

Episode 95

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SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Matt Staugler, Ethan DeLeon

M

Matt Staugler 00:00

Tourism is economic development. It's the first phase of economic development. The best way to get someone interested in your area is to get them to visit purely for a leisure visit. That's it. That's the best way to get them to start thinking about moving to your town, to go to school in your state, raising their family there. That's the best way to do it.

E

Ethan DeLeon 00:32

Welcome to the Small Nation Podcast, brought to you by Coverlink Insurance, where people are more important than policies. On this show, we unpack lessons from entrepreneurs, break down development strategies, and do deep dives on small town success. Our goal is to provide value to our listeners by hosting conversations that teach, inform, and inspire. Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon, and I'm here in the studio with the founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff. Today we're excited to have the executive director of the Grand Lake Region CVB, Matt Stogler on the show.

M

Matt Staugler 01:01

Welcome, Matt. Thanks, Ethan.

J

Jason Duff 01:03

Matt is literally Mr. Small Town. I have been excited about this episode because we actually printed up t-shirts a few years ago that said Small Town Champions. And there are certain people that just embody those values of they grew up in a small town, they maybe went to a small school, and then they went back and worked in their town and they were like the chief marketing officer. This is Matt Stogler. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

M**Matt Staugler** 01:30

Well, and that's what I do now as the director of the CVB, you know, for the Grand Lake region. That is my hometown. CVB, what is that? The CVB is the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Most every county or city has one. So our, you know, our job is to literally be the storytellers for our community and get people to come and visit and hopefully spend money while they're there.

J**Jason Duff** 01:50

At any given day, what — I imagine your job is not the same every day, but what does a day in the life of a CVB director look like?

M**Matt Staugler** 01:58

It does vary. You know, our job is really to work and interface with a lot of our destinations. So whether that's the Armstrong Air and Space Museum in Wapakoneta, whether that's Boardwalk Village on the west side of Grand Lake, which is a great new lodging property, or a small retailer or restaurant, you know, we — it's our job to find what's new in their business, what's new in their destination, and tell people about it.

J**Jason Duff** 02:24

Yeah, I love that. And you mentioned a couple of things located in a couple of different cities there. So can you, can you explain where your territory is for our listeners?

M**Matt Staugler** 02:30

Yeah. So we are a two-county convention and visitors bureau. Which is rare. It is rare. It's very rare. So we cover Mercer and Auglaize County. So the county seat in Mercer County is Salina, where I grew up. The county seat in Auglaize County is Wapakoneta, where we live now.

J**Jason Duff** 02:45

Cool. So grew up in the Salina area. Take us from there. Where did you — did you go to college and how did you end up in your current role?

M**Matt Staugler** 02:53

I did. I always wanted to work in travel and tourism industry, but I didn't know that at the time. So I've, you know, worked in this industry for over a decade. I went to school at Ohio State and earned a bachelor's degree in history. My goal was to work at a museum in Washington, D.C. That's what I always wanted to do. I didn't know at the time, but that's travel and tourism. There are millions of people every year across the country visit a museum. Museums are an integral part of our industry. And I didn't know that at the time, but as I progressed through my career, my first job out of college was as a curator at the Bicycle Museum of America in New Bremen.

J**Jason Duff** 03:39

Which, if you've not been, put that on your list. Beautiful town, New Bremen. And tell us a little bit about that.

M**Matt Staugler** 03:48

Again, what's funny is it's in Auglaize County. It's in the county. I'm promoting that as my job now. So just a phenomenal little museum. And I worked with my predecessor in this role as she was promoting the museum and worked there for 3 and a half years. CVB position in Dark County, which is just one county south of Mercer County, opened up and she encouraged me to apply. And I was lucky enough to be selected. I was a 27-year-old kid and the board probably took a chance, you know, on me back then, but did that job for 5 years. That was phenomenal. And then I worked for Ohio Magazine, which is the state's largest traveling tours. Right.

J**Jason Duff** 04:44

Which actually we had Jim Vickers. Yeah, it was a great interview, by the way, on the show. Well, so what were some of the things while your time there specifically? Because that's, that's a great organization, interfaces with a lot of communities throughout the state, right?

M**Matt Staugler** 04:56

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 04:56

What are some of the experiences or things that you may have learned through that experience?

M**Matt Staugler** 05:00

Yeah. So I handled— it was nice to jump back into that industry because, you know, primarily a lot of the work that they do is working with convention and visitors bureaus across the state of Ohio. And so for me, it was nice to be able to jump back into working with some of those folks that I had gotten to work with as a CBB director in Darke County. So revisiting places like Dayton and Cincinnati and new places. We work with Convention and Visitors Bureaus and tourism departments in other states. So Kentucky was part of the territory that I worked in. So to be able to get exposed to a very vibrant tourism economy down in Kentucky was phenomenal. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 05:47

One thing that Jim Vickers mentioned, who is the editor of Ohio Magazine, on his podcast was the difference between marketing, advertising, and PR. And really, in the ways that we promote our communities, you need all three of those things. And he was highlighting that the magazine is funded by advertising. That's what pays the bills and keeps the lights on. But his job as an editor is to curate really high-quality content. So he wants compelling stories. And so that may be where he gave some tips and advice about how to pitch your town and submit articles and advice to the magazine, which I thought was really helpful. Yeah, absolutely. So then what kind of drew you through all those experiences? I mean, you were kind of dancing around this role. You had similar positions, but what drew you to the role of a visitors bureau like job specifically?

M**Matt Staugler** 06:39

I think the role of being a cheerleader for your community, like Jason said, growing, I grew up in a small town and there are a lot of small towns across our state and across the country that are struggling, right? Folks who, the brain drain effect, that's a real thing. And so for me, it wasn't ever, something that I envisioned myself doing. But as I got to know the mom-and-pop owner of a restaurant, as I got to meet other millennials and younger people who were staking their, planting their flag in their town, it kind of got me inspired to say, I want to help these people. You know, entrepreneurship's not in my DNA. That's not what I am wired for, but I am certainly wired to help those people be successful.

