

# Episode 90

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

agent of change, Hardin County, Kenton Ohio, Ohio House of Representatives, economic development, rural infrastructure, political career, Arnold Schwarzenegger campaign, real estate development, challenging the status quo, small town revitalization, public policy, house fire recovery, community confidence, underdog mindset

## SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Jon Cross, Ethan DeLeon

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- J** **Jon Cross** 00:00  
It's a little bit of roll the dice, but being an agent of change, whether you're that investor or you're helping that community kind of reconfigure, how do we bring back pharmacies and local shopping, local banks, local banks? Um, there's great opportunities.
- E** **Ethan DeLeon** 00:22  
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 to 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. We're excited to be hosting the representative of the 83rd District of Ohio House of Representatives, John Cross.
- J** **Jon Cross** 00:52  
John.
- J** **Jason Duff** 00:52  
Hey, John.
- J** **Jon Cross** 00:53  
Welcome. Listen to all the clapping.
- J** **Jason Duff** 00:55  
Amazing. I mean, studio guys, you really—
- J** **Jon Cross** 00:58  
Yeah, please. Please, no need to stand, no need to stand.

J

**Jason Duff** 01:01

So, you know, Jon arrived in Bellefontaine today, but I have to say our studio is on the second floor of the historic opera block. It's beautiful. It's great. And it's interesting, as we're walking in, there are catcalls coming from the street complimenting Jon, and I'm like, Jon, we're walking up these two flights of stairs, and it happened to be these ladies are outside saying, "Sir, you have the nicest calf." Legs. Yeah, legs. But then they micro, you know, they zoomed in and they said, these calf muscles are the real deal.

J

**Jon Cross** 01:31

Well, yes, they are. If you remember, do you remember Strength Shoe?

J

**Jason Duff** 01:36

Oh, yeah.

J

**Jon Cross** 01:37

Do you remember Strength Shoe?

J

**Jason Duff** 01:38

He's probably too young.

J

**Jon Cross** 01:39

I have great calf muscles. I really do. I have great calf muscles. Jason said, what's one thing that people don't know about you? I have good calf muscles because in high school, I couldn't jump. I played basketball. I couldn't jump. And they had the Strength Shoe program. And so I would be outside in front of my house on Wayne Street, and I would be jumping rope. And these strength shoes that had like a front platform, and it built you the strength of your calves up. And so actually, I have better calf muscles, I think, than Arnold Schwarzenegger does, because when I worked for the governor, he's sometimes like, John, you've got great calf muscles. I said, thanks, Governor. And that was his weakest. If you look at his bodybuilding days, his, his challenge was, uh, his calf muscles. He had a great physique, great body, but, uh, calf muscles— I, I naturally had them beat.

J

**Jason Duff** 02:19

So John was working on that.

J

**Jon Cross** 02:21

I still can't jump.

J

**Jason Duff** 02:23

While John was working on that, little Jason got his first set of Reebok Pumps. Oh yes. And the Reebok Pumps back in the late '80s, how you got more strength to jump higher.

**J** **Jon Cross** 02:34  
Yeah.

**J** **Jason Duff** 02:34  
You gave a few pumps. You didn't even have to work out. I remember.

**J** **Jon Cross** 02:38  
So that was— that was what I had.

**J** **Jason Duff** 02:39  
Did that help your athletic ability though? Okay. That's one thing I have not excelled at.

**E** **Ethan DeLeon** 02:43  
By the way, thank you for the Indian Lake water. Thank you. All Nation Water brought to you by Indian Lake.

**J** **Jason Duff** 02:48  
And, uh, well, and we're gonna talk a lot about Indian Lake today, but But no, we, we, uh, we have pure water here, John.

**J** **Jon Cross** 02:54  
This is a great— my God, Small Nation has made it big deal. Small Nation in this beautiful facility, great podcast. And I've watched a lot of your podcasts.

**J** **Jason Duff** 03:02  
Thank you.

**J** **Jon Cross** 03:03  
Appreciate that. And bring in so many wonderful people. But today, this is going to be the best part. It's not like Trump. This will be the best podcast. It's going to be mostly viewed by a lot of people, and I'm going to beat Matt Brown's records. Matt Brown, Matt Brown, you had a lot of people, uh, watch your podcast, but we're going to beat that today.

**J** **Jason Duff** 03:19  
And another Kenton guy, Matt Brown, his episode, for those if you haven't watched it. It's great. The cost of entrepreneurship. Right. You know, really talking. We have a lot of guests that talks about the highs of things, but doing things that are hard can be difficult. Right. And Matt really unpacked a lot of that, so.

**J** **Jon Cross** 03:35  
All your guests have been great, and it's such a treat because it really shows the amazing people we have here in Northwest Ohio. That's right. And Western Ohio, and the great things that are happening.

J

**Jason Duff** 03:46

That's right.

J

**Jon Cross** 03:46

It's fun to be a part of.

J

**Jason Duff** 03:48

Well, a little bit about your story, John. So hometown, tell us about.

J

**Jon Cross** 03:52

Kenton, Ohio.

J

**Jason Duff** 03:53

Beautiful Hardin County.

J

**Jon Cross** 03:54

Yes, I was. It is. It's a beautiful part of the state. Mom and Dad were both from Hardin County. Dad was a 1959 graduate of Ridgemont Schools, the Green Devils back then.

J

**Jason Duff** 04:05

Big FFA program.

J

**Jon Cross** 04:07

Big FFA program. That's the— we still have Dad's FFA jackets. Very small. Doesn't fit me. But— and Mom was a Kenton Wildcat cheerleader and the rest is history. And so I am one of four. I have an older brother and two older sisters. And then 13 years later, I came along and I kept Mom and Dad young. And so Dad's not with us anymore, we lost him a few years back, but Mom's still going strong. She's 82. She is a beautician, she still cuts hair 2 days a week. Wow. And she loves it. And so I've been blessed. One thing that I have been lucky and blessed, like all of you, is I had the parent lottery. And, and when I scratched it off, it says you're the parents of Jerry and Judy Cross. And they were just great parents and just loved to death, and they were very supportive of everything I wanted to do in life. And just so lucky and blessed to have them as good parents. And so I'm trying to be a great parent to Carson and Connor, our two boys. And Christina, my wife, she's, she's amazing. She's beautiful. And I'm very blessed to have a great family.

J

**Jason Duff** 05:06

That's awesome.

J

**Jon Cross** 05:07

Such a great foundation.

**J****Jason Duff** 05:08

For people that may not be familiar with Hardin County, to you, what are some of the things that you're really proud of?

