

Peers offer sage advice to incoming manager

When **Rashad Young** moves from Dayton, Ohio, next month to begin his tenure as Greensboro's new city manager, there will be no shortage of folks eager to assist with his transition and learning curve, from council members to staff to any number of community leaders.

But on the periphery, just beyond the city limits, are two men with whom Young shares much in common, who have already offered their congratulations and who stand ready to assist and support him in ways unique to their shared fraternity. Those men? The city managers in the other two-thirds of the Triad's largest cities — **Strib Boynton** in High Point and **Lee Garrity** in Winston-Salem.

"This is a very small group (of metro city managers in North Carolina) and a job like few others," says Garrity, who ascended to his position three years ago after 16 years in other jobs with the city. "We have this large, complex organization to run with police and fire departments and professional staff, and we answer to a group of elected officials. The cities are different, but the demands and pressures are the same."

"When you become a city manager, you have an instant bond with other managers."

That instant bond is a somewhat recent phenomenon in North Carolina, at least for new city managers coming in from out of state. And it should serve Young well, says Boynton, who took over in High Point in 1997 after a dozen years as manager in Fort Smith, Ark.

"I have a lot of empathy for what Rashad is going to experience," Boynton says. "Twelve years ago when I came to High Point, I was one of the first, if not the first, managers recruited from outside the state to a large city. North Carolina municipalities had a long history of promoting exclusively from within."

For a while, that caused no small amount of friction for Boynton among his statewide peers. At times, he says, he felt shunned, wordlessly accused of robbing other managers of a promotion opportunity that they believed should've been theirs by virtue of their residency.

"When I came here, I was the new kid from outside North Carolina, and it wasn't supposed to be that way," Boynton says. "But I've gotten a kick out of how things have changed. Many of those who were bitter have retired or moved on. And now we have quite a few managers from out of state. Rashad won't have to deal with any of that. Instead, what he will find



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Young



Garrity

is a tight-knit, strong group of managers who he can trust and confide in."

To illustrate his point, Boynton notes that **Tom Bonfield**, the manager in Durham, came from Pensacola, Fla.; **Russ Allen** in Raleigh came from Rock Hill, S.C.; **Sterling Cheatham** in Wilmington came from Norfolk, Va.; and **Gary Jackson** in Asheville came from Fort Worth, Texas.

But Young won't have to look that far for support — or advice.

"One of the first things I want to tell him is that while Winston-Salem and Greensboro are different cities," Garrity says, "we have to start working together more often because the region is growing together and boundary lines are blurring. We have to start working together as one metro area. To a certain degree, that's under way, but we can do a lot more."

Boynton maintains that in some critical areas, intergovernmental cooperation is doing fine and just needs continued support. When it comes to transportation and transit planning, the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation is a model for regional success. And "utilities are not really an issue for any of us" when it comes to sharing water and managing waste water.

Boynton says High Point has had an initiative to bring down violent crime, which has been working, and members of the Greensboro and Winston-Salem police departments have been part of the planning team. That model for idea-sharing should continue, he says.

Points well taken, Garrity says. But a looming topic that the three cities and their managers will have to get together on sooner or later is solid waste management — landfills. "The costs are so big," he says, "it just makes sense to do it in volume."

Boynton says he expects Young will be reaching out for help and explanations when coping with the reality of North Carolina as a so-called Dillon Rule state, whereby so many municipal decisions (tax rates, annexation, certain services) must first receive approval from the state legislature before they can be implemented. Ohio does not have Dillon Rule.

"That's a huge cultural change that we can help him with," Boynton says.

Mostly, though, Boynton and Garrity make it clear that they are eager to welcome a new colleague who should be toting new ideas and new perspectives. Young has already been invited, at his earliest convenience, for an informal welcome-to-the-Triad lunch with all the city managers in the region.

"I think Rashad can learn a lot from us, and I think we can also learn from him," Boynton says. "He will challenge our thoughts and conventional wisdom, and that's good for all of us."

A good cause



Times are tough for business, but we hear lots of reports of companies large and small continuing to step up during the recession. One example took place recently at **The Village at North Elm**, an upscale **Koury Corp.** shopping center.

Several of the small businesses in the Village engaged in a little friendly competition to collect food on behalf of the **Second Harvest Food Bank**, which has been struggling to keep up with skyrocketing hunger during the recession. It started with **Susan Millikan**, owner of Buff Natural Nail Bar, who started out trying on her own to collect 400 pounds of food.

But by the time neighboring businesses including Fitness Together and Contemporary Lady joined in on the effort, with help from other tenants and Koury, the group was able to collect about 3,000 pounds of food for Second Harvest in just four weeks.

It is with no chagrin that David Young of Fitness Together admits to us that Buff beat his total by about 100 pounds of food.

"Can you believe that? A nail bar beating a fitness studio in a competition?" Young kids. "But it's great to see the merchants, employees, clients and developer all pull together for such a worthy cause."

Learning curve

Contractors are lining up to bid on government-funded building projects these days, since so many other types of opportunities have disappeared. The **Goler Community Development Corp.** in Winston-Salem has an event planned that could help some companies break through the crowd.

The "Breaking Barriers, Building Businesses" symposium will take place from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sept. 17 at the Anderson Conference Center at 601 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

The conference will focus on topics such as bidding on publicly funded projects, green construction and collaboration between majority- and minority-owned firms. Registration is open to all firms, with the fee of \$100 covering up to four attendees.

Registration information is online at www.golercdc.org.

Saving a service

When the U.S. **Postal Service** announced last week that a downtown Winston-Salem post office was targeted for closure, the **Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership** sprung to action.

The partnership says there are more than 20,000 workers and 38,000 residents who live within a 2-mile radius of the post office, on the corner of Town Run Lane and Second Street.

"The federal government should support services within downtown areas rather than removing services," the partnership said in an e-mail alert to supporters.

They've also started an online petition to keep the post office open. It's available at the partnership's Web site, www.dwsp.org.

Healthy account

Winston-Salem design and communications agency **M Creative** landed a major out-of-state client recently.

The Bon Secours Richmond Foundation, a philanthropic offshoot of a major health system in Richmond, Va., signed M Creative to produce materials for a \$220 million fundraising initiative.

"We don't have a lot of long-distance clients," says **Don Mikush**, principal at M Creative, an eight-employee firm that focuses on education and health care. "This market gets saturated with creative folks, and when you have a niche like ours, it gets challenging, so we've had to look further and further for clients."

Mikush says he's also had to seek out-of-state clients because he's done work for Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center for about 10 years, and as Baptist's competitors buy up hospitals, the list of health care clients he can work for shrinks.

"We know this will be an ongoing project," Mikush says. "We will develop materials for areas of care that their community will support."

Acting out

A Los Angeles-based acting studio is expanding its North Carolina presence into downtown Greensboro.

J.D. Lewis, owner of The Actors Lab, will teach a scene study and cold reading class each Monday at the Broach Theatre at 520 S. Elm St. The cost is \$200 per month.

The Actors Lab began in L.A. in 1990. Lewis opened a Charlotte studio in 2007 and has worked with actors who have been nominated for or won Oscars, Emmys, Tonys, SAG awards and Golden Globes.

Classes will also focus on business aspects of pursuing an acting career. More information is available by e-mailing theactorslab@aol.com.

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His business reports can be heard Fridays on WFMY-News2 at 6:35 a.m. and WFDD-88.5 FM at 7:35 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.