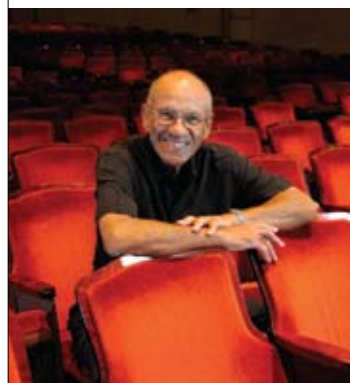


BY JOHN SCHWARB AND JOHN WALKER

Voices of Indy



Tom Ridley

Docent, Madame Walker Theatre Center

Tom Ridley has seen all the changes on Indiana Avenue in his 86 years.

From the 1920s to the 1950s, “The Avenue” was the heart of African-

American life in Indianapolis. Today the street still beats at the restored Madame Walker Theatre Center. Named for its founder, Madam C.J. Walker, the nation’s first self-made woman millionaire, the center features music, dance, comedy, and a multicultural youth arts program.

Ridley, born just four blocks away, leads tours of the center. “It’s the result of the entrepreneurship of a lady who should be more recognized in history,” he says. “This theatre is the result of her working as hard as she did — she said we must work hard to help people.” — JW

Kathie DeVoe

President and CEO, Gilchrist & Soames

When Kathie DeVoe moved to Indianapolis in 2003, she wasn’t sure what to expect. But soon the mother of two young children, now 2 and 4, was starting a list of favorite Indy outings: the Children’s Museum, the Conner Prairie living history museum, the Indianapolis Art Center for art classes, and the



Monon Trail.

“It’s really a fabulous, terrific city, not only from a business standpoint, but it’s amazingly kid-friendly,” says DeVoe, president and CEO of the company that makes fine toiletries for luxury hotels and resorts worldwide. “Most cities talk about what they want to be, but in Indianapolis they do what they say.” — JW



Greg Shaheen

Senior Vice President, Basketball and Business Strategies, NCAA

You probably don’t know Greg Shaheen, but you know his work if you pore over an NCAA tournament bracket every March. The three-week national obsession dubbed “March Madness” is his full-time job.

“Professional plate-spinning might be a more apt title at times,” says Shaheen, an Indiana native who spends 300 nights a year on the road in his “Groundhog Day world” that includes managing the NCAA men’s basketball tournament and the NIT.

Fortunately, the 2010 Final Four is a home game—just down the road from the NCAA headquarters at Lucas Oil Stadium. — JS

Larry Bird

President of Basketball Operations, Indiana Pacers

You’d think 13 Hall of Fame seasons with the Boston Celtics had earned Larry Bird the right to move to Florida for a life of golf and being “Larry Legend.” But retirement just didn’t suit the Indiana native.

Bird missed home-state basketball. He was a boyhood sensation more than 30 years ago in French Lick, two hours south of Indianapolis, then put Indiana State University on the map before turning pro. Today, Bird’s slam-dunk is working from the front office after a coaching stint that led the team to the NBA Finals.

“I couldn’t find the action when I retired from the game,” Bird says. “No better place than here. This is where I find my peace, in Indiana.” — JS



“I couldn’t find the action when I retired from the game. No better place than here. This is where I find my peace, in Indiana.”

—Larry Bird

PHOTOGRAPHY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) BY ROB BANAYOTE (2) AND COURTESY OF KATHIE DeVOE; OPPOSITE PAGE COURTESY OF INDIANA PACERS

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Mayor Greg Ballard (center in blue polo) at the Great Indy CleanUp

Greg Ballard

Mayor, City of Indianapolis

Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard has already accomplished the almost-impossible. In November 2007, the first-time political candidate stunned the city by defeating a two-term incumbent many thought unbeatable.

Since then Ballard has focused on achieving his campaign pledges. One of his efforts — making Indianapolis the nation’s “most livable big city” — includes several green initiatives. Completing the bicycle-friendly Indianapolis Cultural Trail, which will take cyclists through the city’s six cultural districts, is part of that plan.

After a 23-year career in the Marine Corps, the Indy native retired in 2001 as a lieutenant colonel. Despite traveling worldwide, Ballard has always called Indianapolis home.

“I could have lived anywhere but I just like the people here,” he says. “It’s a great place to raise a family. I go to a lot of conventions we have and they all say the same thing: ‘You’re the nicest people anywhere.’” — JW



Zach de Pue

Concertmaster, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

Zach De Pue exemplifies the young, urban lifestyle. Until recently, the 30-year-old violinist lived downtown within walking distance of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra’s Hilbert Circle Theatre, where he is concertmaster, a facilitator between the conductor and musicians.

De Pue also performs around the United States with his three violin-playing brothers as The De Pue Brothers and in a separate chamber music group, Time for Three. With that schedule, working in the heart of Indy makes relaxing easier, since his favorite hangouts are so close by. “I’m a regular over at Scotty’s Brewhouse,” he says. “I definitely love steaks, and downtown is a great place for steaks.”

When not playing classical music, De Pue loves to jam to bluegrass because of its vibe and energy. — JW



“I go to a lot of conventions we have and they all say the same thing: ‘You’re the nicest people anywhere.’”

—Mayor Greg Ballard

Allison Melangton

President and CEO, 2012 Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee

The clock is literally ticking in Allison Melangton’s office, counting down the days to February 5, 2012: Super Bowl XLVI at Lucas Oil Stadium. And kickoff is in less than 30 months — not much time when your job is merely winning over a worldwide audience.

But Melangton knows the drill, with more than 25 years of events management, including a stint at Indiana Sports Corporation, where she directed events including Olympic Trials, NCAA basketball championships, and Indy’s winning Super Bowl bid.

“This community does such a great job embracing every sporting event that’s here,” she says. “I really can’t wait to see how everything turns out.” — JS

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Scott Jones

Chairman and CEO, ChaCha

Say “cha-cha” and most folks think of the hot Latin American dance style. But not Scott Jones.

He was chairman and chief scientist at Boston Technology, creator of the voice-mail technology used by more than 1 billion people, among numerous other startups. And his latest innovation is ChaCha, a unique Internet search engine that links the get-it-now usefulness of mobile devices like cell phones to the vast database of the Web. Text a question such as “What’s the best steakhouse in Indianapolis?” to 242242 and get a response in minutes.

What’s unique: ChaCha connects users with real people — called “guides” — who produce on-demand answers via text messaging. And it’s free. Nielsen & Co. has ranked ChaCha the fastest-growing SMS (Short Message Service).

Jones, like ChaCha, is headquartered in Indianapolis, and wouldn’t have it any other way.

“It’s an ideal place to work and raise a family,” he says. “ChaCha’s an intense startup and here there’s no long commutes, no traffic jams, great schools. Work-life balance is important to us.” — JW

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