**J****Jon Cross** 05:14

Well, Hardin County is just a— it is a, as we, as we say, the tagline, it is a great place to live, work, and prosper. It is the heart and soul, I think, of Ohio. And it is a small farm town community, a blue collar workforce, and a lot of grit and grind and people who work hard for a living. And it's just a great place. I've always thought, Jason, growing up in Hardin County and Kenton schools, proud to be from the public schools of Kenton, you know, we were always the underdogs. And I think my life, as we talked, through this today is talking about being an underdog and being an agent of change. And how do you make positive change in whatever you do, whether it's public policy, politics, business? You know, when you grow up in a small community, you don't have access to a lot of things that you would in a bigger city. I think that's where you see a lot of great things. And I'm also proud that Hardin County has been home to amazing individuals. We have a 4-star general that grew up in Hardin County. We have had successful authors and artists. People of great professions, a lot of well-known people, people who have done very well in life, who have made it big, have come from Hardin County. So the heritage of our community is amazing and just great people. And so I love it. I love that I came back home in 2014 and then was really sad to leave because of our house fire, which I'm sure we'll talk about. But we now live in Findlay, Ohio and live in the district and we love Findlay. We are recuperating from having a house fire and losing everything. I don't think anyone can understand perspective of life of when you— everything you work hard for, you lose overnight in a house fire. And you— and, and literally, when we got out of the house, all we had were the clothes on our back. And matter of fact, I think the boys didn't even have their shoes on. So the very next day, we went to Dick's Sporting Goods, and you bought shoes, shirts, underwear, socks, and you started your whole life over. Wow. And, and that humbles you. So it's, it's been a great experience. I'm proud to be from Hardin County. Always want to say you can always take the boy out of Hardin County, but you can't take Hardin County out of the boy.

**J****Jason Duff** 07:34

And you did leave for some time. I did.

**J****Jon Cross** 07:36

I left. I went to California.

**J****Jason Duff** 07:38

What drew you there?

**J****Jon Cross** 07:39

Well, so, you know, growing up, my inspiration to get into politics and running for office is when I went to my 8th grade trip to Washington, D.C. So that—

J

**Jason Duff** 07:49

The 8th grade trip. Did you take an 8th grade trip? My senior trip was actually— Your 8th grade trip. DC, but for a lot of public schools, that is like a rite of passage, right? Yeah, right. Making that trip to Washington, DC.

J

**Jon Cross** 08:00

Well, for many kids, it's the first time they leave Ohio, right? Or they're spending a great deal of time away from home. And what a great place to go see our nation's capital. And so for me, I thought, wow, this is really cool. This is something I want to do. I thought, what a great honorable profession, different than what people probably think of it today. And, and so that, that got inspired. But there's a great company in town called Imperial Cup where my dad worked for. Yeah, it was the The Allen family, Ari Allen, started this company.

J

**Jason Duff** 08:26

My dad— and just to unpack that, they made coffee cups like for everyone.

J

**Jon Cross** 08:31

So like your cup there, they made—

J

**Jason Duff** 08:32

if you're watching the video, yeah, watch the video, it's a wonderful cup.

J

**Jon Cross** 08:35

And so this is, this was my greatest, uh, this is the— I'm gonna show you an old man, my old man's sales trick to sell cups. So they made cups for vending machines, and the important part of the cup is the, is the, is the, um, the, the lip right here. And when the coffee cups comes down the vending machine, well, right here is this is the seal of the cup. So the old man would go into it and say, "Yeah, okay, here's our competitor's cup." And he'd take the knife and he'd cut up. And when you cut up, it unrolls the top seal and goes, "Look how bad that is." And he said, "Let me take out the Imperial cup." And he'd take the Imperial cup up and he'd slice down. Well, when you slice down, you don't unroll the lip and it shows it's a better quality cup. Sold truckloads of cups doing that old classic 1980s sales trick. But RE made cups and Dad was their national sales manager. And so I got to know the Allens really well. And Richard Allen, who was his son, who was in California running the West Coast plant, well, they sold their company. Richard got involved in real estate and politics. And he called me and said, hey, John, I know you're involved in politics. I'm friends with Arnold Schwarzenegger. He's running for governor. Why don't you come to California and help him? Because they need help. They need bodies. They need help. And so I—

J

**Jason Duff** 09:43

And he was running for governor.

**J****Jon Cross** 09:44

He was running for governor. It was a recall campaign. Had a lot to do with Enron and— the current governor. And so it was a tricky situation because voters had two things to decide. You had to decide whether you wanted to vote to recall the governor. And if you voted yes to recall, then you had 18 candidates to pick from.

**J****Jason Duff** 10:05

Wow.

**J****Jon Cross** 10:05

And if you remember, there were other celebrities, business people, actresses, all kinds of names on there, even a guy that was named I think Schwartz or Schwartzman that kind of sounded like Schwarzenegger. And so Arnold ended up winning that race because people wanted to recall the governor and then they chose Arnold Schwarzenegger to be the governor. And it was a 3-month campaign. It was great, just 3 months long. Very exciting time. I've never really left Ohio. And I literally go to Santa Monica. The first day I'm there, I'm in— Johnny Carson's old office post, post the Johnny Carson Show. Yeah, at Oak Productions, where Schwarzenegger has his office, and got connected. And I ended up going to the, what they call the Fourth Street, the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica. There's a Fourth Street, and it was a retail store, and they converted that into their Southern California headquarters. And so my job was to go in and basically help, you know, with the phone banking and all the grassroots campaigns of, for, and Literature distribution was all done out of that Southern California office. Got to know Maria Shriver really well, because she would come in with the kids. They were very young at the time. And they would volunteer and help. And it was great. It was just kind of a cool spot. I think the second day I was there, I went to the local coffee shop. And someone tapped me on the shoulder. And I was wearing my Arnold shirt. And I turned around. It was Jamie Lee Curtis.

**J****Jason Duff** 11:33

Wow.

**J****Jon Cross** 11:33

And he goes, how's my buddy Arnold doing? And I'm like, I don't know anything. I just got there. Things are great. Campaign's going well. We're going to win. I don't know. And so just great. I thought, listen, win, lose, or draw, what great memories to share. And if you come to my home office, you'll see some cool Arnold stuff and pictures. And it's just a neat thing that I can look back and say I was part of. And he really did make California better. It was some of the best years of California outside of Ronald Reagan being governor. He, he had, he was an underdog. And when we talked about being the underdog, Arnold Schwarzenegger was an underdog because he had to face a challenging California climate. He had to face a very challenging legislature that wasn't necessarily the same party, had the same agenda. And he worked really hard to really put California on the map, maintain a stable economy, continue to provide a better environment for businesses to thrive. And sadly, since he has left, it's really not done so well. And so he was really a great savior for California at that time. And it was just really fun to be a part of it.

J**Jason Duff** 12:40

Would you say that as you were working with him, you know, traditional views in California being the underdog, was he a contrarian on, you know, a lot of how things were working and changing the status quo?

