



The Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Massachusetts Avenue and other amenities are attractive to (from left), Brad Beutler, Molly Sender, Alex Miser, Ashley Herring and other young professionals.

CAREER STARTERS

Discovering and Embracing Indianapolis

By Alyssa DelPrete

College graduation is a time for young adults to not only decide *what* career path to pursue, but *where* to begin establishing roots.

Many are discovering that Indianapolis is brimming with opportunities.

“I’m truly surprised at how much I love Indy,” shares Molly Sender, associate community manager at Courseload at the time of this interview (she has since moved on to KSM Consulting). “I feel like Midwesterners are so humble and don’t want to brag about Indy, but I really think the city is this little treasure and we shouldn’t be so hesitant to brag about it.”

BizVoice[®] talked with Sender and four others who received the prestigious Orr Fellowship, a selective two-year program offering graduates paid positions at high-growth companies in the Indianapolis

area along with peer and professional networking. We also caught up with a pair of winners from the 2012 Indiana INTERNnet IMPACT awards.

Opportunities abound

Sender, originally from Central Illinois, came to Indiana to attend DePauw University.

"I joined the fellowship thinking I would move to a bunch of cities afterward, but there were just so many different opportunities afforded to me in Indy," she confesses. "It's just so easy to become part of the fabric of this city. It's pretty incredible for a 24-year-old to say, 'I'm part of this city and getting involved.'"

Sender is not alone in her enthusiasm.

"It didn't take long for me to know I wanted to stay in Indiana," asserts Brad Beutler, another recent Orr alum whose hometown is West Lafayette. "As a young professional, it's easy to get connected in the local tech and business community in Indy. It's a welcoming atmosphere. If there's a business leader in Indy, that person's just a phone call away for you to meet and pick their brain."

Entering the working world can be intimidating, but the two former interns of the year have embraced the networking capabilities the city has to offer.

"Someone described Indy to me as the intersection between access and opportunity," states Alex Miser, now communications coordinator of the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development. "The city offers a circle of people small enough to be involved with you."

According to Ashley Herring, current project associate at Deloitte Consulting, "Indy is a large city with a small feel and has opportunities for young professionals to make an impact. That's rare for a city this size."

An emerging city

Bo Dietrick, a video producer in the marketing department at Salesforce ExactTarget Marketing Cloud, completed his Orr Fellowship in May 2012. He has lived in Indianapolis his entire life, and while he cites proximity to family as a reason for staying in the city, he is quick to note that it is a "bonus" but not the main motive. "The past five or six years have been special for Indy," he explains. "It has a lot going for itself now. It's transforming from what it used to be to become a hopping downtown."

Dietrick mentions all the events and attractions that the city has to offer. From professional sports to concerts, people are

coming to Indianapolis for a number of reasons.

Sender echoes Dietrick's enthusiasm for the capital city's future. "There's an attitude that Indy will succeed. ... Everyone is willing to pitch in to make the city better, and I want to be part of that."

Herring, who lived in South Bend before coming to Indianapolis to attend Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, also expresses a desire to be part of the city's success.

"The potential and growth of the city is very attractive to me," she maintains. "I've also seen the global presence that we're trying to bring for the city and for young professionals to live here. I've gotten really involved in those efforts, and they've encouraged me to invest in Indy." She adds that Deloitte's growing impact in Indiana is another key factor influencing her to stay.

"We're all (coming) together to put Indy on the map," Beutler says. "Major cities like Chicago and New York have already formed what their city's going to be. But Indy has yet to be put on the map, so there's an opportunity to be part of that."

Dietrick attributes part of the city's progression to the development of different neighborhoods.

"It used to just be downtown and then the suburbs. But now, for instance, I can live in Broad Ripple, which feels like a natural step from college, and then go downtown and work or meet with businesspeople. Neighborhoods give people more opportunity to feel comfortable where they live but then work where they want."

Miser, whose roots are also in Indianapolis, makes similar claims. "There are so many cool distinct areas and cultural districts in Indy."

But Dietrick is also quick to address a common perception that Indianapolis is an attractive place to live because of its affordability. "I don't think that's the reason people stay. If you want to live in a bigger city like Chicago that's more expensive, you make other sacrifices, like not having a car. ... It's not the money. It's the community and the lifestyle."

Branching out

The reality, however, is that some native Hoosiers and those transplanted here for school or work do move on.

Van Hoang, director of operations at SoapBox Consulting in Washington, D.C., grew up in Columbus, Indiana. Another Orr Fellow, she spent her first two post-graduation years in Indianapolis.

"As much as I've enjoyed all my time in Indiana, I really wanted to challenge myself and move out on my own and live in a new place," Hoang explains.

She describes her experience living and working in Indianapolis as positive and valuable, but "personal motivation" and her passion for socially-conscious businesses drew her to Washington. "When I was networking in Indy and looking at different opportunities in Indiana, many of the opportunities I saw were purely tech companies or marketing companies. They didn't have a social aim or, if they did, they were non-profits."

Hoang concedes that there may be more Indiana prospects than what she found. "(But) opportunities in bigger cities were more available to me. And I didn't feel that I was in a place in my life where I could start my own venture."

When she found SoapBox, she recognized a chance to work for an organization that meets her need for a career with a deeper purpose. SoapBox dedicates a portion of its proceeds to a charity or the community. "I love working at SoapBox and having that reason to go to work."

She adds, "Washington, D.C. is a great city for young people."

Melissa Jackson, another departee, is still employed with the Hoosier company she worked for during her fellowship. Meeting her request to return to her home state of New Jersey, Teradata allows her to work remotely. She is thankful for the company's growing global presence and the ability to perform her duties as marketing program manager from home.

"I wanted to get closer to family, and I wanted to get back to the beach," Jackson admits with a chuckle. "And get back to a place where people can understand my accent!"

However, family ties were not the only reason she felt compelled to return to the East Coast. "There's more of a metropolis of big cities on the East Coast. In Indy, there are a lot of opportunities in the tech space. But on the East Coast, there are more opportunities in the industries I'm interested in: marketing and finance."

But Jackson notes the difficulty of her decision to leave the Hoosier state. "I really loved my six years in Indiana," she states. "If you could transport my family to Indiana, I would be there in a second. I see a lot of potential in the city (Indianapolis)."

She concludes, "Who knows, I might be back someday!"

RESOURCES: Ashley Herring, Deloitte Consulting | Alex Miser, Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development | Brad Beutler, hc1.com | Bo Dietrick, Salesforce ExactTarget Marketing Cloud | Molly Sender, KSM Consulting | Van Hoang, SoapBox Consulting | Melissa Jackson, Teradata