



# Talent Strategy in Toledo with Jeff Schaaf

Mon, 8/9 10:42AM 57:49

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

toledo, people, community, years, chamber, talking, recruiting, big, hang, opportunity, area, region, live, friend, concerts, interns, couple, funny, day, jamie farr

## SPEAKERS

Jeff Schaaf, Halie Morris

- H** Halie Morris 00:12  
Hello everyone, and welcome back to Everyday Business Solutions. My name is Halie. And today I have with me Jeff from the Toledo Chamber of Commerce. Jeff, would you mind introducing yourself?
- J** Jeff Schaaf 00:22  
Sure. Thanks for having me today. I'm Jeff Schaaf. I'm the Director of Talent Strategy at the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce.
- H** Halie Morris 00:28  
So can you tell us a little more about what you do as the Director of Talent Strategy?
- J** Jeff Schaaf 00:32  
Sure. So my role, I am responsible for most primarily, talent, attraction and the strategy of how we help attract talent to the region, help our members attract talent to the region. I run our Summer in the City program, which is a program for interns who are here interning for the summer with any company in the region. They can sign them up for our program and we show them around Toledo. We give them opportunities for professional development, so that at the end of their internship, if they're offered an opportunity to

stay in Toledo, they want to stay in Toledo.

H

Halie Morris 01:03

That's kind of cool, because I went to college here and I've gone through the internship experience locally. I was down in Maumee, but getting close to the city that you might potentially live in one day full time is hugely important, because it makes or breaks your experience. I feel like the Toledo campus is the close-to-home place- Everybody wants to go somewhere else. So it's cool to see incoming people and that that fresh perspective, right?

J

Jeff Schaaf 01:37

Yeah. So we found there's two elements to the program for an intern. We have interns who have grown up here and stayed here, and maybe grew up in their bubble in Perrysburg or Sylvania, and that's where they've always gone to school. That's where they hang out, because there really isn't a reason to leave if you're going to school and playing sports, and all your activities are there. Then there's people who are not from Toledo, and who have never experienced Toledo, who are here for the summer. So we kind of show them all a little bit of the unique things that make Toledo, Toledo. Some of the things that I might take advantage of all the time because of my role in the Chamber and that I have to know what's going on in Toledo. So it's fun. If we measure their opinion of the community before they start their internship and their opinion after, it always goes up double digits every year.

H

Halie Morris 02:25

So how do you measure that? I'm curious.

J

Jeff Schaaf 02:27

So we asked them to rate Toledo on nightlife opportunities, rate Toledo's networking opportunities, rate Toledo on cool places to live, that sort of thing. Usually, at the beginning of the program, they're like, "I don't know. It's probably like a two, because I don't really know that much," and by the end, it's at five and five is the best on the scale. So that's cool. Then we also take a look at it from [the perspective of] who actually accepts at the end of the summer. Our acceptance rate is usually anywhere between 30 and 40 percent, which it doesn't sound great initially on paper, but when you realize that the majority of the interns who are in the program are only juniors in college, so they probably won't get an offer at all that first year, or if they get one, it might not be

something that they'd be able to start until the end of their senior year or when they graduate. They might not be fully interested in accepting that offer yet and then 30 percent will go back to school for the year, and then the other 30 percent may decide that there's another opportunity for them. Usually, if we lose them, it's because they have a spouse or a significant other that has already accepted a job somewhere else, or they have to go into a master's program and do something else. Our success rate is, even though it sounds like it's not with only 30 percent, it's pretty high.

H

Halie Morris 03:48

I was going to say, when you consider all the different factors and all the different things college students have going on at that time, yeah, that's a pretty good rate.

J

Jeff Schaaf 03:56

It's just really hard to measure it because it's not a one-for-one every single time, but we work really hard our team at the Chamber and our team of Epic young professionals that we help. Because with our young professionals networking organization, we bring in a lot of those people during the program, because they're actually living the life of a young professional, so they can talk a little bit about [their experiences]. I'm way out of that range. I haven't been in the the intern phase for a long time. So I may be closer in age to their parents than their peers. Bringing in somebody who's maybe three to five years into their career, they can give a better perspective than maybe they would think they could get from me, although I think I've got a pretty good perspective.

H

Halie Morris 04:40

I was gonna say, my parents have a better social life than I do and the reason is probably Pokemon GO honestly. They're going out and I'm like, "Where are you going?"

J

Jeff Schaaf 04:53

You got to make it. Everywhere that you live is where what you make of it, and so we're trying to show them as many opportunities as possible to make it in Toledo.

H

Halie Morris 05:02

Well, and I used to think, "Oh, I want to move to like a big city or another country because I want to experience those places, but then I graduated, and my dad's like, "Realistically, what are you going to do? You can stay here for a couple years," but he's like, "Do you

want to buy a house because your monthly payment is going to be a mortgage payment."- and he knows me- "For the kind of apartment you would live in Halie, you could buy a house."

J

Jeff Schaaf 05:27

Yeah, I think when you look at some of the apartments in other cities, that we bump against quite a bit, when people are trying to attract- If we're bumping against Columbus, or Cincinnati, or Cleveland, and you compare it to some of the rents here, or the mortgage rates here, you can have a pretty nice house here for some of them the rent payments that you might be in some of those other cities.

H

Halie Morris 05:49

Yeah. We've got some really nice apartments that are very alluring and I have a dog. I have a tendency to not do my laundry unless it's convenient. So I know there's certain things that I need that make that price go up really, really quickly and I, of course, hang stuff all over my room. I'm always decorating and changing things. My dad said, "You can't do that in an apartment, Halie." So it's crazy, because now I'm looking at a home here in a couple of years, kind of keeping an eye on the markets. It's very rough right now, for me to try to buy.