J**Jon Cross** 12:51

Well, yeah, he certainly was part of that challenging the status quo because the status quo was, was maybe public policies that you or I here in Ohio would see a lot different, right?

J**Jason Duff** 13:01

That's right.

J**Jon Cross** 13:01

A Republican in California could be similar to a Republican in Ohio, but the economic side of things, not necessarily the social side of things, but the economic side of things. Central California is very much like Ohio. It's deep red, a lot of farming operations. But it was really about getting a stable environment, not to have a mass exodus on business. I can remember actually we did a workers' compensation— there was a big workers' compensation bill that was driving business out of California. And we did this thing where we went to Las Vegas. And we put Arnold in a semi-truck. And it had some kind of marketing message about moving businesses from Nevada to California. And it was a great, you know, marketing thing. And he drove the truck down the Vegas Strip. And it was a great, you know, marketing element because of the policies of, hey, we made some major pro-business policies. We want to keep business in California. And oh, by the way, move your business here. Yeah. Now what is happening is businesses are exiting, people are exiting, and it's going to Nevada. It's going to Texas. It's going to states where they don't have income taxes and better opportunities. And it's sad because California is a beautiful state. But, you know, I worked for Carly Fiorina out there, who's the former CEO of Hewlett-Packard, and she's a good friend and she was running for the U.S. Senate. So as a person who has kind of been an underdog, right, Kenton City Schools, not a Division I, so we were kind of always the underdogs growing up in Hardin County, not being the biggest county. You think you're always the underdog and it's a really fun position to be in because you're not at the top. And so to build something, to grow something, to win means a lot more. And I think I've worked with people like that, even with Richard Allen and the Allen Group when I went to work for him in real estate development. Um, we were developing a large industrial park in Dallas, Texas. We acquired 6,000 acres in South Dallas, Texas, a very underdeveloped area, very poor part of Dallas. We completely turned that whole area into a major logistics hub. Great jobs, great infrastructure. But we were competing against Ross Perot Jr. and his family that had a huge industrial park already established in Fort Worth called The Alliance. And so it was really cool to be a bunch of Kenton boys because Richard's a Kenton boy. Sure. Oh, wow. Yeah. Competing against Ross Perot Jr. And so to be that underdog, to go against a big Texan like that was fun. And that project today has really taken off. That whole South Dallas area has really taken off as a major logistics hub. And it was fun to be a part of that, to brand that whole South Dallas logistics hub, which is what it is today.

J**Jason Duff** 15:50

You, in the news, you know, books like with J.D. Vance and Hillbilly Elegy. And, you know, while the Appalachian region is a huge, you know, part of bordering our state and several states around it, there are a lot of very poor and challenged areas in our part of the state. That's right. And, you know, going through Hardin County, there are other villages and areas where there is blight, where there's extreme poverty and a lot of, a lot of challenges to overcome. But with that, like, what, what are the things that we learn when we go to school with the same people that are struggling? And I think our families, you mentioned that you hit the lottery on parents, having great parents. Some of my friends, like going through school, didn't have that. So how do we, how do we help raise up community and build up community? And how has that become kind of a core value for how you work today?

J**Jon Cross** 16:46

Well, you know, there's, you know, I think of my classmates, just a lot of great people and they are wonderful parents. They— I think we all knew that Kenton and Hardin County, maybe their glory days were in the '80s and we were children of the '80s, right? Great music, you know, great TV shows, just a great time. And I always joke with my brother and sisters, when they were in high school in the '80s and into college, you know, we were young kids and diapers and we missed out on a lot of great fun of the '80s. But what I think is that folks that I grew up with saw what great opportunities we had and we want that for our children. And so I think a lot of my classmates, and what's great about social media is able to follow them and watch them. The amazing things that they're doing. Uh, maybe friends that were— we weren't necessarily friends in high school, or we weren't close to. It's amazing how you become closer to them, or at least you feel closer to them, because you see each other on social media. You see great things that they're doing. And I think, you know, I'm proud of all my classmates because they're doing wonderful things. They're great parents. And that's— you want that next generation to get better and better. And better. And it might be tougher for our children to sit here and say, well, I didn't, I didn't have it so good growing up like our parents had those stories. But what I hope is that for every generation, it just gets better and better. And I think, you know, for our small communities, look here in Bellefontaine, Jason, you know, if you think about when we talk about being agents of change, you are an agent of change because Bellefontaine would not look like this today if you and your company didn't get engaged and become an agent of change. Kenton would not be tore up and under construction and infrastructure dollars flowing to that state. One thing I'm proud of is we put Hardin County on the map.

J**Jason Duff** 18:39

Yeah, really.

J

**Jon Cross** 18:39

That was my goal, was to put Hardin County on the map, that we were not an Appalachian county, but we were rural and we needed resources because we were surrounded by counties with bigger cities that had more resources. And one of my goals by going to the legislature was, even though I support all the 83rd District, I really wanted to put Hardin County on the map. And you go to Kenton today and it's torn up and they're looking at roundabouts. And, you know, it's great to hear, you know, the tough talk and people like, I hate roundabouts or I love roundabouts. I hate that the streets are torn up. Yeah, but it's changing and it's changing for the positive because I still hear stories about the grandfathers of the day who of Hardin County said, well, we kicked out Interstate 75. That's the urban legend was we didn't want 75 to go through Hardin County. So it got kicked out and we lost a lot. And I always thought like, we can't be that generation to lose opportunities. And so to rebuild infrastructure, to improve water and wastewater infrastructure may not look sexy or sound sexy, but that downtown, when the new curbs and streets are in, the new streetscapes, it will give folks like you and other investors and other capital to—

J

**Jason Duff** 19:49

You want to be there. That's right.

J

**Jon Cross** 19:51

You want to be there because we're seeing it. And that's, That's what makes me excited to get to go to work every day, whether I'm an elected official, a private citizen working in business, whatever I'm doing, I want to make something better. And to do that takes time, treasure, and I have a lot more gray hair because it's not easy. And people give you a rough time. They criticize you. No one likes change. People can become jealous.

J

**Jason Duff** 20:17

If you do something good, there's going to be 50% of people that hate it as bad, or they don't want you to say succeed. And then if you do nothing, right, you're a bum and idiot too.

J

**Jon Cross** 20:25

I, I have a great thing that, uh, Matt Jennings gave me, my campaign chairman. He's a wonderful person and a good friend.

J

**Jason Duff** 20:31

He's been a guest.