J**Jason Duff** 07:35

Yeah. You know, and going back in the DNA of the starting of Small Nation, you know, even when I first met Matt, Small Nation did not exist. We had had a billboard company that was, you know, helping small businesses advertise in small towns and rural communities. And so Dark County was one of those communities that we had a pretty good footprint of a number of sign locations. And I got to know Matt's former predecessor at the Dark County. Visitors Bureau, which is Deanna York, and she then introduced me to Darke County, which was really interesting to me because Darke County and Logan County were almost identical, the same size in terms of population. The county seat of Greenville, Ohio, and Bellefontaine were so familiar to me because they were so similar. Literally, the towns have the same fountain. And I know, I'm like, that's like breaking news for some people because They think that our fountain that has a pineapple on top is so special. We brand our own fountain.

M**Matt Staugler** 08:28

Really rare.

J**Jason Duff** 08:29

Really unique. But there actually happens to be one that is identical in Greenville, Ohio. But here was the thing. As new bright-eyed entrepreneur that had a goal and a passion to revitalize Bellefontaine, Ohio, which was me, I was out there studying and looking at other communities that had a lot of things put together well. And if you go back in time to 15, 20 years ago, Greenville, Ohio had a very successful Main Street program. There were some investors that started buying buildings. I think of the Palace Building, which was the former Almond's department store that got renovated. And I remember the owners of Coffee Hall, which you have to remind me, that would be, or not the Coffee Hall.

M**Matt Staugler** 09:14

Coffee Pot.

J**Jason Duff** 09:14

Coffee Pot.

M**Matt Staugler** 09:15

Yes. Rob and Amber.

J**Jason Duff** 09:16

Rob and Amber. This amazing young couple that had invested in town and they were so friendly and welcoming. And this coffee shop called The Coffee Pot was insanely beautiful. But the food and the energy and the vibrancy was, was awesome. But it just happened to be that in a town of Greenville, Ohio, of, you know, 13 or so thousand people, there was multiple coffee shops. How could multiple coffee shops be successful in a small town. And then as you went up and down, you started to see how the Main Street director was working with the, the Darke County tourism director that was working with the chamber that was working with the city. They, you know, they started to have something that they were all pulling to make the downtown better. And that's when you saw big corporations like KitchenAid, which manufactures mixers. I mean, you can walk into a Costco today and see a product that's made and Darke County, Ohio, they had a store in town called the KitchenAid Experience. And for many, many years, that was a destination that people would drive hours for because you could see the products and touch the products and you got to know the story of the people that actually made them in Darke County. And so I— that was kind of where I think you and I became friends, where Matt was like working on the public side of things in an organization that was governed by a board. Doing some pretty innovative things. And then I think, you know, you had a short stint of serving on city council because you were very motivated and interested to do that. But that's where our friendship kind of started to form. And then after a few years, Matt was doing such great work. I bent his ear and I said, hey, would you want to come work with us? And, and he did. And we had a lot of great fun together and he accomplished some great things. But it's always interesting to like look at the the DNA and the lineage, because today we have a lot of maybe younger versions of me coming to Bellefontaine saying, how are you doing this? What are you trying to figure out? And I want them, I want people to rip and duplicate and take it back home.

M**Matt Staugler** 11:17

And I think Jason touched on one thing that's, I think, really important where a lot of small towns fall down is there isn't that cooperation. Jason said it's me and the Main Street director and the county commissioners and the chamber working together. There isn't enough latitude in a small town to have those kinds of rifts because that will ruin you. Right.

J**Jason Duff** 11:42

You need everybody on board.

M**Matt Staugler** 11:43

You need everybody on board. And you've got to be holding hands and say, look, if we don't do this together and make it successful, nobody's going to. Nobody's going to come and save us.

J**Jason Duff** 11:52

Right.

M**Matt Staugler** 11:52

We have to do this together.

J**Jason Duff** 11:54

Do you have some examples or advice? Because that's really hard to do. And I kind of call the process messy because you're not always going to be fully aligned with all those various groups. But do you have any kind of examples where as you were working on something or trying to champion something and ways you accomplished getting people to work together?

M**Matt Staugler** 12:12

You know, our job as the CVB is promotion. It's our job is to stand on the sidewalk, sometimes literally, but mostly figuratively, and shout at people that, hey, there's great stuff here. Stop, you know, park. Yeah. Come walk around, experience it. We put an informational kiosk out in front of our office. Actually several of them around the county, trying to just, again, give people the opportunity to understand the kinds of experiences that we have here. And that was a challenge with some folks in government.

J**Jason Duff** 12:53

Can we just be honest? So it's like, okay, where's it gonna put, where are you going to put it? Who owns the property? Yeah. What's on it?

M**Matt Staugler** 13:01

This violates the sign ordinance.

J**Jason Duff** 13:03

Yeah. Oh, okay. What liability is there?

M**Matt Staugler** 13:04

You can't, oh, you can't sell advertising on this sign.

J**Jason Duff** 13:08

Because it violates zoning ordinance.

M**Matt Staugler** 13:10

It's all kinds of problems. Yeah. And it just, it's demoralizing for one thing, because—

J**Jason Duff** 13:16

Because you have a good idea and inspiration behind it, but then all the nos, right?

M**Matt Staugler** 13:20

And you have business owners who are looking for a lifeline. We, you know, we have a small advertising budget that we have as a business. We're looking to you as the CVB to help promote us. This is a great idea. They go to council and they say, we support this, and it just can fall on deaf ears sometimes. It's so tough. It's so tough in a small town. But if you can get everybody rowing in the same direction, gosh, that makes— that's 90% of the work.

J**Jason Duff** 13:49

So in the case of me kind of observing Matt and Greenville and Darke County going through that, a few things that I picked up on is that when Matt created a visual of what it looked like, because everything when you say whether it's wayfinding or signage, everyone has like an idea of what it is in their head. And it could be very different from what actually the reality is. But I think creating that visual and that rendering and then literally dumbing it down where you're out maybe chalking off the sidewalk and getting very, very specific. And then I love the idea of kind of doing walking tours where it's like, hey, let's— Jason loves his walking tours. I really think getting everyone on the same page because what people like to do, I call it the dartboard, is like when you come up with a good idea, people are just kind of You know, like dying of a thousand paper cuts where they're just, well, have you thought of this? Or you can't do that. And where if we get everyone around this, then it's like, hey, that probably is something we need to talk about or work through or compromise on. But can we get everyone around the project to, to, to talk, to discuss it and make some decisions? Because otherwise they just get stuck. And I think, you know, we've featured a lot of communities on the podcast who I think that you're seeing them succeed because they're able to work together in this mess and they've overcome those challenges and we're starting to see, it's apparent to, you know, onlookers that they're getting somewhere, they're doing something. But I want to kind of tie this back into your story a little bit. You eventually came home, right? So you're in the Grand Lake region now. Right. And we have heard a lot of great things about that region with Grand Lake St. Mary's and things like that. So I want to hear to kind of finish off your story to bring you to where you are now. What brought you home?