J

Jeff Schaaf 06:24

It's a challenging market right now if you're a buyer, but that's a good thing for our community. That shows that people are investing in our community and if you invest in the home, that's what we want. We want a young professional, like you, to be in Toledo and invest in a home because that means that you want to stay here and that you're invested in the community and really want to help us move that forward.

H

Halie Morris 06:48

That's the thing. My friend just bought a house in Toledo, not too far from campus, which is funny because she's from somewhere down by Columbus. It's a smaller town out by Columbus. She came up here for school and then took a teaching job. So now she's in the community for good. She goes to the farmers markets and stuff like that. So I started to branch out to the farmers markets in Toledo, which I didn't go to before. Then through work I do- like t-town dash we did two years ago and we've got people attending the golf tournaments and things like that. So there's so much to do and I can't imagine trying to figure this out in a different city. This is my home.

J

Jeff Schaaf 07:29

Yeah, that's what we try to do. We try to make it a little bit easier for people who might be transplants here to get acclimated. I was on the call today with a candidate, a CFO candidate for one of our major corporations and they're looking to potentially move from somewhere in Virginia, and they've never lived anywhere else except for on the east coast. They're like, "Tell us what we need to know about Toledo." Right? That's like, "Okay, well, what do you want to know first, because I can just start rattling things off," But we talked about what it's like to live here and the things that we have from the Toledo Museum of Art to the metro parks to. We're on the Maumee river and Lake Erie, so if you're a fisherman, that's the place to be if you're a boater. This is a great place to be and the the questions that always come up that people aren't sure about are funny ones, like what's your winter like? The winter one is a little challenging because I had a CEO that we recruited a few years back, and he said, "What's your winter like?" They were moving up from Florida, and he originally was from the east coast. So he knew that we would have some sort of snow and that was the year that we had record snowfall. We had like 90 inches of snow that year. We had level three emergencies and offices were closed. He had driven his rear wheel drive Camaro up here from Florida and on the first major snowfall that we had, he put it in a ditch. He called in and he said, "I thought he said these winters weren't bad up here." So what are you going to do? I can't predict the weather and I can't control it, but that one bad year is something that we'll all be talking about for the next 15 or 20 years. This past year was not bad at all. I was outside on Thanksgiving with my family. So you get a little bit here, you get a little bit there. We aren't Cleveland, so we don't get dumped on like every time that there was a snow forecast. That's kind of nice. As we were having the conversation today about the amenities and I know he called his HR person afterwards. I was like, "okay, we're coming in next week, for sure. We weren't sure, but we talked to Jeff. This sounds like a place that we can live. So we want to come in and actually continue the interview process." So that was a little mini victory today, small wins.

H

Halie Morris 09:42

That's awesome. No, it's funny to think about. I came from Midwest Ohio. So the winters are a bit different because of the lakes. There's not a huge temperature difference because it's only a couple hours north but yeah, the lakes make a huge difference on if a storms coming what it's gonna do.

J

Jeff Schaaf 10:01

The lake effect. Snow is something that we don't tend to get for some reason after the the weather comes through the Chicago area, it splits and goes north or south more often than that. And south of us will either get a lot of snow or a lot of ice and north of us will

get a lot of snow and then poor Cleveland and Akron on the other side. They have buffalo they just get dumped on. I have a friend that lives in Buffalo. And he's like, either live on this side of Buffalo or that side of Buffalo and the one side just gets hammered with snow all the time and the other side gets no snow. So I was like, Who wouldn't want to live on the side? It just gets hammered with snow all the time. I wouldn't that's that's my least favorite part of Toledo, is the snow.

H

Halie Morris 10:39

You go sledding on that side, but you don't live on that side.

J

Jeff Schaaf 10:42

Yeah.

H

Halie Morris 10:43

yeah, I live in Sylvania. And I know literally one side of the lane you'll get hit with a bad rainstorm. And the other ones dry phone I've gone. I've driven through it had to get in my car and the rain drive through like torrential downpour. And I get home and I get on my car and like it's dry and I walk in I was like you didn't get rain. They're like no Why are you wet? Yeah, that's the beauty of Toledo weather. Five minutes wait for Yeah, um, so no, it's kind of funny but then you're right like the lakes are huge, really weird weather patterns. But then you can go put your boat in I know. My friends. They have a boat so they'll go drop it in your free launch right there and then right out on Lake Erie and you can spend all day out there.

J

Jeff Schaaf 11:28

Yeah, I mean the marinas that we have around here there's if you are a sailboat or if you're a sport boater if you're a fisherman, there's so many opportunities around here to drop your boat in the water or keep it at a marina. The the parties around the marinas the islands put in Bay Kelly's Island, the wineries and the craft breweries out in pork than in Sandusky, like you could spend an entire weekend out there and it's like you're on a vacation somewhere and you're only 45 minutes from your home. So that's another one of the great bonuses of up to and our proximity to other markets. Detroit's 45 minutes away and 45 minutes away. Cleveland's an hour and a half. Columbus is a couple hours, Cincinnati's three, Indianapolis and Chicago are four and a half, five hours. Like if you want to hop in the car and taking an overnight trip. There's so many great opportunities to do that without actually having to live in a congested city.

H

Halie Morris 12:22

Exactly. And the flip side is you can also go about the same distance and be completely out in nature. Absolutely. The other great lakes just beyond the first one. Yeah. And then, you know, there's Hocking hills. And my friend went to Pennsylvania. She just took a road trip one weekend, and they were going through all these caverns and caves on water and stuff. And I'm like that was that close.

J

Jeff Schaaf 12:45

yeah, I tell people that are looking to come to the region. The only thing that we really don't have are mountains and surfing. But if you want mountains, you're only a couple hours away. If you want, you can go into Pennsylvania, you can go down south into Kentucky and Tennessee. If you want surfing the trade airports only 40 minutes away. And you can have to either coast pretty quickly. So

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Halie Morris 13:06

Or you get one of those mini ones that you put on the back of the boat.

