having our anniversary in February. So that's another big event that'll be coming up.

J**Jason Duff** 56:22

How many years will you be celebrating?

R **Rob Fry** 56:23
Fourth year.

J **Jason Duff** 56:24
Fourth year.

M **Megan** 56:25
All right.

J **Jason Duff** 56:25
Well, congrats.

R **Rob Fry** 56:28
And then, uh, you'll be out for the— you missed the last one, and it's probably a good thing, but the St. Patrick's Day race is, uh, in March.

J **Jason Duff** 56:37
And last year, really good at drinking, I'll probably be walking.

R **Rob Fry** 56:40
I was also doing— yeah, I know, it's— it was 28 degrees and windy.

J **Jason Duff** 56:45
Hey, so get out.

R **Rob Fry** 56:46
So we're hoping that we get a good weather day.

J **Jason Duff** 56:50
Yes.

R **Rob Fry** 56:50
Yeah, that'll be in March.

J **Jason Duff** 56:51
And then the last question I have for you is, where can people follow you in your business to keep up with the work you were doing?

M **Megan** 56:56
Crooked Can Ohio on Instagram, on Facebook, and X, I guess that's what we say now, right?

J

Jason Duff 57:03

Oh yeah, the new Twitter. Changing my language too.

R

Rob Fry 57:06

Is it Crooked Can OH on X? Isn't it different on X? I thought it was different.

J

Jason Duff 57:12

You stalk them and find out. Yes, yes. And I will link some of those in the show notes as well.

R

Rob Fry 57:16

Or website. We have a website.

M

Megan 57:17

Yeah, yeah.

R

Rob Fry 57:18

Which honestly, our website has our tap list.

J

Jason Duff 57:21

Okay.

R

Rob Fry 57:22

Yeah, it's constantly active.

J

Jason Duff 57:23

So, and are you on BeerMenus, Untapped, any of those kind of—

R

Rob Fry 57:26

We're on Untapped. Great. And that's how we link the website is with Untapped. Great. And that's why it's, yeah, it's current.

J

Jason Duff 57:31

Well, thank you guys. I think one of the things, and we've talked about it, and I love that you brought it up, is the rip and duplicate. Yeah. Don't feel you have to come up with that perfect brand novel idea. Look at what someone else is doing and then make it better. And the other thing is just the local partnerships and collaborations. If you're thinking about wanting to see a brewery or a food hall or just the idea of taking these food trucks and supporting them to open up that, that, that stall or that brick and mortar. You've got to get to Hilliard, Ohio, and check out Crooked Can. What Rob and Megan have accomplished is, is pretty awesome. And just appreciate you sharing your insights and ideas and strategies around how you did it today.

M

Megan 58:11

Thanks for having you.

E

Ethan DeLeon 58:12

Thanks for tuning in on this episode of the Small Nation Podcast.

E

Ethan DeLeon 58:14

We hope that conversation proved valuable to you. And if you enjoyed it, be sure to share the episode and follow the show on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or your favorite podcasting platform. You can also subscribe to the Small Nation YouTube channel if you prefer to watch your episodes. Follow Small Nation on social media, and we'll see you in the next episode.