**J****Jon Cross** 20:32

Yeah, yeah, did a great job. He gave me this thumbs up statue that I had on my desk at the state house, and I matched it with a, a brass or a bronze thing that said, be bold. And I think people have to realize being bold isn't being brash, okay? There's a confusion of being cocky versus confident, being bold but not brash. And, and that's where you get a lot of the, the heartaches, the people who don't like what you're doing or how you're saying it or what you're doing. Is people know me, I speak my mind, I tell the truth, I say it like it is. And sometimes it's not as beautiful as it can come across, but I have an objective. I'm trying to get something done. And it takes a lot of arm wrestling and a lot of approach to getting something completed. Because I don't want to be status quo and I never wanted to be the guy say, well, politicians never get anything done. No, we got stuff done. We got 14 bills passed, \$120 million back to our district. I can walk away after serving 6 years in the legislature and be proud of community projects that got done, money that we brought back to the district and whatever else we decide to do in the future or the things we've done in the past. Because again, it is fun to go into an organization or community and and if you're down here and they expect you to get it here, that's a lot of fun. But if you have to be a CEO to a Fortune 500 company and you have to move the needle that far, that's really hard. That's not fun. Yeah. And that doesn't sound like a challenge. So it's even when I was served as the economic development director in Hardin County, it was— we brought expectations up and we really built a platform for, for people to succeed. And it's just about giving confidence. You can bring the smartest people, you can bring money, you can bring all the, all the assets you can to a community, but you have to, to, to bring confidence to a community. It takes that whole pot of everything to make happen.

**J****Jason Duff** 22:22

In that same vein, like you're talking about previous generations and being an agent of change, what advice would you give listeners, you know, who feel like they have to be the ones to invite change in their communities and business with like showing respect to the older generations, you know, That's kind of like what you're talking about, not being brash.

**J****Jon Cross** 22:38

Well, we've wrestled with that. I certainly wrestled that with older, older folks in my community. And we've clashed at times and we've said things to challenge that. I think people should not be afraid to challenge the status quo right now with social media and everyone being sensitive. Everyone is cancel culture. We're always worried about what you say. Yeah, I knew every time I gave a quote to a paper, I knew how to sell newspapers because I would say something something a little on edge and it got the conversation going. It got things started.

**J****Jason Duff** 23:14

Do you have any examples that you remember that you think?

J

**Jon Cross** 23:16

Yeah, I, when I was the economic development director, I think I gave my whole board of directors a heart attack. If you remember, I told the commissioners, if you want to come to Hardin County and have a bunch of shit on your porch and old couches and this and that, get your ass out of here. There's 87 other counties to go live in.

J

**Jason Duff** 23:32

Yeah.

J

**Jon Cross** 23:33

And the paper printed it and I knew they would. And a matter of fact, I turned it around to the Tenton Times-Reporter I said, put that— put— make that the headline. Yeah. And my God, the board just about lost their shit.

J

**Jason Duff** 23:45

And— but it set a tone, right?

J

**Jon Cross** 23:46

It set a tone that we— we— we— it— it— it was a hiccup. And— and what happened was— and I— and I know how I did this— the board came in, half the board loved it and half the board hated it. And, uh, the commissioners, some of them liked it, some of them didn't. And one commissioner said, let me tell you something, young grasshopper. And I knew that's— we had them, like, we had them, because there was the generational divide. And they're like, let me tell you, young whippersnapper, Shepherd. Yeah, there was the clash, and you wanted to create some of that because if we just keep doing the same thing every single day the way it's been done the last 40 years, nothing's going to change. That's right. So I was willing to be an agent of change, to strategically say things and do things to build morale or, or challenge the status quo. But going back to that story, someone says, you can't say that. So I went around with my camera and I took 100, over 100 pictures of properties that weren't being well maintained or this and that. And I stuck them on the wall of the boardroom. So when the board was going to come in and maybe read me the riot act, they walked into a boardroom and I wallpapered the whole board with pictures. And people like, what's that? I said, this is your community. This doesn't look so good, does it? Yeah. You wouldn't see this in Dublin, Ohio, right? They wouldn't put up with it. You wouldn't see this in Findlay, Ohio. They wouldn't put up with it. So are we going to start following the rules of the city? Are we going to start following ordinances? Are we going to start looking for a mayor that's going to make a positive impact? One thing that we did, my sister Jacqueline, I take full credit on this, is we recruited Lynn Jones Webb to be the mayor of Kenton because she felt the same way we did. And she's been a wonderful mayor to take that community in the right direction versus just having a mayor to be a mayor and nothing was getting done. We started to get agents of change in the right places to start moving the needle. And, you know, it— yes, you can say things the right way and you can be savvy, but sometimes, you know, you had to do things to shake the tree a little bit.

 J**Jason Duff** 25:47

All right, at this time we're going to take a quick break to hear a word from our sponsors. Come check out 600 Downtown Pizzeria in downtown Bellefontaine, where they cherish the art of making the most authentic, unique, and delicious world-famous and award-winning pizzas. Their team hand spins each pizza the old-fashioned way and only uses the freshest of ingredients. Come see why they were featured on the Food Network. If you are looking for a dynamic workspace in the heart of Bellefontaine, look no further. Build Cowork and Space is your destination for creativity and collaboration with state-of-the-art facilities in a thriving community. This is where innovation happens. Join them today for as low as \$99 a month and build your success at Build Cowork and Space. There's a book called Fierce Conversations that has also kind of pushed me out of my comfort zone because, you know, I like, you know, I'm a peacemaker at times. I want to find a compromise. And for the longest time, I didn't like that awkward pause, like as you're delivering tough news or negotiating a deal. And, you know, one of the sales training courses I went through is the advice was, is that you know, to ask one question after someone presents their best offer is to ask them, is this the best you can do? And then part of the strategy was hold the pause, even if it's awkward. And, you know, John, one thing I do give you so much credit on is that you have been very— you've grown comfortable to being direct and having fierce conversations. And sometimes that has put you in the news.

 J**Jon Cross** 27:21

It might have cost me my election.

 J**Jason Duff** 27:23

It may have.

**J****Jon Cross** 27:24

For those watching the home game, I didn't get reelected, but that's okay. Yeah, it's not everything to be — it's just because I didn't get reelected doesn't mean we weren't successful for 6 years. Sometimes the district wants to go a different direction, and that's okay. And I think what you have— what I would tell young people is don't be fearful to try to make change, but then also don't fear of you getting changed along the way, because at some point people want to go a different direction. And by the way, like I tell Matt Jennings, we are going to be the old generation. We're like, I'm 44, becoming 45. And I thought when my parents were 45, so old, so old. My God, they're happy. They'll be dead soon. So, so we have to learn to let go because the next generation, my son and his friends, are going to be running this area, right? They're going to be the next business leaders and political leaders, and they're going to have different ideas. And they're going to say, why the hell did John do that? Or why did their generation do that. And you have to be willing to let go and let them make the next move. And I think that's tough to do because as we go along, we think, well, we're right, we know better, we're the experienced elder now. But you have to be in a position where at some point it's the next generation's time. And what all I really wanted to do was make sure that we provided a great foundation. I think in the state of Ohio, when I first started, particularly when I was in economic development, we were not a top 10 business-friendly state to do business. And today we are. So, you know, thanks to our state government leaders, Lieutenant Governor Husted, Governor DeWine, the all 99 members of the House and 33 senators. It's just a combined effort from everybody to really move the needle. You all, others, there's just so many people that have made Ohio better. What a great gift to give to the next generation because they won't have to build it farther. We've brought them to a point where there's new infrastructure, better schools, you know, we've got things better for them so they can take it to the next generation. And it's not where they have to go fix 100-year-old infrastructure. Yeah. You know, so we're giving them a great runway, and they can't be fearful to be leaders of change and, you know, agents of change and to challenge the status quo. There's nothing— there's no laws against that. It's not in the Constitution that you can't challenge the status quo. And it makes for great debate, great conversations. And so it's— and it's also— I've learned a lot, too. You know, I've learned that I've been— I consider people say, oh, you know, Krause can be brash. It's tough love. Sometimes you just don't— I mean, I have a big heart. I don't think what people really is, you know, I have a big heart and I care.