J

Jeff Schaaf 13:12

Yeah, on the back of the speed boats. My brother has one of those.

H

Halie Morris 13:14

I've done that, not well, but I've done that. I prefer the wakeboard. But again, you can go wakeboarding and everything. And it's just like, people have got all the houses up on the lakes or second homes up on the lakes. It's really easy to make a friend.

J

Jeff Schaaf 13:30

It is my brother and his wife just bought a cottage this past year. And so it's nice to be able to just pop up there for the weekend. 45 minute to an hour drive up there you stay for the day, you can stay for the whole weekend. It's just another one of those nice benefits of living in the area that we live in, you know, you go down south, in Ohio, like especially around the Columbus area and there might be two lakes down there. And the real estate is really expensive. And they're they're congested. So up here we have probably hundreds of lakes around here. And any weekend you can be out on one of those legs having a good time.

H

Halie Morris 14:07

Well, it's funny too, because I was talking to cousins of mine that are closer to the Dayton area and they're talking about oh, we want to get up to a cottage up in Michigan but it's such a high click on devils they cannot say well don't do doubles like doubles like spacey. There's like a million other ones. Pick one.

J

Jeff Schaaf 14:22

Yeah, there's so many different ones. And even if you go just into Indiana, there's a bunch too.

H

Halie Morris 14:26

Yeah, exactly. And then the other thing is they're talking about like their roller coasters and stuff at Kings Island. I was like, I wrote like a couple record breaking ones this weekend. Like it was nothing. Yeah, I mean, if you want to go ride roller coasters, you got to go to Cedar Point. Yeah, it's funny people come from all over the country to ride our roller coasters and and I forget that they're, you know, like the as big as they are sometimes. Yeah.

J

Jeff Schaaf 14:46

And you have to waterparks out there and they just keep adding and adding and adding. There's so much stuff out there. It's really a great asset that it's kinda like the zoo. If you don't have kids. You might not take advantage of it all the time. But It's a great community asset. And there's really some great things that happen there. I don't go to Cedar Point on a regular basis, because it's not necessarily my thing. But it's nice if family comes in from out of town or if you have another guest who's coming in, to at least be able to say, hey, if you've got an extra day that you can stay. Let's get some tickets to Cedar Point and go for ride some roller coasters. Go to the waterpark hang out on the beach. It's a it's like a little mini resort area as many Disney right? Yeah, without as many characters.

H

Halie Morris 15:32

Right. And then they'll do concerts over there, too. I didn't realize that for a long time. But they do concerts and everything else out there. And it's just really cool. And I say that because we were there a couple weeks ago and happened to be on one slow day. So a lot of people out there right now. But yeah, it's funny, because you'll go somewhere else then



like, I went down to my family and Dayton, I grew up there. I don't remember ever being like that bored. I always found something to do. And I go down there now. And I'm like, What do you guys do for fun? Seriously, what? Where's your pumpkin farms? Where's your apple orchards? And they're like, I think there's one an hour away. And I'm like,

**J** Jeff Schaaf 16:11

Yeah, I feel like in the last 10 or 15 years that has really developed around here. Those non traditional- it's not your major attraction, like a zoo or a museum. But it's just fun stuff to do.

**H** Halie Morris 16:25

In the fall. It's starting to become it seems we've watched Gust Brothers grow.

**J** Jeff Schaaf 16:30

Yeah, Gust. There's one up in Erie that they do.

**H** Halie Morris 16:34

Erie Orchards.

**J** Jeff Schaaf 16:34

hard ciders and things like that. And hay rides. And they bring in food trucks on the weekend. And the kids can go out and pick apples and pumpkins and the adults hang out and listen to music and, and have food and you can spend, you know, three or four hours at an apple orchard. Which back in the day, who would think that that would be fun. It's become an experience. And it's not just about picking apples anymore.

**H** Halie Morris 16:57

I've gone two days back to back with a little one. And she like soaked it all up. She makes friends when we go out there and they live in our in the other direction. They don't care. Yeah, they don't. But it's it's funny because there is so much to do that when you've lived here for a while. It's just part of life. And then other people come up and you're like, oh, what am I going to do? Oh, well, I've got like a million things planned. You can't see it. All right. And then you go visit them. And even if you go to like my, my cousin lives, right outside date, and I went to visit her and it was fun. But then like when we were done going

someplace we were just done. Yeah. Then what do you do next? Yeah. So it's kind of funny, because we have a lot. And I think like, people just don't realize it.

J

Jeff Schaaf 17:38

And it's hard to find on paper, right? In today's age where there's so much electronic and digital media communication, it's harder to convey the message. And so that's one of the things that we've been working on, we've created a toolkit that our employers can use when they're recruiting to the region. And it's our website to leave a region calm that has information on the communities on education, on our major attractions, it has the news, it gives a feel for what life is truly like here in Toledo. But we put together like a video. So if you've got a recruit that you're bringing in, you can send them the video. And then the next week, you can send them the brochure and a little booklet that tells a little bit more. And then we have some information about just an overview. We have a terminology spreadsheet. So you know, we've grown up here for a long time or we've lived here for a long time you start throwing around terms and things that someone new to the region has no idea what you're talking about, oh, we'll take the trail to the zoo. Well, the trail has like an official name. It's like us 25 I think and it's the Anthony Wayne trail if you're looking on your phone or on a map, but we just throw it around as a trail or over head over to Franklin Park if you want to get some shopping done. Franklin Park is the name of the mall. Like it's just some of those things are we have a lot of references to Tony paqos or mash or Jamie Farr and, and young people especially if we're recruiting to the region, Jamie Farr was a star on a hit TV show mash years ago back in the 70s and 80s. And that generation was even born so they have no tie to who Jamie Farr is he also used to be the namesake for the marathon classic so but if you're not familiar with that, and we're throwing that around as a recruiter or as someone at a company, you got to kind of explain yourself. So the terminology is kind of fun. Why explains why we're called the Glass City why we're referred to as frogtown talks about the gray Black Swamp, you know, those sorts of things that are historical to the community. And that might not be as relevant today to who we are, but that certainly are in the fabric of who we are.

