

**SMALL
NATION™**

MAIN STREET QUARTERLY REPORT

Q1 2024



Dear reader,

Thank you so much for being a dedicated reader and friend of Small Nation. As we continue to grow with our work in Bellefontaine and beyond, our readership also continues to grow and we're excited to have you along with us. Heading into Spring, I'm thrilled to share some exciting news about our Small Nation quarterly newsletter. You'll notice we've given our newsletter a refreshed design to better serve your needs and keep you engaged.

In this edition, you can look forward to new columns that delve into diverse topics, providing valuable insights and perspectives. We're introducing featured properties, showcasing excellent

opportunities within our Small Nation community for new and expanding businesses. You'll also get an inside view on what makes our community and our partners successful. These changes aim to deliver content that informs, inspires, and connects us all.

I invite you to explore our revamped newsletter and stay tuned for more updates. Your continued support is what propels Small Nation forward, and we're committed to bringing you value that reflects the innovation and diversity of our community.

Jason

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VISITING MT. STERLING, ILLINOIS



The team and I were out in Mt. Sterling, IL, in January working on the launch of a new strategic plan for this small but mighty community. This town in western Illinois is home to Dot Foods, one of the largest food distributors in the world. Dot was founded by Robert Tracy in 1960 as a way to give customers access to affordable products and help food industry suppliers increase their sales.

Now, Dot is a multi-billion dollar company with distribution centers located across the county. But they don't stop there - the family created the Tracy Family Foundation as a way to honor the legacy of Robert Tracy and his wife Dorothy and serve their local community of Mt. Sterling where the company calls home.

The Foundation is looking for a new long-term strategic plan for the community which we, along with two other amazing Illinois-based planning firms Teska and All Together, started working on this week. Through two packed days of stakeholder meetings, we have learned so many great things about this town and its history and have already started working on ideas on how to continue their downtown revitalization and send Mt. Sterling into the future.

I'm so excited to be working with the local stakeholders the next few months to explore the goals for the next three, five, and ten years. Be back soon!

TORNADO RESPONSE & RELIEF EFFORTS

Dear Small Nation community,

Last week, our community suffered a catastrophic EF3 tornado that hit Indian Lake, Ohio, just a few minutes from Bellefontaine. The destruction in Lakeview has been unimaginable. Many buildings in the downtown are gone or severely compromised. Our Community Storage units took a direct hit. We are working hard to help customers get access to their property and protect and preserve as much as possible.

The community is coming together, working to rebuild and restore, to bring up essential community services. Things like power, water, and where we dispose trash. Volunteers will continue to distribute emergency essentials in Lakeview, behind the Depot, the municipal building in Russell's Point, and Indian Lake Community Church.

We have incredible first responders who have saved lives, dedicated linemen, and utility workers working to turn off and disconnect electric where it is unsafe and dangerous, and volunteers who are organizing to meet emergency needs.

You will see the destruction of Lakeview's municipal building, the library, neighborhoods, and several downtown businesses. But then you will see our response, what locals are calling, "The Lake Effect." The grit, determination, and unwavering commitment in the Indian Lake region.

Small Nation is committed to deploying all resources necessary to help those impacted by the Indian Lake tornado.

First, the United Way of Logan County, Ohio has set up a Tornado Relief Fund. As a local agency, 100% of monetary contributions will be directed to relief efforts.



If you work from home or your office/ internet connectivity has been impacted and you need immediate office space or access to internet to work, we are offering complementary memberships to BUILD Cowork + Space. We also have office space available at BUILD and the Opera Suites by BUILD with high-speed fiber internet. Please contact the BUILD team at 937-589-2600 or info@buildcowork.com.

For businesses that have been negatively impacted, we understand the importance of continued business operations. As such, we have space available in the Main Street Marketplace for pop-up retail. Other businesses in Downtown Bellefontaine are also offering space in their shops.

Downtown Bellefontaine businesses are working on a plan to collect and provide relief efforts for our neighbors at Indian Lake. More information soon.