**J****Jason Duff** 30:00

When you're passionate about something, there's something I notice is that the term passion can be shielded in a lot of different things. And yeah, I think it goes down to what you're talking about, leaders that are active versus passive, like you care so much and you want to see the result that you're going to take the path that you know with your toolkit on how to get it there. Some people welcome that and get excited about it. Other people, it makes them uncomfortable.

**J****Jon Cross** 30:28

Yeah. And, and everyone's style is different and there's not one perfect style. It doesn't mean you need a different leader for a different point in time. Different. That's right.

**J****Jason Duff** 30:38

Could be, you know, and that's the thing is, is looking at whether it's different presidents of, you know, of course the national level, but it could be within a university, it could be within your PTO board. Like it's, it's, it's all levels. There are different types of skill sets that leaders need to bring. Yeah. But, you know, thinking about where you're at now, you know, you've got— you're serving for another, what, 2 months, 3 months?

**J****Jon Cross** 31:00

Yeah, I've got a couple of months left to go. And matter of fact, I was on a phone call today with one of our sheriffs and needed help to get some more funding. So we're we're making phone calls and trying to get things done. I mean, there's just a lot of things that people don't see every day that we do to help. You know, obviously Indian Lake, we're helping a lot with trying to get money for dredging and things like that. There's just a lot of things that maybe not be— they're not sexy, they're not newsworthy, but behind the scenes you're trying to help. Because really, the way I saw the job as a state representative is, in addition to passing laws and policy, you're also helping people navigate a challenging state government environment and helping people get through to get a win is a great feeling. I mean, you know, comedians always talk about the, the, the juice, the excitement they get is the laughter in the room after a great joke. That is a drug to them. Yeah, it is. It is so exciting to just get a win when you know that you've got something done for somebody, whether it's little or big. Yeah. Knowing that you helped them get something accomplished is what what makes me motivated to get back up and do this again. The part I'll miss a lot of doing the job is— what's great is, you know, we make these proclamations and hand them out. We do not recognize people enough for the positive things that they do. And I will miss giving out a proclamation or two to say thank you, thank you for the good work, the pat on the back.

**J****Jason Duff** 32:26

Yeah.

**J****Jon Cross** 32:26

And a piece of paper with a signature because it means something to them to get that, to put that on the wall, to be recognized. Because I think we don't— we are— we become a generation where we're we're first to point out flaws faster than we're first to point out success. And it's really great to go give out proclamations and thank people and recognize the good work they're doing. That is such a joy of the job, and I'll miss doing that.

**J****Jason Duff** 32:51

Well, doers and creators, it can feel very lonely. And we've had a lot of guests on the show that have kind of unpacked that. But I think part of that recognition is, you know, recognizing that the sacrifice, the hard work, the, the journey, And I think that's a really good piece of advice, John, that we need to do more to recognize people.

J

**Jon Cross** 33:11

Lots of great things are happening and it's exciting. There's a lot of good buzz and success attracts success and, you know, money attracts money. And so there's just a lot of good things. But I'm very hopeful for the next generation and, and I'm excited about the future. I'm still trying to figure out what I want to do when I grow up.

J

**Jason Duff** 33:31

And, well, you mentioned some of the changes that you've been through. You know, you've taken some punches here in life and over the last year. I mean, and for some people that would be completely devastating that they couldn't pick themselves back up.

J

**Jon Cross** 33:45

Yeah. You know, COVID was hard. Yeah. Social media was hard. I mean, people can be nasty, nasty. And yeah, you read the comments and you reply back or someone—

J

**Jason Duff** 33:55

a few of your haters are also some of mine. So this is just going to turn into a therapy session for the both of you. I mean, really, we see you haters.

J

**Jon Cross** 34:03

We see you. We see you through the— we're coming for you. So listen, I love you all. I love all my haters. I love all my people.

J

**Jason Duff** 34:16

Truthfully, I mean, I really do. Some of them, they may be—

J

**Jon Cross** 34:20

they become characters. Well, they're like characters. There's like 16 of them, and they become cartoon characters. And, you know, they call you fat, or, oh, Cross, look how fat he is. And then you look at them and you're like, my God, looks like you haven't off the couch eating your Cheetos and you're calling me fat? Listen, if you really want to make people go batshit crazy, take your collar and pop it up. You— people will lose their shit. When I came back from California, I was popping my collar because—

J

**Jason Duff** 34:48

and people, they did that at that time.

J

**Jon Cross** 34:50

That was the thing. Well, they did, but, but I didn't do it because I was always kind of— I've lost 20 pounds, by the way. I've lost 20 pounds.

**J Jason Duff** 34:55

That's great.

**J Jon Cross** 34:56

Thank you. My blood pressure is back to normal. I have no stress in my life. It's very healthy to not get reelected. But I will tell you, I would pop my collar because I was always sensitive to my cross double chin. The cross is— got this double chin.

**J Jason Duff** 35:08

We got— we share that.

**J Jon Cross** 35:09

Yes. So when you pop your collar, you kind of hide it a little bit. Everyone's busting my gut. Cross pops his collar. What the hell is he like? I've never seen— like when I was running for office, I remember a buddy of mine, Tom Ruff, would come in. He's a great lawyer, good friend. He said, Cross, You got to put your damn collar down. And I was like, my God, people have done lost their shit because I popped my collar. I should have a podcast calling Pop Your Collar and Piss Off the World. Yeah, that's the trick. You know, I don't know if— but for all those who have double chins, pop your collar.

**J Jason Duff** 35:40

Yeah, that's the secret.

**J Jon Cross** 35:41

There you go. See what happens?

**J Jason Duff** 35:43

Well, you look great.

**J Jon Cross** 35:44

I feel great. I really do.

**J Jason Duff** 35:45

Part of it is the stress.