H

Halie Morris 19:53

Well, because I've moved up here at the start of high school and I had all those questions like what the heck are you talking? Yeah, right. I came up with my little like, Ohio Southern accent. And it was funny watching people like blink at me when I spoke. But I was like, why are we the Glass City? What does that mean? What is what is made of glass here, right? And then the frog when I found out early because my parents explained that they actually made me a little booklet of like, Oh, this is what till you know is Oh, that's cool. Yeah, I still have that. I'd like to see it. It's alright, they just did a picture of Toledo through their eyes,

like their old condo. And sure sure of I think Matt Higgins. And it was really, really simple and small, because I was like, you know, just coming out of eighth grade. But it was really cute, because it was like, oh, like, this is home. Yeah. And as a, you know, an employee or somebody looking at a position, even if you're just like relocating, because we have some pretty big headquarters in this area, too. It would be so helpful to just understand what the heck is going on.

J

Jeff Schaaf 20:59

And that's kind of that's kind of the purpose of the toolkit is that we want to, we want to make it easy for a recruiter to be able to sell a little bit at Toledo, they should still be focused on selling their company to the potential employee, and then my role and other people at the Chamber's role is to help sell the Toledo aspect of it. So don't feel as a recruiter, if you're trying to bring into Toledo, that you need to know each and everything about Toledo. That's what I'm here for. That's our role at the chamber is to be that Toledo promoters.

H

Halie Morris 21:31

So I'm curious, though, talking about applicants and bringing people in. I used to be in recruitment. And I've heard quite frequently that it is hard to get candidates right now that they're just not as many people applying. On the LinkedIn, everything seems a bit dry compared to what it used to be. What's that? Like, from your perspective? Right now?

J

Jeff Schaaf 21:52

We're certainly seeing that across the board. It's not unique to Toledo, certainly. But it is an issue for us in our community right now. Especially in those frontline service positions. I think we're seeing a few reasons for that. COVID certainly was an element where people who were working in those industries maybe didn't feel as safe as they thought they should, that they weren't being treated the way that they thought they should be. And so they may have reconsidered that they want to work in those industries. So they may they were at home, they were with their kids, they were with their family. Some of them are saying maybe I don't need to go back, maybe I can make this work. If I'm not paying for daycare, and I'm not working is at a wash at that point, right? And so should I stay home and stay with my kids? I think a lot of those same people took a look at it and said, my skills are worth more. And there's opportunities for me to use those skills in another industry or in another career. And they've taken those opportunities as well. And I think just people reevaluated then before COVID hit we were struggling with those frontline workers. So that's still going to be an issue. And I think we're going to probably see more

automation in those industries than we have in the past. But we're still struggling to fill nursing roles. And those are really well paid jobs. Those are jobs that people go to school for for four and five years. How do we make sure that we're competitive in our market, as a relates to other markets, we certainly see more and more development here and investment in the community from companies. And so as you see an Amazon come into town, that lifts the wages, but it also puts some constraints on the employment pool. Some of our counties and surrounding counties are basically at 0% unemployment right now. Based on the population in those counties and the number of jobs that are open, there, there just aren't enough people. So we're looking at different ways. One is recruiting from other areas of the country. One is talking to immigrants, legal immigrants who are here in the United States that are looking for work, or people who can enter the country legally and come work for us. There's a variety of issues there that you have to tackle whether it be making sure that the visas are correct. With everything that's happened over the last four years, the visa process was up in the air, it was changed. It was, you know, so many different things and so many issues that we we weren't getting the number of people coming into the contrary as we would have liked. And then there's, you know, a simple thing is a degree in Kenya is a little bit different than a degree in the United States. Does that mean that you're not as qualified for the same position? We don't know. That's where you need resources at the university where resources at other locations that can say, Okay, this degree in Kenya actually perfectly aligns with what this career path is in the United States, or, like a doctor in Kenya, for example, do they go through the same type of training? Do they know the same types of things as they would in the United States. So we have some teams here. And we're working with some different organizations that can kind of help with that. So that when someone comes in from another area, you can say, yes, they'll fit in perfectly in this position. Because the majority of those immigrant candidates that are coming in from other countries are fluent in English as well. They want to work. That's why they're here. And so we want to make sure that we're getting them into the positions that are available. But we're working with the colleges and universities, we're working with alumni groups, from those colleges and universities, if we know that there's a pocket of alum from the University of Toledo, or Bowling Green State University that are in Orlando, we're going to start doing some campaigning in Orlando to those people of like, hey, we've got jobs, and they're open here until you remember what it was like when you were here. 20 years ago? Well, it's not like that anymore. Check us out again. And if you're up here, give us a call. And we'll give you a tour. We have to start looking at other non traditional ways of recruiting to the region, and then taking a look at the people who are here in the region. And maybe it's a skill that was really valuable 10 years ago, but that industry has changed a lot. And maybe you haven't been able to keep up. How do we rescale or upskill skill you into another position. So the chamber works very closely with a lot of workforce development agencies and organizations in Northwest Ohio, to make sure that people who want to work are able to

work in a job that's going to be enough to pay the bills for them.

H

Halie Morris 27:02

It is interesting now, in the Toledo area, I've known a lot of people who they've moved out because their internships, whether it's people graduated with me or before me. And I've started to notice that there's a lot of people who eventually do drift back anyway. Because you know, especially if they're recent graduate within the last like three or four years. They know Toledo growing, and they know that there is actually a lot of fun stuff to do. They miss the best night like development, though. There's some cool things right there. Yeah. So I've noticed, like, the cost of living is a lot more in the outside world, sure, than it is here. And a lot of times you get paid the same. I've like done a little digging, like where you'll get paid. What you get paid is not proportionally equal compared to the cost of living as what you will get paid here.

