

# Ep.2.46 - Shawn Pomaville

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## SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, Shawn Pomaville-Size

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### **A** Announcer 00:01

Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.

### **E** Ed Clemente 00:29

Hello, I'm your host today Ed Clemente and we're fortunate to have a friend of mine as well as someone I've worked with quite a while Shawn Pomaville-Size, she's the Executive Director for Motor City's National Heritage Area. Welcome to the show Shawn.

### **S** Shawn Pomaville-Size 00:44

Thank you Ed, glad to be here.

### **E** Ed Clemente 00:46

And I should mention upfront that I'm on your board. And I was on the original board before you were even there way back. So I feel like this is a board I'm very familiar with. But I think, you know, like a lot of best kept secrets, I think this is why we want you on the podcast to show some of that unique interest in this organization, too. So let's start out first with you go to a party, and I'm sure this happens, people don't know what the National, Motor City's National Heritage Area is, what do you kind of tell them real quick?

S

**Shawn Pomaville-Size 01:18**

Well, the Motor Cities National Heritage Area tells the story of how Southeast and Central Michigan put the world on wheels, so to speak. So it is our mission to promote and preserve the very unique story that we have to tell in Michigan. That is specific to us and us only. And that leads me to say that we are a National Heritage Area. And National Heritage Areas are unique places that are recognized by the Federal Government. Literally, it takes an act of Congress to become a National Heritage Area. And they are places where the natural resources and the cultural resources all come together to to give a unique landscape that tells a certain story of importance to the nation's history. And so in our case, it's the history of how we put the world on wheels.

E

**Ed Clemente 02:16**

Yeah, and and I, you know, like I said I was in originally I think one of the founders of it, I guess we could easily say was Congressman Dingell, right?

S

**Shawn Pomaville-Size 02:26**

Well, it was Congressman Dingell, and Senator Carl Levin, who pushed the legislation through for us to become a National Heritage Area, right. And now we're one of 55. And you were on the original Board of Directors, and then all of a sudden you're back here now. And so we're very fortunate to have you Ed with all the expertise that you bring in the fun. And we've got a great board of directors, we've got, you know, a number of luminaries on there. We've got Dave Lorenz from Pure Michigan on there, Sandra Engle, she's our Vice Chair, and she is with UAW International Director of Communications. We have Mark Heppner as our chair, and Mark is the CEO and President of the Edsel and Ethel and Eleanor Ford House. And so yeah, what we do is, is this heritage area that tells the story is we work with a number of the assets in the area. And at one time, we counted them, there were 1100 assets involved in auto story, like museums, and labor organizations and archives and the factories and the auto collections and the events. All of those work together and we're sort of an umbrella organization to, to link them, to support them to help them grow. And as they tell the story of how our tinkerers became titans, how auto and labor helped build the middle class and transformed manufacturing worldwide. So it's a story that we use to advance the region, both culturally and economically.

E

**Ed Clemente 04:14**

Why don't you touch on the actual because there is physical boundaries, right?

S

**Shawn Pomaville-Size 04:18**

Sure. A National Heritage Area has boundaries, they get measured out, and they are on file with the Secretary of the Interior of the United States government. So it's 10,000 square miles and if you were to impose a clock face over a map of the state of Michigan, I won't use my hands so nobody can see me use the hand, but if you imagine a clock face at noon would be let's say Flint. And then as you keep going around two to three o'clock, you're in Warren,

Michigan, and as you go to six o'clock, you might be all the way to Dearborn. Nine O'Clock out west as far as Kalamazoo. So that's the picture everything in between there is part of the National Heritage Area. So I haven't mentioned it yet, but we are affiliated with the National Park Service. And so that is why those boundaries are out there, that is why they are in the Secretary of Interior's office. And so that is all that people like you on the board back in the beginning decided where those boundaries should be. And discussed who all has a story. So as you know, that includes Detroit, that includes Dearborn that includes Lansing, etc, everything in between even smaller towns like Wayne and Westland that have auto stories to tell, or preserve, etc. So that is 10,000 square miles and 16 counties.

**E** Ed Clemente 05:54

Yeah, in fact, my very first meeting where you accepted me back on the board, was that the Oldsmobile Museum or what is it the museum in Lansing, right?