**J Jon Cross** 35:47

Apparently I have great calf muscles and great legs.

**J Jason Duff** 35:49

The ladies out in the street were saying that.

**J Jon Cross** 35:51

My wife's going to be like, who are those ladies? I'm coming after them.

**J****Jason Duff** 35:54

But no, in seriousness, the, the, the stress that you're under in a job in public service, you know, that's got to be, you know, a nice transition and then working on your health.

**J****Jon Cross** 36:06

And yeah, if you think about what, what did the Cross family go through? Didn't get reelected. I lost my house to a house fire. You know, my insurance company wants to sue me because they don't want to pay me more money. It's like, what the hell else? That's a lot. You know? And so what I, what I looked upon all that is I wanted to show my kids that you don't, you don't stop and you don't back down and you stay strong. And we got our family into a house. You know, we're fighting our insurance claims and we're going to, you know, get that settled and make sure the insurance company does this right. Because if the insurance— I feel bad for all these people in Georgia and Florida with the hurricane going through.

**J****Jason Duff** 36:44

I've been through my own stuff with the Indian Lake tornadoes.

**J****Jon Cross** 36:47

Yeah, that's right. And the tornado in Indian Lake, you know, those insurance companies are not doing it right. And there's stories about that. And shame on them. Them. And, uh, one thing I wish I, you know, I probably can't talk too much about it because we're in the middle of all that, but, you know, I hope future legislators look at insurance companies and hold them accountable because we all pay, you know, to have our stuff protected. And then when your time of need is there and they cut and run, that's— yep, that's, that's pretty—

**J****Jason Duff** 37:12

so that's another new, you know, as you go through these, these really bad hardships and you're like, um, I've had a few of those moments in my life where it's like, I don't you know, where do I go from here? But it is in those moments you kind of get— I like the movie The Matrix. It's like this new set of programming lenses, experience that really do help prepare you for what's next. Yeah, it's hard to realize that when you're going through it at the time.

**J****Jon Cross** 37:37

I feel like I can run through a brick wall now. I mean, I'm just like, if you can go through the good and the bad, and I, and I want my kids to know that you can, you can make it and be successful no matter what life throws at you. You can get back on your two feet. And what I do love about Ohioans and Americans is we love the rebound stories. That's right. We love when people get, you know, they have tough times and then they fight back and we applaud that. And that's part of the American dream. And so it's good days are ahead. And again, I don't base my whole life off just being a politician or running for office. I've kind of checked that box and, and there's other life goals and things I want to do to be to continue to be an agent of change and make positive things. And I'm looking forward to that.

J

**Jason Duff** 38:21

Well, now you're in Findlay, Ohio. This is a great— Findlay is a great community.

J

**Jon Cross** 38:26

Hancock County. Yeah, beautiful.

J

**Jason Duff** 38:27

And, you know, some, some great universities in the area.

J

**Jon Cross** 38:31

We have Ohio Northern University, which is a gem, the University of Findlay. We've got great technical career schools, Ohio High Point. If, if to all of our friends watching, hopefully now 538 members watching, so I can beat Matt Brown's 537 people watching. Go eat at the restaurant at Ohio High Point and watch these kids do—

J

**Jason Duff** 38:53

Sloan Kitchen. Amazing things. So they celebrated 50 years today, which is incredible.

J

**Jon Cross** 38:58

And it's changed so much, because when we went to school, the bad kids would go there. And it is completely different. And in Findlay schools, they've got their program right next to the high school. And so So I would love to be Carson's age, 14 all over again with the great experience, lots of choices and opportunities. And that's what makes Northwest Ohio. You know, to be a CEO, a chief executive officer is more like— I always thought being a CEO is more like being a cheerleader in chief. It's about getting people excited, getting people fired up. And that's also an important part of leadership is positive leadership. And so hopefully we've got, you know, better days ahead of us here and good things continue to happen. Great.

J

**Jason Duff** 39:46

Well, you cannot not drive through Kenton and you hear the sound of the jackhammers. You see new concrete going down and lots of momentum. And that's something too, if you go back in Bellefontaine 10 years ago, 80% of the downtown was vacant and empty. And I'm thankful that our public partners, took the risk to start to get the infrastructure in because you've got to have the sewer pipes, you've got to have the electric, you've got to have the sidewalks. And then we've got to really invest in the entrepreneurs to get the entrepreneurial spirit. And so, you know, thinking of the public side, because you have had both, both, you've been on both sides of that. Now that the funding, and I think the total that you have helped bring back specifically to Hardin County is how much?

J

**Jon Cross** 40:29

100 and I stopped counting at some point, but it was over \$120 million.

J

**Jason Duff** 40:34

And the big recent downtown com— uh, district commitment was like—

J

**Jon Cross** 40:38

oh, like for Kenton's downtown, I think it was like \$5 million or something like that.

J

**Jason Duff** 40:43

Huge amount of dollars. That's, that's a big deal. And so now that those things are in motion, what is your hope to really build that entrepreneurial spirit for both the existing building owners, businesses, but also then working with others from the outside to help One thing that I learned when I worked for Richard Allen and the private real estate development company he had is we weren't in the business of developing infrastructure.

J

**Jon Cross** 41:05

We really needed the city, the county, the government entities to provide that. One thing we talk a lot about here is housing and how do we get more housing, what I call workforce housing, because I don't like to use the word affordable because nothing's affordable these days. So how do you get workforce housing here? You got to have cities and counties be building the roads, the water, the sewer. And so my goal, my focus for Kenton and Hardin County, even with Ada getting some improvements, Forest and helping them with their sewer and some of their improvements, is building this infrastructure and getting everything, getting the foundation for the communities done. So it gives the entrepreneurs, the investors, folks with capital, a better reason to come in and say, I want to invest here because now I know the foundation of a community is put together. And that, I think, really makes a huge difference to give new life and new blood and new excitement. And let me make a pitch. If you're an investor, think about this. Cameron Mitchell wants to build another restaurant in Columbus, Ohio. It's going to cost him millions of dollars to do that. But if you're a young entrepreneur and want to start a restaurant in Bellefontaine or Kenton or Findlay, There are buildings you can buy right now for \$25,000. Now, they might need—

J

**Jason Duff** 42:21

they might need investment—

J

**Jon Cross** 42:22

\$500,000 of work. Yeah, but you can't do that in Columbus, Ohio.

J

**Jason Duff** 42:26

That's right.

J

**Jon Cross** 42:27

And you're one of thousands. Where you come to Kenton, you might be the second or the third, and there's a lot of opportunity. The marketing approach we've always used was come be the first and buy in while it's cheap now, because it will— I guarantee you Downtown buildings and downtown rates in Bellefontaine are much higher than they were 10 years ago.

J

**Jason Duff** 42:49

That's right.

J

**Jon Cross** 42:49

When they were almost giving them away.