J

Jeff Schaaf 27:50

Yeah, I have I've had in the last 20 years or so I've had the opportunity to potentially relocate to Kansas City or to LA. And Kansas City, the difference in compensation was only a couple \$1,000, which can't say probably has a similar. It's probably a higher cost of living than here, but not too crazy, because it's still Midwest. In LA the the difference in salary was maybe \$10,000. And the cost of living in LA is much different than here in Toledo. So there was no way you could live out there on the salary that they were they were offering. And so I'm still here in Toledo. I mean, I think I made the right decision.

H

Halie Morris 28:35

You could have found a very nice cardboard box to live in. Or I could have had five roommates. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, it would have been right back to your college. Yes. Yeah. Yes. So no, thank you. I think I have a cousin or some kind of distant relative that lives in San Francisco and they're talking about their house is smaller than like any of ours. And it costs about 10 times more.

J

Jeff Schaaf 28:59

Yeah. And there's a variety of other issues in San Francisco right now that no one's talking about.

H

Halie Morris 29:06

I'm sure we were talking about it. I was gonna go out and be towards the middle of college I was looking at maybe doing an internship with her company and just living with her for the summer that I did it for experience. And it was just like we were just talking about I would have had it me because I had somewhere to stay food not so much. As long as it was a paid internship. I might be able to feed myself but yeah, it was just like when you're looking at like, especially the West Coast or even the east coast where you're closer to the water the cost goes up

J

Jeff Schaaf 29:45

so much. They're beautiful places to visit. But you know, I'd I'd rather live in my my modestly sized home in Toledo with my 20 minute commute to work every day and everything readily available where I need it. Do we have major league sports teams here? No, but the mud hands is one step from it while or one step or two step away from major league sports, and the venues are outstanding, and you can go and hang out with your friends and enjoy a good evening.

H

Halie Morris 30:19

Well, there's the concert they do in promenade Park, we were down waterfront and we saw that across the way, and we saw that they had a concert thing going on the one night and we're like, oh, what is this?

J

Jeff Schaaf 30:31

Yeah, they just started back up. I think it's the third year that they've had those like back in the 80s and 90s. That was popular. They had them every Friday night. And somewhere along the line, one of those buildings got abandoned and it wasn't really a great place to hang out anymore. And so now that chromatica has redone the the waterfront buildings and promenade Park, in conjunction with the city, the concerts are back. So when I was leaving the office today cool in the gang was warming up. And a lot of our young interns in the office had no idea who I was talking about. And I was like, just go along. If you've been to a wedding, you'll know cool, and again, because they've got some some good songs from the 70s and 80s, and good r&b soul music. But they'll have concerts every Friday for the rest of the season. They actually do like family movie nights on Thursday night, they've got a big screen on the side of one of the parking garages down there. And they've done I think they've got like jurassic park or The Goonies or frozen or different movies like that, that you can go down and there's usually food trucks. There's food vendors and drink

vendors and you kind of like, bring a blanket or camp sharing, you're hanging out along the river and and watch a good movie or watch a good music show. It's it's a great venue.

H

Halie Morris 31:51

I'm gonna have to look into that as soon as the train stops. Yeah. No, we I knew about the concerts happening. I didn't know specifically they were every Friday, but we were down there on a Friday

J

Jeff Schaaf 32:02

there every Friday through September through the first through Labor Day right now. And the big headliner for the Solheim cup that will be here in September is what's the finding? So that's a little bit different. The normal Friday concerts are like 15 bucks to get in the quest of finding is like a VIP concert. And they're expecting 30,000 people down there for that event, which will be crazy. Yeah, I

H

Halie Morris 32:28

heard that they were booking up fast, like couple months ago.

J

Jeff Schaaf 32:32

Yeah. So yeah, that's booking up fast. We're expecting anywhere between 100 and 125,000 visitors into the region that weekend for the tournament, which will be, which will be great. I mean, we have not had an event like this in probably 15 or 20 years. So it'll be great. I heard this week that we are the first we think we're the first international sporting event hosted in the United States since COVID. Oh, wow. So that'll be great to see. Because the European ladies will be coming over to compete against the ladies from the US. And it'll be it'll be cool. It's gonna be fun.

H

Halie Morris 33:12

Oh, that's really cool. See, I knew the marathon classic last year, was one of the first two hosts host after everything shut down for the for COVID when they stopped all the tournament's and stuff. Yeah. Jared was telling us about that. So that's kind of like it's really cool to be leading the curve on those things, especially with I feel like we're doing well with cases and stuff in our region. Last time I checked. I think so. Yeah. So it just it feels like home again, after everything. And it feels really good to be back out there. It's cool. Like the concerts and stuff like that are really cool, especially like, I don't like the

super big ones because they're way too loud. For me, there's too much going on. So the small ones are like perfect, like yesterday, go down on a Friday night.

**J** Jeff Schaaf 33:59

It's just a great night, a couple of years ago, Diana Ross was on the waterfront. Like she's a legend. It was her 75th birthday that year. And so she was on tour for to celebrate. And I mean, talk about somebody who was a pioneer in her industry and to have someone like that, on the water and in downtown Toledo. Like, I went with my parents and it was standing room only. We were standing on the stairs because there weren't any seats to be had. But we had a great time and the crowd was really fun. And everybody had fun. And Diana Ross was fun. And it was just it was just a good night.

**H** Halie Morris 34:38

Yeah, like it's like we've talked about this entire time Toledo is got a lot going on. I mean, and it's not going to be like for like in New York. Yeah, there's always stuff going on. But are you getting it right? Or is it is it worth gluhwein? Are you going to be you know, packed in there not having fun?