**S** Shawn Pomaville-Size 06:04

R.E. Olds Museum? Yeah.

**E** Ed Clemente 06:06

And that's a fantiastic little, well, its not even little, it's pretty big actually. [Right.] It's right around the CAT route, you walk there from the Capitol.

**S** Shawn Pomaville-Size 06:13

You can easily and we've had legislators down there because, you know, we want them to know what an asset they have in the state. And we want Michiganders to be proud of the fact that they have a National Heritage Area, proud of the fact that it commemorates the auto story of the region, which is in so many people's DNA. And so you know, you don't toss a coin or a rock too far before you find somebody who has worked in auto industry in the room next to you. I myself had a summer job while I was in college, working at the Rouge Factory, building the Mustang 2 so, I mean, it's, it's just part of who we are here.

**E** Ed Clemente 06:55

You know, and I'm gonna ask you to digress with one anecdote. But we had the head of the National Parks here this summer.

**S** Shawn Pomaville-Size 07:03

Didn't we? Yes, yes, we had the brand new Director of the National Parks. And Chuck Sams is his name. He's the first Director of the National Parks in five years. And he's the first Native American Director of the National Park Service and he was in Detroit. And part of the reason for

choosing Detroit was so that he can show the presence of the National Park Service even in someplace as urban as the city of Detroit. He was also here to work with the State of Michigan, on some projects with electric cars, electrification of vehicles on the roads into the national parks in Michigan. So it was it was a wide ranging visit. Fortunately, he was also very well aware of National Heritage Areas and a big fan of them. They aren't an official program of the National Park Service, but rather we are each authorized at by somebody in Congress to be created. And we are funded by the National Park Service. So that's a really important factor to remember. And I wanted to point out some of the economic benefits of that that trickle down here in the state of Michigan. So for every \$1 of funding that we get from the National Park Service, we're returning at least \$5.50 in local funds. So we do that through our grant program. We sub grant out monies that we get from the National Park Service to one of these museums or archives, or that I mentioned before, and they have the opportunity to apply to us for grants for programs that are educational or tourism-oriented or even preservation oriented about auto and they in turn put a mach in and that's how we get to expand the program and leverage it.

E

Ed Clemente 09:09

Can you give one quick anecdote of that, like someone you might have done a grant with?

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 09:14

Oh sure, let's see who's a good grant. Let's see, Packard Proving Grounds, for example, out in Shelby Township, so we've worked with them on and off different grants over the different years to help preserve it. So it could be something like they have an Albert Kahn Gate House there, and we've helped them with some of the work they've done to restore tha. We've helped them with their exhibits about the arsenal of democracy for example. And they continue to do improvements to the roof, etc., but you find those Packard Proving Grounds types of places all over the National Heritage Area, large and small. It could be a preservation project at Henry Ford House, where we help them build interpretive signs. So visitors knew what they were looking at. We've worked with helping archives like the Walter Reuther Library, digitize some of their archives, things like that. Those are all examples of grants that we give.

E

Ed Clemente 10:22

Yeah, and I know there's quite a few from being on the board. But also I want to, I just want to jump back for one little thing. One thing when the when he (Director) came the, from the National Parks, he also when he did a meeting with MEDC, to sort of what you were alluding to, because he met with Trevor Pawl, and that was part of the electrification plan. And the other thing I thought was interesting, to me, the highlight is when he went and saw the Diego Rivera mural, at the DIA, [Right.] and I think he was impressed with that. Yeah.

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 10:56

I'm sure he was, who cannot be impressed by that. And so, you know, it's not only is it a National Historic Landmark, which is what is a designation from the National Park Service, but the DIA is in the National Heritage Area, as well. So there's just a very broad impact on our

