

New President Of Delray Beach Chamber Of Commerce

Jeb Conrad is a chamber of commerce kind of guy. Not only does he enjoy the challenges that come along with the job, but he is quite adept at all sides in this triangle of city engagement.

“I have the experience and knowledge of what works, what doesn't work and what may not have been tried.”

He has worked at four different chambers of commerce and gets excited about being a part of the businesses and local communities. “We have the opportunity to perfect, change and/or drive initiatives as business collaborators. I have served as a voice in that group in all different circumstances,” said the Indianapolis native. You bet he has.

Conrad was the President and CEO of the Bloomington, Indiana Chamber of Commerce and the President and CEO of the Kokomo Economic Development Alliance. He also worked for the Indianapolis Economic Development and was Director of Community and Government Affairs for Simon Property Group (the largest Mall Developers).

To say that Conrad is a people person would be like saying the sun comes up in the morning. “What makes Jeb so special is that he is always positive and working to help people be successful in business and in life. He's dedicated to building the community anywhere he has been involved and is politically savvy in working to build consensus before making decisions that affect the community at large,” said Steve Bryant, Executive Director of Ivy Tech Community College.

Conrad's people skills were honed before he even knew what the word honed was. His father Larry was the Secretary of State of Indiana from 1970 to 1978 and was not only his first mentor, but an example of good citizenship and leadership. “My father was very gregarious, he knew everyone in a room and made everyone feel comfortable. He became one of the transformational leaders in Indianapolis,” said Conrad.

Though it sounds glamorous to be the son of a secretary of state, Conrad mentions this fact as a footnote during his interview. It was not as exciting to an eleven-year-old. “When I was a kid I wanted to play football with my friends and I had to go to fundraisers and political events with my family (that includes a sister and two brothers).

But this rarified world of politics did have an everlasting effect on young Conrad even if it was by proxy. “In college I realized I had absorbed some of my father's communication and relationship skills that were helpful in life and in school.”

Conrad was involved in the Indiana University Inter-fraternity Council and was an officer of his fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha. The exemplary leadership skills he saw early in life helped shape Conrad's future in many ways.

He has been described as an even-tempered, calm collaborator who has the smarts and know-how to get the job done. As the Director of Government Affairs for Simon Property Group, Conrad worked with the local community to deal with issues during mall construction. There were traffic components as well as real estate, finance and inner-office politics. Conrad worked for Simon Property Group for seven years and was proactive and amendable for both the private and public sectors.

According to those who know him, Conrad is always up for any task. “One of Jeb's strongest attributes is his ability to bring people together from various constituencies and perspectives, keeping the dialogue positive and moving forward,” said Scott Fuson, Retired Corporate Vice President Marketing and Sales for Dow Corning Corp.

Marketing is another of Conrad's strong suits. In Indianapolis he worked with the chamber of commerce business leaders to come up with economic development programs and solutions for economic growth. They also addressed real estate needs, financial incentives and workforce needs related to facilitate growth in the community.

“Even though I am a face from the outside I have the experience and knowledge of what works, what doesn't work and what may not have been tried. I have a fresh set of eyes coming from the outside.”

His outside status will not last for long. Conrad's short-term goal is to meet with 100 members of the chamber in 100 days. “I want to get feedback from members and get a feel for the community I represent. I also want to be able to give a detailed plan alongside the big picture.”

He does however have an initial impression of our town – and it's positive all the way. Staying positive and not shooting from the hip are some of Conrad's signature personality traits.

One of his mentors – who taught him an important life lesson – is Jim Morris, President of the Lilly Endowment Fund for community giving Indiana and CEO of the NBA Pacers.

“From Jim I learned about community pride and engagement. I also learned about being a servant and a leader, which is important – not just to the community, but to you as a person. If you don't learn this, you are missing out in life.”

From Herb Simon, CEO of Simon Property Group, he learned you can be successful in business and still be a compassionate human being. “Herb was the CEO of the largest Mall Developer in the world and he was the nicest guy. He listened to me and when I was only in my 20s, it taught me that my thoughts were valuable.”

Now that Conrad is a few decades past his 20s his thoughts are still considered to be valuable to those around him.

And because of that the citizens and businesses of Delray Beach should be very happy.

“I am fortunate to know Jeb Conrad professionally and as a friend. His concern for people's well-being has always stood out. His passion to help people extends to his personal and work life. He is widely respected in the economic development world and is constantly working to empower and educate businesses he works with. Jeb forges connections and follows through to help businesses and communities grow,” said the Mayor of Kokomo, Greg Goodnight.

Welcome to Delray Beach, Jeb Conrad.

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