**J** Jeff Schaaf 34:53

Yeah, when we're talking with our epic, Toledo professionals, we talk about What other city could you live in? That's our size or bigger, that you could send a note to a CEO or a president of the organization and have lunch with them the next week. Right? Like the network here, I always joke, it's two degrees of separation until you know, like, someone always knows someone. And that's a great thing for networking. It's a bad thing if you're trying to get away with anything. But it's great. Like, Archie, you're president and I went to high school to high school and grade school together. Like, that's how, that's how small the network is here in Toledo. Like, it's very easy to connect with someone, it's easy to get involved with a nonprofit and be on a board or be on a volunteer opportunity with and the CEO of Owens Corning could be standing next to you on that project. It's a simple, it's just a great community. And if you're in business, it's great for networking, if you're not in business, it's great for developing a social network as well.

**H** Halie Morris 36:06

That's one thing I learned a lot, of course, doing the podcast, I get to talk to a lot of really cool people. But the responsiveness of the community and the way people come together here, it's so different than, like anything else. There's no, well, I'm the CEO, I can, you know,



I can't interact with it. They're just part of the community, you know, and they happen to run a company Yeah, type of thing versus that being too big for them. She was basically,

J

Jeff Schaaf 36:33

yeah, it's funny, like, I run it. Well, I'm at the chamber. So I get to interact with a lot of those presidents and the companies, and a little bit of a regular basis, because they're on our board, they come to our events and things like that, you know, they're people just like we are. And it's great to have conversations with them. And they talk about concerns that they might have about the community, or they might be showing me an aspect of the community that I'm not familiar with with yet. And it's just, we've just got a great network and a great, great community.

H

Halie Morris 37:04

I was laughing, I went to inside the five in Sylvania with one of my co workers. And we were talking about how it started. And the guys who founded it, and everything like that. Took my sister to soccer that evening and went and ran into one of them with his dog. I was laughing as he came over to pet the dog, of course. Yeah. And I was like, Oh, do you ever get inside the five? And

J

Jeff Schaaf 37:24

if you're new to Toledo, go over to Wildwood and take your dog. Right, you'll meet all kinds of people because everybody loves the puppies.

H

Halie Morris 37:32

Oh, yeah. Interact with everybody. But it's funny, because you'll just be talking to someone. And the next thing you know, they're like, Oh, yeah. You know, instead fire around this company, you're like, oh, wow, that's a huge influence here. Like, you can say inside the five most people are going to know exactly what you're talking about, even if they've not been to it. And it's kind of cool. I'm going to go to epic. And there's all kinds of different events. So you can go to those. T town dash, which I mentioned before, we just mentioned because it popped up in somebody's memories. And one of our team members said that was the most fun event she's ever done. Oh, that's good. So it was just funny, cuz we were laughing about we practically ambushed a cop to get a picture from one of the scavenger events. And he had no idea what was going on. So there's course photographic proof. And then there was photographic proof, or like a picture that was like, Oh, yeah, it was about that one team that solar golf. Oh, yeah. I remember that year. Yeah. Yeah. So

there, it was just, it's fun. There's so many memories in that in here.

J

Jeff Schaaf 38:36

Yeah. And that that's our hope with our interns or with Epic, or with college students, as we're having conversations or with people that were driving around town when we're recruiting them and showing them around town is that we give them a good enough memory that when they leave, whether they decide to come back, they at least have a good impression of Toledo. And they can speak positively about it. So we've traditionally been, I shouldn't say we, this community in the past was traditionally a group of naysayers who said this couldn't be done. Won't, it'll never happen. And in the last 25 or 30 years, I think that's changed dramatically. And we have a great group of young leaders in the community that have are working with some of the more seasoned leaders and we've done really cool things like hanceville. You know, years ago, people would have said, there's no way you could create a fun environment in downtown Toledo around the ballpark. And now we have hanceville and you've got multiple restaurants. You've got an outdoor venue park that has concerts there. You've got the downtown outdoor refreshment area, or the Dora that that we we affectionately call it around town and when the state of Ohio passed the downtown outdoor refreshment laws A few years ago, it was intended because I think Cincinnati was hosting the Major League Baseball All Star game. And Cleveland was hosting the Republican National Convention, I think one of the political parties, and that was the goal. And people started saying, well, Toledo is eligible to set one of those up, we should do it. And there were a couple naysayers at the beginning. And now here we are, we have two outdoor refreshment areas in downtown Toledo, where you can take your beverage, your alcoholic beverage, and a special cup out from the bar and wander around and enjoy it in the park or meet a friend at another bar restaurant. We have two in downtown Toledo, we have one in Sylvania. Now. I think mommies just went live in perrysburg just went live within the last few months. So it's more about community. And it's more about being able to be outside and enjoying your friends and your family in an environment that is still safe. Especially with COVID. Last year, it's nice to be able to take that those drinks outside and still continue to interact with each other. Yeah, we haven't had knock on wood. We haven't had any problems with that. I think our door was the first in the state of Ohio to go official. Wow. And we were kind of the guinea pig for that. So we led the chamber was highly involved in that from an advocacy and and legislative perspective. And so it's great that we were the leader on that in the state of Ohio and people can people can look to us as the experts on that, if they're trying to set one up in their own community,

H

Halie Morris 41:34

again, like we did where I got to experience a lot for the Teton dash. And then I've been down to henslowe quite a few times. So I feel like we do it really well. The one in Sylvania was really enjoyable when our farmers market was still right there. And now inside the five is expanding, and there's a lot of stuff, they still hold festivals right there. And then the farmers market is just right down the street at the school. So it's really convenient.