M**Matt Staugler** 15:34

Well, to be able to come back home, take over for Donna Gruby, who was the predecessor at the Green Lake CVB, to be able to sort of pick up the suitcase that she was carrying and working so hard. She worked— she was the director for 20 years. Wow. Just an amazing tenure. So to be able to take it back over for sort of my mentor in the industry was special for me, but also to do that in my hometown. And my wife is from St. Mary's, which is right next door to Salinas. So, we are now raising our family there and working to build it as a sustainable, fantastic place where people do come visit. And while they visit, we hope that they find, just have a great time. Yeah, absolutely. And understand that, boy, we could take a job here. We could move our family here. We could go to school here. That really is, that's the tie of tourism and economic development, right? And so for me to be able to work together with folks like Jared Ebbing, who I know has been on the podcast, we've just got such great talent in our area. So to be able to do that back home, I couldn't ask for anything else.

J**Jason Duff** 16:51

And other than being home, tell us what's special about your region.

M**Matt Staugler** 16:56

Oh gosh, you know, for us, we're sort of spoiled, I think, when you grow up so close to a fantastic body of water, you know, you grew up in Indian Lake and you understand the impact that that has, you know, on the area. There are so many people who don't have that experience.

J**Jason Duff** 17:14

They— well, there's not many lakes in Ohio. It's relatively flat.

M**Matt Staugler** 17:19

I mean, there's not, you know, for us, you know, around us we've got Grand Lake, Lake Laramie, and Indian Lake in sort of close proximity. True. But other than that, there's, there's not a whole lot of opportunity for that. So that makes us pretty special. To have, and we are the largest inland lake in Ohio, 13,500 acres. So, you know, for us to be able to, you know, tell that story for the kinds of experiences that people can have in a place that doesn't offer a lot of that, I think is pretty great. And, you know, our story is sort of a comeback story. I know Jason's a big fan of comeback stories. I love it. You know, I think Jared, talked about this when he was on the podcast a little bit, but the water quality issues that Grand Lake has experienced, we're not unique in that. The Western Basin of Lake Erie and some other folks have dealt with those same sort of algal microcystin toxins. But when that really started 15 years ago, it was a crisis. I mean, it really was. The health of the lake was severely damaged.

J**Jason Duff** 18:27

And if you think, for those that maybe haven't grown up on a lake, the kind of activities that bring people to your lake is boating and swimming and fishing. So you can imagine if the news came out that, hey, there's algae blooms in our water. Yeah, is it safe? And then you've got all this misinformation of tests that say, oh, it's perfectly fine, and another test saying, no, it's not fine. But just that the fact that you go through the situation where there's a health crisis because of your water, that could jeopardize the whole tourism economy for the whole region.

M**Matt Staugler** 18:59

And I think that was what marshaled the local community to understand that this is a problem we've got to wrap our arms around. It did hurt our economy, and I think it hurt the future outlook of potential employers looking at the area and saying, "Boy, do I want to locate my business here?" You know, employees. Boy, do I want to take a job here if this is, there's a dying asset effectively in the area. And the local leadership that stood up and said, we're not going to accept this. We are going to fix it. The county, both counties working together with that shared asset, Grand Lake straddles both county lines. So part of it's in Auglaize County, part of it's in Mercer County. The two boards of county commissioners formed a joint lake facilities authority staffed by both sets of county commissioners. And they have gone out over the last 10 to 15 years and secured, you know, EPA grants, ODNR.

J**Jason Duff** 20:07

Yeah.

M**Matt Staugler** 20:07

You know, gone out and gotten the resources to be able to fix.

J**Jason Duff** 20:12

Yeah. And they've really taken care of the issue from what I understand. Jared shared a little bit of the progress, but I was looking back, that was episode 11. 2 years ago at this point. Yeah, and there's been major positive changes with that. And then also say, if you look at Ohio in general, you know, Matt kind of spoke to what has happened up in Lake Erie and some of the challenges there, but particularly Buckeye Lake had their own. That's another, I think the third largest inland lake in Ohio. They had a big hiccup with the structure and the support of their dam, and so they went through a completely kind of different issue, but also another crisis as the dam gets rebuilt and things happen there. And then where Indian Lake has recently had a hiccup is because of efforts to make the water, you know, improve the water quality, um, an invasive species of mussels got into our water. And I noticed growing up— this has happened probably about 6 or 7 years ago— like, I've been around the lake a lot, and the lake that one season was the clearest I've ever seen it. Like, it is pristine and beautiful. And a lot of locals are like, that is amazing, we did such a good job. Well, the problem is, in a very shallow inland lake, the, the sun got to the, the base of it and weeds started growing. So our issue wasn't the algae, it was now invasive species of grasses that are growing. And so that's been kind of a thing that Indian Lake has been making major progress to work through. But, you know, what, what it goes down to there's a lot of finger-pointing when a problem comes up. Yeah. And I've seen crisis, you know, recently Indian Lakes went through the March 14th tornado. And just anytime your community faces a crisis, there's lots of different emotional responses. One of the first is, it's like, who do we blame? Yeah, someone needs to be blamed. But like, what I think your point is about when you can get leaders doing a lot of listening, bringing in some professionals to try to evaluate and get a lay of the land, the situation, and then the lobbying effort. And we've hosted a number of legislators on the show. They have given kind of advice about how do you reach out to staff, how do you get— I remember John Cross mentioning, here's how you get things in, you know, plead to us to get things in the state capital budget because those things kind of matter. But I really think you've got to get those, those leaders around the issue. And then for us, the business owners, the entrepreneurs, if we see a good comprehensive plan, if we see where you know, things are going from planning and zoning, then we can plug our ideas and resources into doubling down. And I think me looking from afar, that is what Grand— the Grand Lake area and Celina and St. Mary's and really the whole, you know, Auglaize and Mercer County are really winning at right now.

M**Matt Staugler** 22:54

Yeah. I mean, we're very lucky Wright State University in Dayton has a branch campus in Celina.

J**Jason Duff** 22:59

Yep.