culture from auto and auto history and UAW-related history that is now being used not only to help us have the vision and keep the vision and be proud of where we're from, but it also attracts tourists. And so we, you know, work really hard with our partners and I want to say we are a public private partnership, all the way. So we work with, as I said, MEDC. I mean, I'm sorry, Pure Michigan, well, which is part of MEDC and Dave Lorenz, on promoting our auto history, the Convention and Visitors Bureaus throughout this National Heritage Area we work closely with on projects that you know, we can use to help promote the area, bring more visitors in and help these museums to have greater traffic too. But I wanted to get back to Director Sams coming here, you know, not only did he have those, all of those meetings, but he had them at the Paquette Plant here in Detroit. And that was also someplace that is very impressive and very unique to our National Heritage Area. And something he totally enjoyed as you can see from the pictures, he got a ride around in a Model T afterwards. So here he is in his you know, Rangers hat and he's riding around in the Model T it was kind of iconic. But you know, the Paquette Plant is some another group that we've worked with over the years, this was the plant on Paquette Avenue, the Model T plant before the moving assembly line. So this was slated to be tore down, and it was in disarray. And people who love the Ford story in the Model T story got together and they they banded together and created their own nonprofit. Boy, they've been massively successful. They're still going they are still working on that building. We've helped them with that building, you know, some fire suppression systems and interpretive projects so people can see what was going on in the day. And there's a secret room on one of the floors where they met together and created the Model T. So there's, it's a jewel, it's you know, and there's lots of examples like that throughout the Heritage Area. And Director Sam's got to see it firsthand.

A

Announcer 12:04

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E

Ed Clemente 14:01

I had a couple of things I wanted to do to highlight is also on the board, we still have like not just museum people, we actually have automotive people too, right? You have different companies.

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 14:12

Yeah, thank you very much. Yes. So you know, actually the Heritage Area was founded by the National Park Service, but also the Big Three. Ford, GM, back then it was Daimler Chrysler, Stellantis now and so those were the founding members of what created the National Heritage Area. And we do tell the story of those companies, the American car companies and the UAW here, and that's called out specifically within within the legislation that created us. But since that time, because that was in 1998 by the way, that that legislation passed, but since that time, we've been fortunate to have great cooperation from those companies and and people from those companies be appointed to our board. So for instance, we have Bob Kreipke who's the Ford Motor Company Historian Emeritus. And Bob is our immediate past Chair. We have

Sabin Blake, who is a with General Motors, and we have Tom Rolands who is with Stellantis. So we we are fortunate to have their input as we continue to grow, as well as some corporate support too. DTE Mike Twomley, Chris Pokorski, different folks who are telling the story. People from some of the bigger museums like Cynthia Jones from The Henry Ford, people from Lansing are on the board. And, you know, we try and be representative of the entire board. So as much as we can we work to be inclusive that way.

E

Ed Clemente 16:04

A couple other things too, and these are, you know, you're not like our traditional business group, but a couple of things is I think you should mention the Highway Signs Project, because I'm sure a lot of people have seen these now. Why don't you talk a little bit how that started and then how many you have?

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 16:25

Well, so when Heritage Areas are formed, they do a management plan. And they prove to the National Park Service that we have an abundance of these history-related assets. And we give them our plans for how we're going to link them together and help them grow and thrive. And so one of the ways that we recently did that, came from that management plan and these are highway signs that say, Welcome to the Motor City's National Heritage Area, they have the NPS logo, which is very, very identifiable and they are placed in strategic spots around the interstates right now that are entrances and exit areas to the National Heritage Area. So you might see one driving up south on I 75 from Ohio, or you know, you might see one eastbound on I94 coming into Ypsilanti, or Detroit. So, and like I said, they're all over, entering Flint, and it's huge auto story,, entering Lansing and its huge auto story. So we've got 14 of those that we did in partnership with MDOT. And then MDOT went ahead and approved 20 more that we want to have closer in in the heritage area that are closer to the museums themselves. And we're in the process of raising money to fund those. But in the end, we'll have about 3435 of these signs. And you've seen them, they're the brown signs, they're rectangular, and they got a white outline. And they're very recognizable as something unique along the road, and they're very recognizable because they have the National Park Service logo on them.

E

Ed Clemente 18:18

Two more things. I think you might have touched on this, but there's also the Stewardship Council and then the Leadership Council.