J

Jeff Schaaf 42:02

Yeah. And it's, it's like, it's just one of those things that you don't really think, oh, we should have this. And then when you have that, it's like oh, yeah, this is pretty nice. Why do we have a weird rule that said, we couldn't do that before. So it's kind of nice. And it's again, it's another attraction item that you can talk to somebody from another state or another city who might not have something like that, or they may have experienced it. I think the big place that used to have it was Savannah, Georgia. And everybody's like, do you know you can go into a restaurant and grab a drink and walk out and walk down the street and go to another, it feels relaxing? Savannah, it does feel where it's Vegas is the other big place. But I mean, everything is available in Vegas, and we're never going to be a guest. But it's just kind of cool to be able to talk about and say, in our warehouse district, which is a historic district that people have taken the warehouses and refurbish them and turn them into businesses and restaurants and bars. This is another element of that. And so, again, like I said, talent attraction, it's important to be able to showcase cool and unique things that make Toledo you know, stand out amongst other cities.

H

Halie Morris 43:13

I feel like now would be a really great time to get in. Because we're, I mean, we can only build so many houses. It's so much, right. But the one thing I was laughing about is that same night, I think it was the night that there was a concert going on. There was no hotels anywhere. They were all full, because we had somebody who I had a friend or a friend of a friend and from Hong Kong In Hong Kong for eight years, she loves to come back home and visit. And somebody came with her. And he was like, I can't find a hotel anywhere from like here to bg. Yeah, even and there was no

J

Jeff Schaaf 43:50

way you have you had the marathon classic. There's cheer tournament, there's a cheer tournament. There's always a some sort of a soccer tournament around here, kids soccer or baseball tournaments. And you have a couple hotels that are in transition right now that are remodeling. So that has taken a couple 100 rooms off the market, which really shouldn't affect us. I mean, we've got I don't remember how many beds we have in

Northwest Ohio destination Toledo. It was our Convention and Visitors Bureau would be able to give us that number, I'm sure but yeah, it's just it's interesting to see how many people are actually coming in and staying in the summertime for a variety of different reasons. I think we have posted the national gymnastics championships a couple years ago for the YMCA type organizations. There's they did it like five or six years in a row where it was like the national Jehovah's Witness conference was here and they were here for six weekends in a row. So it was great like downtown hotels will be booked because everything was at the Seagate Convention Center. And you would just see these like hundreds of people walking To the Seagate center in the middle of the day, which is unusual, because usually the events there in the evening, you're like, What are you here for? Like, oh, we're here for the Jehovah's Witness cause conference, you're like, oh, welcome, have you done this? And they start asking you questions about where should we do this? Or where should we do that. And it's just like, that's the cool stuff that a lot of people don't get to experience if they're working a normal nine to five job, and not out and about like we are with the chamber in downtown. So

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Halie Morris 45:27

I've learned though, that there's so many things for people who are working a nine to five to get out and do. Because, like you said, there's a there's a mix of people who are making these things happen. There's different generations, different types of individuals. And it just feels like especially post COVID. As we move forward, people are so eager to get out there. And there's a new spin on what we're doing. Oh, yeah, for sure.

J

Jeff Schaaf 45:51

There's definitely a thirst for being around people again. And it's, I kind of said, when we started to come back, it was like, meeting my friends all over again. Because you have this network of your work friends, right that you go to lunch with or that you were at common events with. And you haven't seen them for a year. And so when you get together, it's like old friends. And we were at an event earlier this week over at the new Metro park in the marina district, and everybody was there. And we were all fired up, because we were talking about the Solheim cup and what how it's going to be great for the community. But afterwards, there were a group of us that we've interacted quite a bit over the last few years. And we haven't seen each other in a while that was the first time that we may have seen each other in person. So we were just kind of hanging out. It was a beautiful night, we were enjoying the scenery we were enjoying, there's food and there was you know, it's just a little bit of catching up with everybody and seeing like how that can be bad. It's been over a year since I've seen you. And when you're there together, it just is. It's awesome. It's a great. It just showcases that community again.

H

Halie Morris 46:57

Well, I have a lot of like you said a lot of friends and reconnecting with even ones that I've known since high school on. It's just, we haven't talked. Yeah, we're busy. A lot of us graduated before during COVID. And so, or I had a friend who just graduated. And she works at Duke now, which is crazy, super talented friends. By the way. I have to brag about him. But it's funny because I'll be like trying to hang out with somebody and I've got three other people were texting me like, oh, when are we actually gonna go swimming or what I call pool at my house. Everybody wants to go swimming Go figure. Yeah. But so many people that like want to hang out now because we hang out. And yeah. And it's refreshing when you finally can find time. Yeah. There's that I and then I have another friend I just met, we started chatting during COVID on social media became friends. Then once things got safe, we did a trip down to Columbus together and we start hanging out all the time. I volunteered with her at the Crosby art festival. She's been volunteering there since she was like 12 or 13. Cool. Everybody knows her this whole, like all these people that come together every year for this or they they volunteer for similar events. And then there's all these booths from all over the country. All these people come in to sell their art and things like that. It was really cool.

J

Jeff Schaaf 48:19

Yeah, so we have arts community is awesome. It's so strong, whether it's the Arts Festival, Toledo Museum of Art, or the Arts Commission, or the ballet, the symphony, I mean, you name it, like, it's things that I don't take advantage of on a regular basis. But it's great that we have those here for the people who do and for people who are interested in that if we're looking to recruit to the region as well. I mean, we've got such a great. Like, I call it a toolkit that we use, but we've got so many assets in our community that you can just kind of it's almost like a deck of cards, right? Like you can say, Oh, well, if you want all the hearts, here's all the hearts if you want all of the spades, here's all the spades and you can like do different things to different people, depending on what they're looking for. And it's great to be able to have that and not have to rely on just one thing. Right? So we kind of have a little bit of everything and and we should be able to to appease anybody's appetite.