M**Matt Staugler** 22:59

And there's some of their staff, Dr. Steven Jochaman especially, has really led the way in analyzing, you know, the problem and recommending solutions that are Mercer County Soil and Water and some other folks have then gone, been able to go to the state for H2Ohio funds and things like that to do that. So now we are treating literally millions of gallons of runoff and stopping those toxins from ever even getting to the lake. Yeah. You know, the levels were a fraction of what they were 10 years ago based on the reports that Dr. Jackaman has. And we meet monthly as a Lake Restoration Commission. Dr. Jackaman gives amazingly detailed updates and reports. The water quality of the lake this year was phenomenal. Phenomenal. But the job's not done. We're still continuing to make those improvements to the lake, but it really is a success story. It really is.

J**Jason Duff** 24:02

That's incredible. And then being in your role, how do you get the word out about that success right now, get the negative connotations out of people's heads and say, hey, come spend your time, bring your family, let's have fun in our community and spend your money here?

M**Matt Staugler** 24:16

Well, Jason knows this as well. Negative stuff sells, right? And so when the news media latches on to a negative story, you know, then it's hard to dislodge that negative perception in the minds of a consumer, right? And so, you know, it is an issue for us and it's a challenge for us in the marketing and PR area to be able to tell that story, that success story, because most news media won't want to pay attention. They don't want to run the happy stories. They don't want to run the happy stories. Yeah. But, you know, for us, it's highlighting The Boardwalk Villages, you know, of the world who, you know, in our area, they're investing millions, millions of dollars in this brand new lodging property. Those types of investments wouldn't be happening on our lake if the water quality had not improved and if the outlook wasn't so positive. So it's, again, it's highlighting those stories and making sure that people are aware that, you know, our lake is definitely on the rebound.

J**Jason Duff** 25:13

So let's think about the, the people that are investing in some of the projects to really think about. If you go back in time a few years ago and think that you could create a Key West level of experience in Celina, Ohio, and I know you're a big supporter, but let's just say we go back in time in the time machine and spend millions of dollars planting the flag to make that investment with pools and volleyball courts and bars and restaurants and these beautiful brightly colored lodges that makes you feel like you're literally walking the streets of Key West. Mm-hmm. Could you ever see that in Celina?

M**Matt Staugler** 25:54

I drove by that area every day going to school. I lived on— I grew up on the south side of the lake. We drive around the west side of the lake to get to school and, you know, in high school. And never, never would I have imagined.

J**Jason Duff** 26:09

And this is another thing that we sometimes have these limiting beliefs, right, where you drive by. And I always use the example Dublin and Bridge Park where Crawford Hoang made a big, bold move that had a really rundown, scary Planet Fitness and a driving range and piles of mulch and construction scrap that was around there. And today, if you look in the Columbus market, that's probably one of the most desirable and valuable pieces of real estate. What does it take in your mind to help people get from, you know, thinking that's just the same old thing to making it treasure for the community and, and for a place that people love?

M**Matt Staugler** 26:54

Well, and it's building that in that environment. You know, I, I know you're a big believer as well that competition is, is actually good. You can't have too many boutiques. You can't have too many restaurants.

J**Jason Duff** 27:05

I use the coffee shop example in Greenville. Greenville is known as a destination for great coffee because there are multiple coffee options. They're just all different.

M**Matt Staugler** 27:13

Yeah, and if you look at the west side of the lake, it is all hospitality businesses now. Roamer's, Jason Roamer, sort of started that trend. He built an event center.

J**Jason Duff** 27:25

I filmed a wedding out there not too long ago, actually.

M**Matt Staugler** 27:27

Yeah, and some villas there. That was the start of it. 20 years ago. Then a hotel popped up and there was a restaurant out there and then Boardwalk Village got started. So, you know, that entire west side of the lake now is all tourism-based businesses, you know? And so to answer your question, it's understanding, it's having great people like Jared in place to help sell the story to that, you know, big employer who comes in and says, you know, look at the amenities that you're, you know, you're going to have to attract talent. Look at all of these fantastic facilities and businesses that we have. Look at this great asset and a phenomenal lake that we have here too. And again, it's just everybody joining arms and saying, we're going to do this together.

J**Jason Duff** 28:15

And, you know, if you look at Jared, he's the economic development director for Mercer County. He had to come up with some incentives, I imagine too. Part of it is like looking, What— and we've unpacked this with other things on the show— is like, what can we do in terms of tax abatements? What can we do in terms of working with the city to make it attractive for developers? And that's the thing. I think some communities just sit back, you know, dreaming or hoping of that. But you really have got to look at the nuts and bolts of the financials. But I like what you said, Matt, like, you know, a local company that the Brunz family, like they've been totally invested in their construction businesses and other development work and great things that they've, they've done. They want to give back. And the way they give back is by starting businesses and making these investments. But then took the partnership with the city, took the partnership with, you know, county economic development, and then having the confidence that there's someone that's going to market it. Yeah. And truthfully, let's maybe share some of your secret sauce. Like, I was up in Ashtabula County. Ashtabula. Ashtabula. I have to— I messed it up. I've been practicing, Nick. Ashtabula. Yeah, there you go. See? Yep. Ashtabula. See, I'm getting, I'm getting better, but it's like practicing. I love that area. And they rebranded, you know, the tourism director there, Steph. Steph is awesome. They rebranded that area to Ohio's Wine Country. And again, part of that rebranding because they have all these great wineries and lots of wineries raise some great grapes, but they weren't selling the story. And you didn't know what— like, you people like me couldn't pronounce for a long time. Ash-da-bee-la. And so now that I can, I'm working on it, but I can say Ohio's wine country and I love to drink good wine. But part of it is like with Celina, how are you selling it now?

M**Matt Staugler** 30:05

Well, in Grand Lake. Well, for so long we were the Auglaize and Mercer Counties Convention and Visitors Bureau. That's a mouthful. Say that 5 times fast. That's a mouthful for a consumer. And so, you know, simplifying that to the Grand Lake region and planting our flag in the lake.

J**Jason Duff** 30:17

Yep.

M**Matt Staugler** 30:18

And understanding that that's our main asset that we're selling, just like Ashtabula is with wine. You know, we're going to market with that lake experience first, and they will explore when they get there. They will discover the Armstrong Museum. They'll discover the Bicycle Museum. They'll explore our amazing downtowns. You know, what's great about Celina is it is literally connected to the lake. You can pull up to a public dock you know, park your boat, get out. You can look one way and that's Boardwalk Village. Look the other way is downtown Celina, all walkable.