The outpouring of supplies, people, and resources is like nothing that I have seen. I'm reminding everyone this is more than a sprint; it's a marathon. We have to protect and recharge and build the capacity for rebuilding the lake long-term. Over the next few weeks and months, we will continue to stay here until we can rebuild our community.





SMALL NATION™

PODCAST

SEASON TWO

10,000 + LISTENS



BRISKET RECIPE AND RUB

- 3 Tablespoon coarse fresh ground pepper
- 3 Tablespoon paprika
- 3 Tablespoon chili powder
- 1 Tablespoon white sugar
- 1 Tablespoon onion powder
- 1 Tablespoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons mustard powder

PREPPING BRISKET

Pick a prime cut but no less than a choice cut brisket with the thickest flat edge you can find.

Trim all fat off exposed meat side.

Trim fat cap down to ¼ inch.

Find the grain in the flat and cut corner off. This helps find the grain in meat when meat is finished and ready for slicing. You must slice against the grain, or it will ruin all your hard work.

I separated the point and the flat on this one to experiment.

Dry brine the brisket with ½ teaspoon of pink salt for pound on trimmed meat. Coat evenly all over meat and let rest fridge uncovered for 48 hours.

Since we dry brine everything, make sure you use a rub with no salt.

Evenly coat brisket with rub for the final 12 hours of the 48-hour dry brine time.

COOKING BRISKET

Fire up the smoker and get to temp (225 degrees). I use a gravity feed lump charcoal smoker and layer chamber with lump and wood chunks. I prefer hickory and apple.

Place brisket fat cap side down into smoker. This helps protect the meat from heat and helps keep fat from melting and running down over meat and ruining the bark we are trying to create.

Smoke for 7-8 hours and at that time the meat hit the stall which is around 160 degrees.

Pull the meat off smoker and wrap in 2 layers of pink butcher paper. Pink butcher paper helps maintain the bark on the meat and retain moisture in the meat.

Once wrapped, insert a quality temperature probe in the thickest part of meat punt back in smoker to finish.

Set thermometer to 200-205 degrees and wait.

Total time on smoker will be from 18-30 hours depending on size of meat, weather conditions etc.

Once you hit the desired temp pull off smoker, leave temp probe in meat wrap in multiple towels and put in a cooler for at least 2 hours, but should slice before cooling to 150 degrees for safety reasons.

There are many techniques and ways of BBQing, however patience and a quality thermometer is really all you need to make great BBQ.



If you'd like more information about becoming a Small Nation Podcast sponsor, please reach out to ethan@smallnationstrong.com!

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A NEW LEAF FLORIST WELCOMES NEW OWNERSHIP AND EXCITING CHANGES



A New Leaf Florist, a cherished flower shop in downtown Bellefontaine, is thrilled to announce a change in ownership and an exciting period of transformation. The shop, deeply rooted in the community, has been a staple for floral needs for over 25 years. The new ownership, as of the beginning of the year, brings fresh energy and a commitment to upholding the shop's legacy while introducing innovative changes.

New owner, Bo Ramsey, stopped into the business one day to purchase flowers for his wife, Jennifer. Having other businesses that are seasonal in nature and looking for something to do in the wintertime, Bo asked if they needed a delivery driver and started delivering flowers. After learning the business was looking to sell, Bo and Jennifer decided to take it on.

"I brought in Jennifer to see how it all runs, check out some numbers, and made an offer," Bo said. "They had offers from bigger florists, but they wanted to see it go to somebody local, somebody that has passion and is going to carry it on like she did."

The upcoming months will see a gradual shift in management ensuring a seamless transition for customers. Bridget Helmlinger will be assuming the role as general manager.

Exciting plans are in store for A New Leaf Florist, with a complete renovation on the horizon. The makeover will encompass new flooring, paint, lighting, and an eye-catching new awning for the exterior. Additionally, the shop has acquired a new Sprinter van to enhance

delivery services. A New Leaf Florist will remain a hub for beautiful, thoughtfully crafted floral arrangements, and the new ownership looks forward to adding their unique touch to the shop's offerings.