J

**Jason Duff** 42:51

Yeah.

J

**Jon Cross** 42:51

And we've created a great market here. And I think that's where Kenton is on their way.

J

**Jason Duff** 42:57

Appreciate you sharing that. Absolutely. We just actually had a couple of young entrepreneurs in town through a consulting visit, and they're about my age, 25, 26 or so, and they have bought in the first couple of buildings and starting to do the same thing in their small town because the barrier of entry was so small that they can be making a, what, \$300 a month payment on this commercial space in their small town. And, you know, they're getting attention. He's like, you know, I'm a creative by heart, but, you know, if I have to be a building developer to do what I want to do, then so be it. And so it's prime for, for your small towns to go in and make your business and make your dream.

J

**Jon Cross** 43:34

What I love about Small Nation and what you have done is you are really an organization or a company that is creating a renaissance of reenergizing rural communities throughout Ohio. And when we talk about — and you hear the campaign trail for the presidency, you're hearing a lot of people talk about a renaissance of manufacturing. Small Nation is providing a renaissance of our historic downtowns coming back to life. In the '90s and 2000s, it was all about going out to Walmart and to the big box stores. And then as you saw that transition in the I guess we call it the teens, the 20-teens to present, that shift is now boutique and shop local. Shop local.

J

**Jason Duff** 44:18

I think it's going to be pharmacies are coming back. I think we're going to see independent pharmacists.

J

**Jon Cross** 44:21

We've lost— we are going to become a pharmacy desert just like a food desert in some of these.

**J Jason Duff** 44:26

That is a crisis.

**J Jon Cross** 44:27

Yes.

**J Jason Duff** 44:27

And then that pendulum, unfortunately, it always swings, you know, but it's going to swing back. And I think we're going to realize what we were doing 50, 60 years ago by having that independent pharmacist in our towns was the right thing. And I hope that we get it back.

**J Jon Cross** 44:40

So being an agent of change, how do you get in there and do it? Well, it's about going in and it's a little bit of roll the dice, but being an agent of change, whether you're that investor or you're helping that community kind of reconfigure, how do we bring back pharmacies and local shopping?

**J Jason Duff** 44:57

Local banks.

**J Jon Cross** 44:57

Local banks. There's great opportunities. And that's what I love about Small Nation. Even if you look at your podcast series, think about everyone who has sat behind this microphone.

**J Jason Duff** 45:09

There's a reason we have these guests on, right?

**J Jon Cross** 45:11

You have members of Congress. And state legislators, businesses, investors, entrepreneurs. If you take just the podcast alone of what you have done, let alone what you are doing to help communities across Ohio rebuild and that renaissance of reigniting down historic courthouse districts.

**J Jason Duff** 45:30

There's a lot of them.

**J Jon Cross** 45:31

There's a lot of them. Newark, others. I mean, it's an exciting time and we need more people to be not afraid to do those things and be engaged and challenge the status quo and even run for office. I mean, it is about getting people who want to run for office for the right reasons. And the voters will figure out who those people are.

**J Jason Duff** 45:58

And it could be run for your school board. Yes. Get involved in your church.

J

**Jon Cross** 46:04

Sit on a board.

J

**Jason Duff** 46:05

Sit on a board. And that's the thing. It's—

J

**Jon Cross** 46:07

But let me say this. Yeah, let's not sit on a board or run for office or something to pad your resume, right? We— I think one thing we're lacking is getting good people to serve on boards that know how to understand what it means to sit on a board. What does it mean to sit on the board? I mean, one great podcast you should talk about is what does it mean to be on a board of directors?

J

**Jason Duff** 46:25

It's a great suggestion.

J

**Jon Cross** 46:26

What does it mean to run a company's board, a local nonprofit organization board? Because too many times, once again, we'll probably say something here that'll just upset somebody, is you put board members on because they feel they need feel they've got to check a box and say, I need to serve on something, need to be important, important, or I want to serve. But once they're on, how do you, how do you get the magic out of them? And that was one thing when we tried to recruit people to the Heart Chamber Board was how do you squeeze every ounce of expertise that they have and not be afraid for their feedback and not just rubber stamp everything? That's right. And I, because, you know, one of my goals is to serve on a corporate board, a publicly traded corporate board, and I'm looking into that. But, but taking those experiences that I have done, how can I, you know, help that company move forward in a positive way and not just sit there and say, well, it's on my resume, or I want to do it to make money, or whatever reasons? And it's hard to find those people that want to do it for the right way. And so getting people to engage like that, I think, is really important.

J

**Jason Duff** 47:28

Yeah, but getting involved with whatever is in front of you, I think, is the key for everyone. It's like the The next step for anyone listening. Well, and I think listening to this, this show today, John, and you have helped us unpack this, is that no matter where you live, how you— how big your town is or how small your town is, is that there is opportunities. And it's, you know, listening for those. It's getting active in those. It's engaging. And, you know, throughout your, you know, being born in Kenton, Ohio, and then going to California, you know, getting involved in a national campaign, meeting people like Governor Schwarzenegger, Carly, you know, others, but then deciding I want to come back home.

J

**Jon Cross** 48:07

Yeah, that the, you know, it wasn't planned obviously, but I, what was great for me was just, uh, working for great people, um, looking at great opportunities. I mean, even when I would work between California and Texas, I was learning pretty quickly amongst two states that are completely different how a state would operate non-business friendly and how a state was operating in a business-friendly way. That was helpful when I went to the Ohio legislature. But, you know, getting those experiences and then not being afraid to come home. We are seeing a resurgence, too, of classmates that are in their 30s with young families wanting to move back home because this is a place they want to raise their family. We know that in Northwest Ohio, even though I think I might have promised my wife when we got married, oh, don't worry, honey, we're not going to move back to Kenton. Surprise, surprise. Listen, I love my wife. She went from San Diego to Kenton.

J

**Jason Duff** 49:04

That's, that's, that's love. That's love.

J

**Jon Cross** 49:08

That's true love. And, um, and so, you know, um, and she, she loves Ohio. She loves the people.

J

**Jason Duff** 49:16

And, um, and you guys are a team. I mean, it has been a, it has been a family investment. Um, and you know how many events, uh, I, I've seen your, your wife right there by your side and supporting.

J

**Jon Cross** 49:26

The kids are excited. Kids are definitely excited. Didn't get reelected because they're like, Dad, we just—

J

**Jason Duff** 49:30

we get to see him more, probably more.

J

**Jon Cross** 49:32

And I've, you know, I've really done, I think, what a good job in this post-time to let my future legislator take the center stage. Sure. And I've really been to a lot of football games and golf and sporting events for my kids. And it's, it's been good to reengage. And they see that, and that's important too. So I think, you know, prioritizing family issues are important and not lose sight of that. And so it has been healthy. And I'm just I'm really excited about my own future and what's going to come about. But whatever we do, you're going to know that we're going to be involved for the right reasons and try to make a positive

—

J

**Jason Duff** 50:08

And you're going to be bold.