J**Jason Duff** 30:53

Yeah.

M**Matt Staugler** 30:53

And it's phenomenal. People don't understand the kinds of things that we have until they get there and they experience it. So simplifying that brand, investing in that singular thing that makes you special and different is very important.

J**Jason Duff** 31:08

All right. At this time, we're going to take a quick break to hear a word from our sponsors. Brew Fountain's voted best beer bar in Ohio. Come visit their award-winning team in downtown Bellefontaine for fresh local craft beer, soups, salads, sandwiches, wine on tap, and handcrafted cocktails. And they're always available to cater your next event with their box lunches and platters. Cheers to Small Nation! 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. And I want to give Walpock a shout out since you mentioned it. But the Neil Armstrong Museum, for those who don't know, Neil Armstrong was actually born in Walpock, Ohio, in Auglaize County, the county seat there. Really cool experience. But you better believe they have a dome-shaped — it looks like a moon when you're driving on 75 — museum there. That's really cool to check out. So if you're in the area, I want to put a double click on that. Walpark is one of my favorite downtowns in Ohio. Beautiful historic downtown, great mix of businesses.

M**Matt Staugler** 32:14

Very intimate.

J**Jason Duff** 32:15

Very intimate. And they've invested a huge amount in their streetscape and also what do they call it? The Riverwalk? What do they call that? The Riverwalk. You know, really, really great stuff. And maybe just kind of share for people that have never been to downtown Walpark, what are some of the must-sees and dos there.

M**Matt Staugler** 32:35

I mean, truly, the Riverwalk is a great example of activating a space that, that before wasn't there. So the Auglaize River runs right behind downtown Wapakoneta. And we're more recent, you know, residents, we moved there 3 years ago. You know, before that was all activated, there wasn't really a way for the river to interact with downtown. So, you know, now they've invested in building that up, you can They have a, there's a kayak launch right there off of downtown. You can kayak then in the Au Glaize River. There are some amazing restaurants, you know, in downtown, the Side Rail, J. Marie's, and just some phenomenal retail. If you love retail, I mean, downtown Wapakoneta has a—

J**Jason Duff** 33:21

Great antiques.

M **Matt Staugler** 33:22

Yes.

J **Jason Duff** 33:23

Great clothing.

M **Matt Staugler** 33:24

Yes. Great women's boutiques, great antiques. That's sort of what they're known for.

J **Jason Duff** 33:27

They've got a wine inn, great coffee.

M **Matt Staugler** 33:29

Yes. Yeah.

J **Jason Duff** 33:30

Yes. I haven't been in a few years, so it sounds like I need to go back. But it's definitely worth a stroll. Let's give some love to some of the other downtowns in your network. So you spoke about Celina again, some great restaurants to check out in Celina. New wine store that opened up there as well. So great coffee. You have multiple coffee shops too. Yeah. The mayor's got a coffee shop, I think, too.

M **Matt Staugler** 33:49

Hazelnut.

J **Jason Duff** 33:49

Hazelnut. Another. And then let's talk about what, what do you love about St. Mary's?

M **Matt Staugler** 33:55

My wife's from St. Mary's.

J **Jason Duff** 33:57

Yeah.

M **Matt Staugler** 33:57

You know, we love St. Mary's. St. Mary's has definitely been investing in their downtown. If you haven't been through there lately, they've just renovated the old historic theater. Yeah, I've heard about that. And that's sort of been reactivated. They're building a stage then on the backside to host outdoor concerts. They've already booked shows for next spring as well. So, you know, that theme of reactivating your downtown as a way to attract new residents, is definitely catching on, you know, in our region, you know, Celina and, you know, Walpark are very established. And, you know, St. Mary's is making some huge investments, you know, to get that, you know, up to par as well.

J**Jason Duff** 34:35

And then New Bremen, for people that haven't visited, you mentioned the bicycle museum. What else do you think is really special about New Bremen?

M**Matt Staugler** 34:41

What's great about our area is there are all those little villages.

J**Jason Duff** 34:45

Yeah.

M**Matt Staugler** 34:45

You know, that are—

J**Jason Duff** 34:46

What else is in your kind of region?

M**Matt Staugler** 34:47

So you get New Bremen, Coldwater, which is a very cute town. There's Münster as well, which is another sort of—

J**Jason Duff** 34:57

they have a nice little beer festival, huge Oktoberfest there every fall.

M**Matt Staugler** 35:02

We were there with an awesome photographer this fall shooting it and drinking. But yeah, what's great about our area is that not only do we have those sort of bigger small town downtown experiences, but we also have those great little villages as well that are fun to explore too.

J**Jason Duff** 35:21

Yeah. And I think this segues into something, a little hypothesis that you have, and I want to give you some time to riff on this. But you shared with me in our touchpoint call before the episode is that you believe that quality of life comes first when people are thinking about moving to an area, and then the job comes second. And I think that's kind of an interesting take. We've talked to a lot of economic development professionals and a few tourism people, but you had a kind of a unique stance on that. So I'd like to hear your thoughts on some of this.

M**Matt Staugler** 35:50

I think it sort of goes back to what Jason was touching on about when Jared was working with Bruins and building those hospitality businesses. It almost now, 40 years ago, it was enough to, if you had low cost of living, low crime, great schools, that was enough. People would come find a job there.

J**Jason Duff** 36:11

Those are the major goals if you're trying to get people to come.

M**Matt Staugler** 36:13

Right, and people, when they were looking for a place to live, they were looking job first, right? I sort of, I almost think it's backwards now. People are looking at the kind of lifestyle that they can have first and the job can come second. And that's by the nature of our economy is changing. People are working from home. We're a content economy now, right? And I think that it is incumbent on communities to start looking at economic development in that way. The Ohio Department of Development about 2 years ago actually released a study of population projections for Ohio, and it paints a bleak picture. It's not good. It really does. And these are not, this is not some fly-by-night operation. This is the Ohio Department of Development, you know, that is sort of raising this warning flag. And, you know, for those who don't know, they're projecting the state overall to lose about 6% of their population. And it's worse in other parts of the state. And it's not just a rural-urban issue either. In my neck of the woods, Mercer County's projected to shrink about 2%. It's one of the lucky ones. Auglaize County is projected to shrink about 10%. Logan County's 10%. Rural parts, you know, of our state. But if you look at Cuyahoga County, Cleveland, 20%. Lucas County, Toledo, 20%.