Scott Green, the lead designer with over 30 years of experience, will continue to play a key role in crafting elegant flower arrangements. The owners are enthusiastic about maintaining the high quality and unique offerings that have made A New Leaf Florist a beloved establishment in downtown Bellefontaine.

"The quality of all the floral arrangements is going to be the same because Scott's still here."

said Jennifer. "The only real changes you're going to see are the inside cosmetic changes. We're also going to carry some different lines and bring in unique products not sold anywhere else in the downtown."

Reflecting on the transition, the Ramseys express gratitude for the warm welcome from the community. The decision to sell to local owners with a shared passion for the business was a deliberate choice, ensuring that the shop continues to thrive in the hands of those who understand and appreciate its significance.

The community is invited to visit A New Leaf Florist at 111 N. Main Street and experience the exciting changes firsthand. To learn more or order, visit their website at anewleafFloristinc.com

OUR PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE IN BELLEFONTAINE!



Do you know what makes a Community Bank special? We have a lot of answers to that question, but the #1 reason at Middlefield Bank is – the people. In fact, it’s OUR people. Each employee you meet inside our two Bellefontaine branches takes pride in being a part of this community, making a difference with every individual, every family and every business – every day.

“We really care about our neighbors,” says Kelly Hoffman, Branch Operations Manager. “Our customers see the same knowledgeable, friendly employees and are greeted by name. We work hard to understand their concerns and communicate effectively so we can provide the best banking experience with top notch products and services.”

Seeing the community prosper and grow is at the heart of everything we do at Middlefield Bank, which is why MB continues to invest in Bellefontaine’s community. From funding large scale projects like the Calvary Christian School building to providing a mortgage for new home buyer, to offering products and services that grow with our customers during all stages of life, MB is here to provide Bellefontaine a bank they can rely on.

Another benefit of being a community bank is that MB can be agile and make fast, local decisions. This ability to act swiftly can help individuals, families and businesses thrive or survive when they need a quick response. “Plus,” says Kelly, “at MB your money stays local, and that is meaningful to everyone in Bellefontaine.”

At MB, we’re also looking out for our neighbors, especially during the holidays. Whether you’re shopping online or in-stores, make sure you’re staying safe and

secure. One of our checking products, MB Secure Rewards Checking, helps protect you and your purchases all year long. Be sure to stop in our branches for complete details.*

We strive to make a difference by supporting many local organizations and events over the years. If a hometown project is benefiting residents, it’s likely the bank will be involved! To name a few, MB has worked with: Bellefontaine Athletic Boosters (Go Chieftains!), the Rotary Club of Bellefontaine and the Logan County Chamber of Commerce. Partnering with Junior Achievement Mad River Region and EVERFI, we help bring free financial literacy programs into the schools, teaching kids the importance of wise money management, entrepreneurship, and career readiness. It’s our honor to support so many organizations. We also must congratulate and thank our AVP Commercial Relationship Manager David Willoby. David was co-chair of United Way of Logan County’s annual fundraiser this year, which broke records this year raising more than \$1,102,249. We are so proud of your work and dedication, David!

Be sure to stop by our MB branches each Friday for free popcorn! We also hope to see our customers and friends at Rotary Club of Bellefontaine’s Annual Pancake Breakfast, where we are proud to be a Silver Sponsor. Bring a hearty appetite on November 4th as Rotary raises funds for Logan County students, 7am–12pm at Ohio Hi-Point Career Center.