**Jon Cross** 50:09

And be bold. As the sign sits on my desk with the positive thumb that sits there, because I've always told people, if you don't like my positivity, then you can just sit on that thumb.



**Jason Duff** 50:24

Have you had any takers?



**Jon Cross** 50:25

No, I've not had to Lysol wipe the thumb.



**Jason Duff** 50:30

That's good, Sean. You've been an awesome guest today. Ethan's got a few rapid fire here before you—



**Jon Cross** 50:37

rapid fire.



**Jason Duff** 50:37

Yeah, let's go. We're gonna move into the short segment.



**Jon Cross** 50:40

Yeah, you gotta do— yeah, I haven't heard—



**Jason Duff** 50:41

we haven't heard that, the buzzer. Okay, pause on that one.



**Jon Cross** 50:45

I got that one. Someone did that and then he flipped me off when he went by. Hello.



**Jason Duff** 50:51

I can't see anymore, so when people do that to me, I think Jason just waves back. I smile and wave back. I think they're just— they're happy to see me.



**Jon Cross** 51:02

The one finger victory salute.



**Jason Duff** 51:03

Oh my gosh. All right, first rapid fire question for you. Have you ever done a podcast before?



**Jon Cross** 51:09

This is my first. This is your first?



**Jason Duff** 51:10

Wow. Okay. Wow. Well done.



**Jon Cross** 51:12

I'm impressed. Thank you.



**Jason Duff** 51:13

My second question is, how tall are you?



**Jon Cross** 51:16

Um, I measured the other day because we were measuring the boys. Uh-huh.



**Jason Duff** 51:20

Now, some politicians don't exaggerate because, you know, you're gonna want the truth. You're gonna be in the president.



**Jon Cross** 51:25

We know John Cross, he's not that tall. I'm calling bullshit on him. I love the Cross, but he's Um, uh, 6, maybe just a little under 6'3". I think like in school, 6'3", so maybe I'm shrinking a little bit because I think I took my shoes off and measured like 6'2½".



**Jason Duff** 51:43

Love it. I'm half that height, so it's all right, Jason, we still accept you.



**Jon Cross** 51:47

Thank you.



**Jason Duff** 51:48

It's all right. Um, what is your favorite restaurant in Kenton, Ohio?



**Jon Cross** 51:52

Oh, this is sad. I know, this is sad, but I think they're coming back. This is sad. It was 101 Smokehouse.



**Jason Duff** 51:59

It was— why is it sad?



**Jon Cross** 52:01

Because they had the fire. Yeah. Listen, I— when you go through fire, and what's amazing is when you go through a house fire, you hear stories of so many people that have gone through a fire. It's amazing how many people have gone through house fires. That— Christine and I, we both kind of shed some tears because it was right about the same anniversary of our house fire. And when we heard that went up in smoke, uh, and fire, we were just heartbroken because it was a new, exciting energy for Kenton.

J

**Jason Duff** 52:26

They had the great barbecue.

J

**Jon Cross** 52:28

I would go from Finley to Kenton to get the best barbecue. They did such great things and you just hate to see what happened to them. And I'm really hopeful.

J

**Jason Duff** 52:39

We're rooting for them to come back.

J

**Jon Cross** 52:40

We're rooting for them to come back because they were just amazing. And that was a great restaurant. Yeah.

J

**Jason Duff** 52:46

Yeah. Thanks for mentioning that. What is one professional development resource that was impactful for you along your professional journey?

J

**Jon Cross** 52:53

Oh, that's one professional development resource. Well, I mean, let me just say this, because higher education is taking a real hit politically these days. I don't know if it's— you would classify as professional development resource, but I had a wonderful collegiate experience. When politicians right now are beating up higher education, I was one of the very few Republicans of my caucus that was pro-higher education. I was chair of the Higher Education committee on the Finance Committee was responsible for putting together a \$3 billion budget to support our colleges and universities. I went to a very small liberal arts college called The Ohio State University. It's very small. Give me a buzzer. Where's the buzzer? Yeah, yeah, I know. I don't have it on here this morning. And so just that experience I had going to Ohio State and my collegiate time was wonderful and it was a great experience for me and loved it. And I hope my two boys will have a great similar experience. And it just brought a lot— culture, diversity, a lot of things that I was not maybe familiar with coming from Hardin County, opened me up to people, resources, other development opportunities. Sure. It was just a great experience at the Ohio State University. Ohio State University.

J

**Jason Duff** 54:09

O-H-I-O. And then if someone were listening today and wanted to follow you or keep up with the work that you're doing, even after your transition and everything.

J

**Jon Cross** 54:17

Don't follow me. I'm just tired of all of you. You know, we, we still got paparazzi outside wanting to see those calves.

J

**Jason Duff** 54:28

I know they're outside right now. We're gonna have to fight them off as we walk out there.

J

**Jon Cross** 54:33

This is gonna be bad. I'm gonna have memes. Yes, social media memes because of this. Uh, we'd love—you can follow me on Facebook at John Cross OH, and I just got—I got back on Twitter. I left Twitter a long time ago. Yeah. And I—

J

**Jason Duff** 54:48

and then it's been changing.

J

**Jon Cross** 54:50

Elon changed it where you couldn't used to be able to go on Twitter and look at what people are saying without having an account. And now you got to have an account. So I came back to Twitter, now X, and — or John, I think it's John Cross, John Cross Ohio, because there's other John Crosses. Of course, there's fake John Crosses. I love the John Krause accounts. Great.

J

**Jason Duff** 55:12

You got anything to kind of— John, it's been a— this has been one for the record books.

J

**Jon Cross** 55:15

So, yeah, just right down the street is your mom's candy shop. Yeah. And I got a quick chocolate there.

J

**Jason Duff** 55:21

The Queen of Hearts.

J

**Jon Cross** 55:22

Queen of Hearts. Yeah. Come to Bellefontaine. Shop here. Buy things here. It is a beautiful community. I'm—I was always—I was always upset that Bellefontaine technically was not in the 83rd District because we cover—

J

**Jason Duff** 55:36

Right on the edge.

J

**Jon Cross** 55:36

Right on the edge. We cover all the way to Indian Lake, all the way up to Hancock County. But I've always adopted Bellefontaine to be part of the 83rd District. You really have, yeah. And it's such a beautiful community. It's just a great honor to be on your podcast today.

J

**Jason Duff** 55:48

Excited, John, for your next steps. And it's been great having you in the studio. And thanks again for being with us. Love y'all.



**Jon Cross** 55:53

Yep. See ya.



**Ethan DeLeon** 55:54

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



**Ethan DeLeon** 55:56

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.