J**Jason Duff** 37:48

The Dayton region's not good either.

M**Matt Staugler** 37:50

It's a crisis. It's a crisis that we have not adequately acknowledged and committed to tackling. And, you know, so you might say, Matt, well, isn't everybody dealing with this problem? Everyone's dealing with this. Well, they are, but they're not in the same boat that we are. So let's look at Michigan and Kentucky. And I think those are legit comps, you know, not only from a geographic perspective, we share I-75 as a major logistics route. Michigan is projected to shrink by about 1.6%. So we're shrinking 4 times faster. Again, these are projections to 2050.

J**Jason Duff** 38:33

Our football team's not helping much.

M**Matt Staugler** 38:35

Yeah, let's not talk about that.

J**Jason Duff** 38:37

Anyway, moving on.

M**Matt Staugler** 38:38

Sorry, moving on. Um, so they're projected to shrink 1.6%. We're shrinking 4 times faster than Michigan. Geez. Kentucky is projected to grow by 6%. So there's a 12% gulf there. We're shrinking by 6, Kentucky's growing by 6. My hypothesis on this is that Michigan and Kentucky for years have invested in their tourism brand and in the hospitality industry more broadly. So, you know, the kinds of experiences that points to quality of life. Tourism is economic development. It's the first phase of economic development. The best way to get someone interested in your area is to get them to visit purely for a leisure visit. That's it. That's the best way to get them to start thinking about moving to your town, to go to school in your state, raising their family there. That's the best way to do it. And Michigan, what's the first thing you think about when you think of Michigan?

J**Jason Duff** 39:43

Pure Michigan. Yeah, because that campaign 15 years ago, they put a lot of thought and intention in it. It's well done and they have stuck to it.

M**Matt Staugler** 39:54

And what do you think about when you go to Kentucky? Horses and bourbon. And if there's any people who are doing hospitality right, they're in Kentucky. Have you visited any of the distilleries in Kentucky lately? Well done. They're phenomenal. The experience is exquisite, exquisite. The tourism director position in Kentucky is a cabinet-level position. That's how important it is to them. Yeah. You know, it's something that I would urge Governor DeWine to look at is appointing a tourism director that's a cabinet-level position and that our state invests more dollars in tourism promotion. We spend the least of any contiguous state.

J**Jason Duff** 40:38

Wow.

M**Matt Staugler** 40:39

To Ohio. We spend the least. The General Assembly actually cut the budget in this last biennium budget. We only spent \$7.5 million promoting Ohio.

J**Jason Duff** 40:47

Yeah. That's very interesting. I feel like, you know, we've been doing this podcast for a little bit now, and it's kind of the first I've heard that narrative. So I wanted to share it a little bit. I don't want to just leave it there. Like, what's— you know, that's a pretty bleak picture, obviously. What can we do about that? But, you know, we go to the Grand Lake region, talk to Matt Stogler. And honestly, like, we had a little sidebar conversation before. You know, we have been very intentional about Christmas this year because part of the visit, if you go to really, you know, a lot of the social media feeds, everyone right now is looking for a Hallmark town that has good coffee, good food, and does Christmas well. And so a few months ago, in a lot of our planning committees with our Downtown Bellefontaine Partnership and the city of Bellefontaine, you know, this idea came up about what if we declare that Bellefontaine, Ohio, and specifically Downtown Bellefontaine, is Ohio's Christmas capital. And what we found is that no one did declare that. And I'll be honest with you, like, just by working on the branding, the logo, the messaging, the mayor did a beautiful proclamation and a video of him doing that. The mayor participated, the visitors bureau I saw picked it up within a matter of days. Like, I heard about it a few days and then I saw the visitors bureau was already like promoting it and I saw signage and everything everywhere. And I think that the kind of tactical strategies. And this is what I've learned. You know, we've mentioned Jim Vickers and Ohio Magazine. Like, this is combining marketing, which is the logo, the branding. It's also advertising because we are boosting this and putting it on our billboards. We have stickers, you know, throughout that we're handing out. We've got sidewalk graphics and signage and then the PR. And that's where you really, if you can strike and do it right, all those warm, fuzzy, feel-good stories that news media and people wanna pick up. So, you know, just sharing, I, I think if you're listening from your town and your community and you want a little more confidence to, to, to ask your city council or your county commission, or even your, your board members or volunteers, we need to fund this. These are examples where it, it, it is a good investment and it is working.

M**Matt Staugler** 43:04

Yes. Yes, it almost always brings, I shouldn't say almost, it always brings a positive return on your investment. You know, for every dollar that you spend in tourism marketing, you usually return at least \$7 back to your economy.

J**Jason Duff** 43:20

Wow.

M**Matt Staugler** 43:21

And so it's a win-win all the time.

J**Jason Duff** 43:24

Yeah.

M**Matt Staugler** 43:24

All the time. And, you know, that's what I would love to see the state do more as well is, you know, you know this as a developer and as a small business owner, investing in those kinds of businesses, helping those small developers get off the ground, work through the red tape, helping those restaurant owners with that first small business loan. We do that all over the state for big business. Let's do that. Let's do that for small hospitality businesses that actually then add some life and vibrancy to a small town. And that might actually get a big employer to give that town a second look.

J**Jason Duff** 44:06

Yeah.

M**Matt Staugler** 44:06

I talked to an economic development director and they had just landed a great new big employer to their area. And in the process of, you know, luring them to the area, they said, "Talk me through your process. How did we end up as one of the finalists?" And he said, if you're not a growing population center, you get thrown in the trash. Wow. He said, even if it's a world-class site, even if the incentives are amazing, you're thrown in the trash.

J**Jason Duff** 44:40

They have to have people.

M**Matt Staugler** 44:41

You have to have people. We don't even look at a place that's not growing. And that's a lot of— if you look at the— going back to the DOD's population map to 2050, there's a lot of those places across our state. You know, so, you know, Columbus is growing. Columbus is, you know, looks great on that map. But the problem for Ohio overall is a lot of that growth in Columbus is from other parts of Ohio. A lot of that—

J**Jason Duff** 45:08

Comes at a cost to them.

M**Matt Staugler** 45:09

Right, it's like a reverse donut. We're hollowing out the outer parts of Ohio and centralizing it in the Columbus region.

J**Jason Duff** 45:15

And everyone's moving in there.