Middlefield Bank is located at 1120 North Main Street and 1454 South Main Street in Bellefontaine. For directions and contact information, visit our website at middlefieldbank.bank

Middlefield Bank has total assets of \$1.8 billion and is the 11th largest community bank in Ohio***. MB offers convenient services and technology made simple across the following:**

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- **Personal Savings Accounts, CDs and IRAs**
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- **Home Equity Lines of Credit**
- **Credit Cards**
- **Online/Mobile Banking**
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- **Commercial Banking**
- **Commercial Lending**

*Restrictions apply. Visit a branch for details.
**Approximate combined assets, as of June 30, 2022
***Deposit market share ranking based on Ohio headquartered banks with less than \$10 billion in assets. Member FDIC, Equal Housing Lender



STATEWIDE DEVELOPMENT: EPISODE 36 OF THE SMALL NATION PODCAST FEATURING LYDIA MIHALIK



If you think discussions about water and wastewater improvements aren't fun and interesting, think again. In episode thirty-six of The Small Nation Podcast with Jason Duff, the founder and CEO of Small Nation, and Ethan DeLeon, Director Lydia Mihalik, the head of the Ohio Department of Development, shares insights into the state's progress, her journey from mayor to director, and the resources available for businesses and developers.

DISCOVERING OHIO: AN ADOPTED BUCKEYE'S JOURNEY

Lydia Mihalik, originally from Indiana, found her way to Ohio when she enrolled at the University of Findlay. Playing basketball and studying political science, she fell in love with the City of Findlay and its supportive community. Her journey into local government began with an internship, leading to roles in community and economic development. Mihalik's firsthand experience with local government operations sparked her passion for serving communities.

SHAPING COMMUNITIES: FROM MAYOR TO DIRECTOR

Mihalik's career took a turn when she became the first woman mayor of Findlay, breaking barriers and serving

for seven years. Her success and commitment to community development caught the attention of Governor DeWine and Lieutenant Governor Husted, leading to her current role as the Director of the Ohio Department of Development.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

During the podcast, Mihalik highlights the significant resources available for businesses and developers across Ohio. She discusses a \$250 million fund for water and wastewater improvements, emphasizing the importance of partnerships with local communities. Small to mid-sized communities, in particular, stand to benefit from these initiatives, showcasing Ohio's commitment to inclusive development.

BRIDGING THE GAP: FROM GRANT EXPERT TO DIRECTOR

Mihalik's transition from writing grants for benches and trash cans to becoming the Director of the Ohio Department of Development showcases her diverse expertise. Her experiences in grant administration and local government uniquely position her to understand the challenges and opportunities in community development.

BREAKING STEREOTYPES: OHIO'S DYNAMIC GROWTH

Mihalik challenges stereotypes about Ohio being a "flyover state." She emphasizes the dynamic and exciting developments happening across the state, with communities like Downtown Bellefontaine taking the lead. Ohio's success, according to Mihalik, results from the synergy of preparation, opportunity, and the dedication of Team Ohio.

AN EPISODE WORTH LISTENING TO

As Director Lydia Mihalik shares her insights on The Small Nation Podcast, listeners gain a deeper understanding of Ohio's commitment to development. From water infrastructure to inclusive growth, Mihalik's journey and the state's progress make for a compelling narrative. For those interested in entrepreneurship, real estate, and the economic future of Ohio, this podcast episode is a must-listen.

Unlock the full conversation on The Small Nation Podcast to delve into the details of Ohio's development strategies and discover how the state is building a brighter future for all.

HARNESSING THE 2024 TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE: A MARKETING OPPORTUNITY FOR OHIO COMMUNITIES

In 2024, a celestial event of unparalleled magnificence is set to captivate the skies – the total solar eclipse. This astronomical occurrence, where the moon entirely covers the sun, will cast a shadow on parts of Ohio, offering communities a unique chance to attract visitors and boost local economies.

The 2024 total solar eclipse is a rare phenomenon, and Ohio finds itself in the prime path of this cosmic spectacle. On April 8, 2024, the moon's shadow will traverse the state, providing an extraordinary experience for both residents and tourists. This presents an exceptional marketing opportunity for Ohio communities, as they can leverage the event to draw in a significant influx of visitors.