H

Halie Morris 49:25

No, it's really cool. There are a lot of like subcultures and sub communities and then everybody feeds back into the big one. Yeah, so it's it's really cool because I my cousin's a ballerina. So I know about the ballet. I've seen the Nutcracker probably more than most people in the city. second longest running of the Nutcracker in the world. I see. I didn't know that. Yeah. Why I feel like Toledo is starting to establish a trend in this conversation

of being one of the leaders in different many different things. Yeah,

**J** Jeff Schaaf 49:55

I think we've been doing the Nutcracker like second only to Moscow maybe it's something like 80 years or in a row, 85 years, something crazy like that. It might be like 80 because I want to say it was 75. They did their Diamond Jubilee when I first started about eight years ago. So

**H** Halie Morris 50:17

I, vaguely we're going to go on for like the last 10 years, every single year, I go to at least one performance. My cousin's been Clara now. And she's been in all these different roles. Now she's worked into more complex roles. And the only time I didn't get to see it was because of COVID. But they still did it remotely dead. Yes, I did watch it that way. But yeah, it was sad. We were it was so close to being hosted in person and just was not, was not quite there yet. I've seen them do a smaller performance since then, that my cousin was in with like, kids stories were told. Sure. So that was cool. I get to see every year how the costumes change, and trying to work my way onto the stage for one of the one of the dancing partners, the beginning.

**J** Jeff Schaaf 51:04

Oh, yeah.

**H** Halie Morris 51:05

My grandma knows everybody, of course. So it's no, it's really cool. I think it took me by surprise how much Toledo did become my home after, you know, like, now I look back this year. And I was like, Oh, I couldn't see myself living in too many other places. Not Not long term.

**J** Jeff Schaaf 51:24

Yeah, we joke at the chamber that for as hard as it is to recruit to the region. And that's everybody has issues recruiting to their region, if they're not, if somebody doesn't have a tie to it, it's even harder to get people to leave. So we have a lot of people who said, I moved here 20 years ago, and I don't ever want to leave. And so those are the things that we've we just need more people to come in and do that. And so we're really big on the give us a give us another look, and maybe look a little deeper than what you think you

know about Toledo. We aren't, we aren't Nashville. But we also don't have some of the growing problems that Nashville has. And we aren't, you know, little Podunk USA, either. We're we're a good mid size market, where we have a lot of things to offer. And we've got some good growth potential. And we're hoping that we'll continue that trend.

H

Halie Morris 52:25

Yeah, I'm excited. Alright, so as far as our listeners go, or whether they're Toledo based or not, is there anything that you would like to leave them with?

J

Jeff Schaaf 52:38

Yeah, I would say like, if you're looking to recruit, make sure that you partner with your local Chamber of Commerce. That's one of the things that we find more often than not, as someone is out recruiting, they are taking advantage of the resources or the relationships that we have, whether it be with Career Services at the universities, make sure that you're connected there. And if you're not your chamber of commerce should know who those people are, if you are selling the region, and you need help with that the Chamber of Commerce is there as well. And there may be other incentives, or there may be other things that are happening in your workforce development agencies that if you want to plug in the chamber is a great way to do that. We have over 2000 members in Northwest Ohio. So we're plugged in with a lot of different companies and with employers in the region. But it's not everybody. And and that means that there's opportunity out there still. But our role is to help you overcome challenges that you're facing as a business. And so we foster economic opportunity, and we help businesses overcome challenges every day. And so one of those challenges right now is recruiting and hiring in any way that we can help with that. We're there we're there for you. We've got a collective voice in some cases. So if it's a legislation thing, or if it's a regulation thing, we might be able to help change that if it's a networking opportunity, or if it's a pooling of resources, because we're all operating unlimited resources these days. 10 businesses getting together to tackle an issue or to recruit for a specific industry may have a bigger voice than individual. So we've started industry sector partnerships, where specific injuries industries are aligning together and saying, we're going to take a look at what we're hiring, and we're going to standardize the job description. We're going to standardize the requirements and education needed. And then we're all going to collectively go after a targeted group of people so that we can all get great candidates. It might be not not be a great candidate for your organization specifically, but it might be for mine. And we both met them at the same place or maybe they aren't the right fit right now. But maybe they are six months down the road. Rather than spinning our wheels individually. Let's all work collectively and To help solve this issue, so I would say yeah, just Chamber of Commerce, take advantage

of everything that we do. And all of the networking that we have,

H

Halie Morris 55:09

you guys are way bigger than I realized, too.

J

Jeff Schaaf 55:12

I've learned we are there's a couple different levels of chambers of commerce, you have like your local community Chamber of Commerce, that they do a lot of the events and have more networking, they might have a monthly meeting luncheon that you can go to, and as a regional organization, so some of the other communities that have regional are like a Charleston or an Indianapolis or Boise has a regional, those regional organizations, it's not so much about a monthly luncheon as it is some of the bigger issues that businesses are just facing in general. So right now, talent is probably the biggest issue that anyone's having. It could be regulation, it could be the other big issue in the Regional Chamber. market right now is diversity, equity and inclusion. So leading that charge, not necessarily in your entire community, but making sure that the business community is plugged into what's happening with dei issues and initiatives. So yeah, we're here. We're here and we're ready for the call. And we offer a variety of services. But talent is my expertise. From my chamber perspective.

H

Halie Morris 56:24

I really appreciate you breaking down not just what your role is, and all the really great things that you do, I mean, quite frankly, but also just talking more in depth about what the Toledo chamber does, what a chamber can do, and the different aspects of it, because I've started to learn or break down more than I think I got to learn more about my own community through this conversation. But as far as like our podcast, we want to connect locally, we want to help those smaller midsize businesses learn how they can do the same thing Connect locally, how they can utilize a chamber to grow, to strengthen their business, to have that like two way connection with our community. So it's not just, you know, they know about it, but the community knows about them that can they can utilize that relationship to Yeah, that's what we're here for. Right. Well, thank you for joining us, Jeff. Yeah, thank you. And then thank you everyone for tuning in. We will see you next month. I do have a blog post I'll be writing for this. And a full transcription will provide contact information for Jeff and his team and you can check us out on our website.