M**Matt Staugler** 45:16

And everyone's moving in. It's not a sustainable strategy statewide.

J

Jason Duff 45:19

Yeah.

M

Matt Staugler 45:20

So we've got to work more to help those smaller communities and even the big guys like Cleveland and Toledo.

J

Jason Duff 45:27

Yeah.

M

Matt Staugler 45:28

Give them more ability to help develop those hospitality businesses. And then the big employers and big, you know, bigger industry will follow there because that hospitality base has to exist first. Yeah. Before they can be successful. They have to.

J

Jason Duff 45:47

Yeah, very interesting. And then I think to your comment about like what draws even bigger employers, I think I want to say it was when the Tiffin folks were in town on their episode talking about landing a big employer, just they wanted to see the downtown. But like they said, I don't want to see anything else. Drive us to the downtown. They didn't, you know, cancel all the other plans. I want to drive through your downtown and I want to get a vibe for what's going on.

M

Matt Staugler 46:09

That goes right back to what that, you know, big big employer was, was saying to that economic development director that I spoke to. Yeah, if you don't have vibrancy in the heart of your community and your downtown is— yeah, that probably means the rest of your town or county isn't really that healthy.

J**Jason Duff** 46:25

Yeah, right. Yeah. My hope is that this would activate other, you know, developers or people in small towns, especially from the private sector. We have a lot of entrepreneurs that listen to this podcast too. And to Jason's point about being the Christmas capital, that, I mean, you may not want to brag on this, but we kind of kickstarted some of that. We drove getting the logo made, right? Small Nation did. And then we shared and, you know, over the past 10 years, the visitors bureau, the public partners have built trust with, you know, the private entity that is Small Nation. And they picked that up and we're collaborating, right, to bring that back in. And we're seeing that kind of move the needle for, you know, Christmas is becoming something to do here, you know, and everyone's knowing about it. You're seeing on all the Facebook pages and groups on road trips and things like that. But it started with the private, you know, sector. So it doesn't always have to come from like we talk about pointing fingers and things like that. Like, I would hope people listening, whether you're an entrepreneur, whether you're in the, you know, the public part of policy or somebody like you, Matt, you know, in the visitors bureau or economic development or something like that, like it just takes someone to kind of drive it and then get other people on board to really start to see some progress.

M**Matt Staugler** 47:40

I think it points back to the power of good marketing, right? You know, we know that good marketing works. Think about any product you buy. Almost all of it is influenced by marketing.

J**Jason Duff** 47:54

Yeah.

M**Matt Staugler** 47:55

What car you drive, what kind of couch you buy. I mean, all of it. All of it. And I think if a community can understand the impact that that has, it can go a long way toward helping solve a lot of your problems, whether that's population loss, whether that's wanting to build, you know, a bigger tourism economy, et cetera. You know, good marketing is worth its weight in gold.

J**Jason Duff** 48:21

Matt, can you, as you follow other people that are maybe trailblazers or breaking through or doing really good work, are there any other communities or examples that you're like, I really love what they're doing and I just admire, we're trying to take some ideas from them as well.

M**Matt Staugler** 48:38

If you're in Ohio and you're in a rural or smaller suburban market for years, Miami County. Miami County is— Troy. Troy is bad.

J**Jason Duff** 48:49

Pickle. Tip City. The trifecta there.

M**Matt Staugler** 48:52

Yes, those folks have always done such great work. Yes. Such great work. And their economic outlook is phenomenal. It's really good, really good. But then there's other folks. There's a great economic development director in Putnam County, Amy Seelz. You know Amy.

J**Jason Duff** 49:11

I know her well.

M**Matt Staugler** 49:12

Dynamite. Get to Ottawa, right? She has really taken the bull by the horns and done the hard work. She is helping develop a new boutique hotel property All eyes are on Ottawa. And, you know, there she was just in a meeting with the city, I think, on a street, on streetscape. You know, these are not things that you would think, oh, why is the economic development director in on that? That's, that's not her job. But she should be caring about the industrial park. Why is she caring about a streetscape? That's how important those kinds of things are to not only to her job, but her community that she's working to build and represent. So there's good people out there doing great work. You can find them all over the place.

J**Jason Duff** 50:01

And I'll tell you, just the names that you mentioned, it is a very small, and sometimes we've talked about this, can feel lonely at times. Go reach out and meet those people. Yeah. Because what I found with Amy, and I'll just share, Amy and her team in Ottawa, just got Heritage Ohio's best, like, placemaking initiative with their football. It's got a name for it. It's like a football avenue that they put AstroTurf down and made it like this great little outdoor area. The budget had to be very affordable, but it's super cool and it was just a creative idea that was implemented. And then the DeFord, which is the new boutique hotel, I reached out to her and this is just how great she is. I said, I would love an opportunity to take the tour and meet the contractors, meet the owners. Would they be willing to give us a tour? And she said, oh my God, we'd love that.

M**Matt Staugler** 50:52

Come on up.

J**Jason Duff** 50:53

So we got a date on the calendar just because I want to hear from their lenses. Like, we've got a building here in town, the Canby, that is very similar in size to Ford. I would love to implement that here. Our boutique hotel is not going to compete with a town an hour and a half away, right?

M**Matt Staugler** 51:10

Yeah, absolutely.

J**Jason Duff** 51:10

If we could share advice and best practices and support, of what they're learning, wouldn't that be a feather in the cap to have something like that here in Bellefontaine as well?

M**Matt Staugler** 51:19

Yeah, yeah. And again, I would just go back to, I really hope the state takes a look at those kinds of things. You know, look at Intel's great and Intel's gonna be phenomenal for Ohio.

J**Jason Duff** 51:32

It's great, but it's got problems.

M**Matt Staugler** 51:33

It does, it does. But think of the fractional amount of money that it would take to help you or another developer like the developer in Ottawa with the DeFord, And you could have those kind of properties all over Ohio, all over Ohio, right? For literally a percent.

J**Jason Duff** 51:52

Peanuts.