The potential economic impact of the total solar eclipse on local communities cannot be overstated. Historically, areas in the path of such celestial events witness a surge in tourism, with enthusiasts and curious onlookers traveling from far and wide to witness the spectacle. Ohio, being in the eclipse's trajectory, has a unique chance to position itself as a must-visit destination during this celestial event.

For local businesses, this presents an opportune moment to capitalize on the increased foot traffic.

Hotels, restaurants, and shops can tailor their marketing strategies to attract eclipse enthusiasts, offering special packages, eclipse-themed menus, and exclusive merchandise.

By tapping into the excitement surrounding the eclipse, businesses can maximize their revenue and leave a lasting impression on visitors.

Communities should actively market themselves as eclipse destinations, emphasizing the accessibility of prime viewing spots, local amenities, and the overall experience they can offer. Establishing a coordinated marketing campaign, both online and offline, will help generate awareness and draw attention to the unique position of Ohio during the eclipse.

Social media platforms, local websites, and travel forums can be valuable tools for spreading the word. Engaging

content, such as eclipse itineraries, travel guides, and behind-the-scenes glimpses of preparations, can create buzz and attract potential visitors. Collaboration with influencers and astronomy enthusiasts can further amplify the reach of the marketing campaign.

Moreover, community leaders should collaborate with local organizations and authorities to ensure a seamless experience for visitors. Clear signage, well-managed traffic, and informative guides can enhance the overall satisfaction of those who choose to witness the eclipse in Ohio.

The 2024 total solar eclipse presents Ohio communities with a golden opportunity to boost their local economies and showcase the unique charm of their regions. By strategically marketing themselves as eclipse destinations, businesses can attract visitors and leave a lasting positive impression. It's time for Ohio to seize the moment and turn this celestial event into a beacon for economic growth and community development.



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MAZE HEARING BILLBOARD SPOTLIGHT



COMSTOR OUTDOOR

A SMALL NATION COMPANY

Maze Hearing, a reputable audiology and hearing center, has partnered with COMSTOR Outdoor to launch a compelling marketing campaign focused on promoting the significance of hearing health. The billboard campaign emphasizes the theme “Hear What Matters Most” and encourages individuals not to miss out on life’s precious moments due to hearing impairments.

The central message, “Hear What Matters Most,” serves as a poignant

reminder of the essential role that hearing plays in enriching our lives. Whether it’s the laughter of loved ones, the melodies of nature, or the everyday sounds of our surroundings, the campaign highlights the importance of preserving these moments by addressing any hearing concerns promptly.

Maze Hearing’s expertise in audiology and commitment to personalized care further reinforces the campaign’s message. By offering comprehensive evaluations, tailored treatment plans,

and access to advanced hearing aid technology, Maze Hearing empowers individuals to take proactive steps towards better hearing health.

By leveraging COMSTOR Outdoor’s extensive outdoor advertising network, the campaign reaches a wide audience across Logan County, sparking conversations and prompting individuals to reflect on their hearing health. Through strategic placement and captivating visuals, the billboards serve as a constant reminder of the value of maintaining optimal hearing abilities.

ESSENTIAL TIPS

marketing essentials

GROWING SALES WITH A CONTENT STRATEGY

What’s a content strategy?

Think of a content strategy as a master plan of all the brand content you put out there to inform and educate your potential customers.

It includes all forms of media – such as videos, blogs, social posts, website content, podcasts, billboard messaging, direct mail pieces and more.

Essentially, it’s the blueprint guiding the creation and delivery of how your brand communicates with the world. It’s about telling your story, engaging with your target audience, and, ultimately, nurturing them to purchase your product or service.

Why is content strategy important?

Customers expect to find solutions to problems, answers to questions, customer reviews and more before they purchase a product or service. Putting this information out there via a content strategy helps you:

- Build brand recognition
- Establish brand authority
- Improve SEO
- Enhance user engagement
- And drive conversions and sales!

WHAT IS A CONTENT STRATEGY?



At Marketing Essentials, we bring more than 15 years of experience crafting custom content marketing strategies for a variety of industries.

By Tyler Louth, Chief Executive Officer at Marketing Essentials (mktgessentials.com). Submit your marketing and sales questions to Tyler at connect@mktgessentials.com

HONEYCORE BOUTIQUE AND PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO NEWEST SHOPPING DESTINATION ON WEST COLUMBUS AVENUE



In February, a new shopping destination and photography studio will be opened on West Columbus Avenue in downtown Bellefontaine. HoneyCore Boutique is a stylish boutique created with the mission of providing a diverse and curated collection of fashion-forward clothing that empowers individuals to express their unique style with confidence.

Co-owner Dallas Castle embarked on her entrepreneurial journey in 2018, combining her love for photography and passion for empowering women. Specializing in boudoir photography, she has grown her businesses to reach clients all over the state of Ohio and neighboring states. Dallas believes that boudoir is a powerful way for women to feel confident. Sharing a common vision of empowering women, self-love, and entrepreneurship, Dallas and her fellow HoneyCore co-owners, Ashton Vorhees and Elizabeth McGee, aim to keep women feeling confident by hand-selected clothing that enhances their self-esteem.

Beyond selling products, the business will offer events and experiences to foster connections among women, creating a safe space for building relationships and community.

“We love to be inclusive in everything we do,” said Castle. “We want to help women build their community and their village and be a part of their self-love journey. That is what HoneyCore and the services we offer here are all about.”

HoneyCore offers clothing and accessories ranging in all sizes from XS to 5XL. The trio also plans to host many events including craft and sips, book club meetups, educational courses, and more.

In addition to the boutique, the photography studios for Honey + Bourbon and Honey’s Boudoir is located in the space. Honey + Bourbon Photography focuses on weddings, elopements, and couples, while Honey’s Boudoir centers around more intimate photography for women to embrace self-love.

“The products and services offered at HoneyCore will only add to the tremendous offerings that make downtown Bellefontaine a destination for retail,” said Keyne Strickland, Small Nation Property and Leasing Manager. “Dallas, Ashton, and Elizabeth are three impressive women dedicated to their cause. We’re so excited to have them join the downtown community.”

HoneyCore Boutique is located on the second floor at 210 W. Columbus Ave. in Suite 4 and celebrated their grand opening on Saturday, February 3, 2024. The business can be accessed by entering between Tanger’s Furniture and Anytime Fitness. To learn more, follow them on Facebook at HoneyCore Boutique or visit their website at honeycoreboutique.com

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RAINBOW ROW FEATURED IN OHIO MAGAZINE



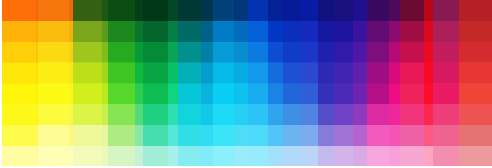
Ohio Magazine featured Rainbow Row in January as part of their 30 Reasons to Love Ohio Right Now feature in the January/February issue. This placement features Downtown Bellefontaine and the six businesses that call Rainbow Row Bellefontaine home. The Craft Emporium, Candy Craze, Eden Haus, Rush Creek Art Studio, and the Salty Swan Studio all make up the ground floor storefronts. Upstairs, seven beautiful short-term rentals make up the Flats, available to rent on Airbnb and VRBO.

Small Nation worked with the editors and publishers at Ohio Magazine on getting this placed in the Jan/Feb issue. Ohio Magazine has over 124,000 print subscribers statewide and a total audience of over 327,000 people, so placements like these are huge in promoting communities like Downtown Bellefontaine as a travel destination to people throughout the state.

Businesses in Rainbow Row, and other businesses throughout the downtown, have seen the positive impact this has had on their businesses. Read the full piece about Rainbow Row Bellefontaine in Ohio Magazine at downtownbellefontaine.com/media. If you're looking for your next day or weekend trip, plan to stop by these amazing stores on your next trip!

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