M**Matt Staugler** 51:53

A percent of the Intel incentive. Yeah. A half of a percent. And it'd be transformative. It would be transform— how transformative would a boutique hotel be in downtown Belfound? Incredible. Huge, huge. And so I, if there's any takeaway from this podcast, I hope it's state leaders understanding how important hospitality businesses, whether that's a restaurant, Adam Rammel, rockstar, you know, how important, I guess, how important those businesses are to the fabric and trajectory of your economy. If you don't have that as a base, you're not going to be successful attracting the next big employer, the next big Intel. You will fail. You will fail if you don't have them as the base of your pyramid. Yeah. Period. And the state can make such a huge impact by creating a fund in the budget to say, we're going to help these small businesses, we're going to help these entrepreneurs achieve their dream because that's going to help Ohio be successful. We're going to turn around this negative population decline that we're facing. By investing in these kinds of businesses.

J**Jason Duff** 53:05

Here's my ask. I couldn't agree more, and I would like to work with you to co-write some bullet points to start with, to start pitching this, because I, you know, I— we celebrate JobsOhio and all the JobsOhio partners. They've done some great things. And one of the biggest victories has been when they created the JobsOhio Vibrant Community Grant program. That particular program is for communities that have typically been distressed, taking and doing large catalytic projects that have an impact on a downtown or neighborhood. And they've seen so much success from that. But I think we need to, with the data that you just mentioned, and Ethan's going to design this clip in a way that we can get them this episode. Yeah, but I would like to really work with you. And if your listeners that are listening to this episode say, you know, I would like to be a part of that too, because it really does take You know, once you get in front of the executive branch, we need legislators on board to help usher this along too. So if you are listening, you're saying, hey, I listened to the episode with Matt Stogler, I would like to be a part of that too, please email us and reach out. Yeah.

M**Matt Staugler** 54:10

And then the Vibrant Communities, you know, program is a great example. You know, I'm not sure what the budget for that program is, but it's probably, one, it's probably not big enough.

J**Jason Duff** 54:18

Right.

M**Matt Staugler** 54:18

Two, you know, the parameters around that actually exclude a lot of people who could use it.

J**Jason Duff** 54:25

You know, okay, you're touching on one of my frustrating points.

M**Matt Staugler** 54:29

None of my community, no community in Mercer or Uglies County would qualify. But I can tell you, every community could use help with starting up a new restaurant, with starting up a new hotel in the downtown or a new retail boutique. Every single one of them, but we would not qualify for a program like that. It's a missed opportunity.

J**Jason Duff** 54:51

Yeah. Wow. A lot of great stuff in this episode. Appreciate you both unpacking it. I have a feeling the conversation will end here, but the comments are now rolling in on the YouTube channel. Yeah, please do give us your thoughts.

M**Matt Staugler** 55:02

Okay.

J**Jason Duff** 55:03

I'm going to move us into our next show segment here, the rapid-fire Q&A. This is where all the hard questions really come. First one is, are you a Coke or a Pepsi guy? Coke. Coke.

M**Matt Staugler** 55:12

Good.

J**Jason Duff** 55:12

We've had a lot more— it skewed more Coke than it has Pepsi. Because it's the right answer. Yeah, it's the right answer. Next question is, if you weren't doing the work that you are today, what kind of work would you be doing?

M**Matt Staugler** 55:21

Oh gosh, um, I would probably still be in, in, in, in sort of some sort of public service role, elected official or something. I did that already, but it was very—

J**Jason Duff** 55:32

Do you still have an itch for that?

M**Matt Staugler** 55:33

Uh, the right thing now that I, I have small children, um, but because that takes up a lot of time, um, but yeah, I do still have that itch. Yeah, absolutely.

J**Jason Duff** 55:42

You know, normal politicians, what they say, oh no, I'd never, you know, never consider that at this point. But I'm glad, I'm glad, I'm glad that you mentioned that because I I met you would be great at that. Yeah, very cool. I thought you were going to say leading tours at a museum somewhere.

M**Matt Staugler** 55:56

Oh, yeah, sure. That would be fine too.

J**Jason Duff** 55:57

Yeah. And the last thing is, what is your favorite restaurant in your region that listeners should go and check out?

M**Matt Staugler** 56:04

Oh, boy.

J**Jason Duff** 56:05

I know you love them all.

M **Matt Staugler** 56:06

Yeah.

J **Jason Duff** 56:07

But if there's one—

M **Matt Staugler** 56:07

You're setting me up for failure.

J **Jason Duff** 56:08

I know, exactly. If there's one or one menu item that you're like, this menu item is pretty darn good.

M **Matt Staugler** 56:15

Yeah, so it would be the Anchor. In Salina, the Corn Poblano Smash Burger.

J **Jason Duff** 56:23

Wow, that sounds pretty darn good. Check it out.

M **Matt Staugler** 56:26

Okay. But yeah, that's, that's my winner right now.

J **Jason Duff** 56:28

Okay. Okay. All right, great suggestion. Um, and just a couple closing questions here. The first one is, what is one professional development resource that was impactful for you along your professional journey?

M **Matt Staugler** 56:37

Uh, it is the, uh, Ohio Travel Association's Ohio Tourism Leadership Academy. I, I, I think it's, it if you're a mayor, if you're a city councilman, if you're in economic development, if you're in any way involved in economic development, you should go through the Ohio Tourism Leadership Academy because it opens your eyes on how big the industry actually is. It goes back to my original point. I wanted to go work at a museum, had no clue that that was part of the travel and tourism industry, but it actually is. And whether that's outdoor recreation, whether that is museums, whether that's restaurants, whether that, whatever, all of those are part of that hospitality world. And I think if people, if policymakers had more appreciation for how big that industry actually is, it would get a lot more play.

J **Jason Duff** 57:34

Yeah, yeah, that's great. And the last one is, if someone were listening today and wanted to follow you or learn more about the work you are doing, where can they go?

M**Matt Staugler** 57:41

The best way would be to follow us on social media. You can just search Grain Lake Region and you'll find us. Otherwise, they can visit us online at www.seamore.org.

J**Jason Duff** 57:53

Great. Perfect. Ooh, he just slipped that in. That's a good, very quick, short domain name. It is. Nice work, Matt Stogler. Jason can appreciate a good domain like that. Listen, we worked together too many years. He knows all the dark arts and all the good— the dark arts and the good arts. So no, Matt, just congratulations on, on your success and all the good things that you're doing for your community. You unpacked a lot of great nuggets today. And again, if you've not been to the Grand Lake region, many of the downtowns that he mentioned are, are up and coming and also some of the best in the state experiences. But just excited to see your region continue to grow. And I've You know, just really proud of, of you and everyone over there doing awesome things. Thanks, guys.

E**Ethan DeLeon** 58:36

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