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 18:29

Yes, and these are groups that serve to keep us connected over this large area that we cover, the Stewardship Groups are. And so this is our local voices and having a way to speak to us to help us understand what they're trying to get done in their communities, and leveraging what we can offer with what they see and have their dreams of preserving their auto heritage. For instance, Lansing has one, it's been very active over the years and has helped them develop project after project after preservation after new and exciting things going on in everything

from restrooms at the R.E. Olds Museum, which was a recent one which are handicap accessible, which I can't tell you how often museums tell us how important that is to their visitorship. To places in the park that commemorate the the Oldsmobile story. And so that's what a Stewardship Community is. The Leadership Council is the past leadership who are still available to give us advice. And these are people who've been in on there for a long time who have been usually there since the beginning. And we've recognized a lot of them with our annual Milestone Award, which is something we give out to people who have helped preserve the National Heritage Area for all of these years. So for example, the current chair of the Leadership Council is Debbie Dingell. And so back in the day, when she was working for GM Foundation, she was very instrumental in helping the Heritage Area get started. We have on there, William Ford, Jr. of the Ford Motor Company, who was always supportive of the National Heritage Area. Right, Rod Albert's the Director of the North American International Auto Show, well, DADA, whatever it is now. And you know, a few people like William R. Chapin, who's father was with the American Motor Company, American Motors back in the day.

E

Ed Clemente 21:01

Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, sure. Well, you know, and I, rather than get into too many projects, but this sort of ties into some of the future stuff, but why don't you mention, it's just kind of one of my favorite ones has been, it's the one you just did down in southwest Detroit by the bridge.

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 21:21

Oh, you mean the park, or do you mean, the heritage site?

E

Ed Clemente 21:24

The site for the Hunger March?

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 21:27

Oh, yeah. Yeah. So that's the Fourth Street Bridge Interpretive Park. And that is really a coalition project that we did with partners from the area to commemorate the 1932 Hunger March, when workers marched from Detroit to the Rouge Factory and, and demanded higher wages, demanded jobs, simply. It was a very significant moment in labor relations and laid the foundation for the United Auto Workers in 1935. And this bridge, which is on Fourth Street was about to be decommission, and it carried a marker for this march. Five people were killed in that March and so when they were decommissioning the bridge, they lost the marker. And so the community really got together and people right there on the Rouge River who have always worked together for whatever heritage there was in that regional, along with keeping the parks and the waterways clear, Friends of the Rouge River, etc. created this group called FRoG, the FRoG organization, which means the Fort Rouge Gateway, so it's the gateway of the river. University of Michigan Dearborn is a big partner in that as well. And so it was all about taking this plain piece of property that MDOT was done with, it was where they did the construction of the new bridge, and they donated it to this FRoG group. And the FRoG group went about raising money and bringing partnerships together to do something with that with that park. So it was

done over a period of years. If you go down to it, and I know you've been down to it, and it was funded by a lot of foundations in the area, the Ralph Wilson Foundation, the Fred and Barbara Erb Foundation, Ford Motor Company, Marathon Petroleum Company all put funds in they were the major funders. And then there are is there are a lot of beautiful interpretive signs that talk about the river and the importance of it. They talk about the industry and the importance of it and talk about the Hunger March and the importance of it. And it's got a stunning piece of sculpture in the middle that is made up of parts of the former bridge. It was a bascule bridge, you know, a lift bridge, and we've got gears from that bridge incorporated into the sculpture, symbolism of the cleanup of the river. It's just kind of a beautiful place to be and it's on the trail, the Iron Belle Trail. So if your listeners are familiar with that trail, it comes down from Ironwood in the Upper Peninsula. It's both a walking and a bike trail, I believe and it comes all the way down straight down the middle of the Mitten and then it veers east towards Belle Isle. So that's the Iron Belle Trail and where it veers east is where this park is, the Fourth Street Bridge Park.

E

Ed Clemente 24:57

Yeah, I've taken a few people there because I always find it interesting when they're from out of town or even international guests. And so your last two questions, and what just short sort of career advice would you give your 17 year old self? [My 17 year old self?] Because you've had a lot of jobs I know, so I just want to make sure what you would tell yourself.

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 25:19

Um, you know, when you know what you want to do with your life, you know, pursue it with gusto. And that's what I would tell my 17 year old self. And I was able to, I'm a graduate of Eastern Michigan University, with a degree in speech and communications and I attended on an acting scholarship. So I would say that I would tell my 17 year old self, go to New York City and give it a try girl. But other than that, you know, today I might tell somebody else, a young person, I had a big chunk of my career was in Nevada as the Director of the Governor's Commission on AmeriCorps and National Service. And I would say to young people these days, if you're not sure what you want to do when you get out of high school, take some time and explore service to your community through an AmeriCorps program. You volunteer, but you get paid a minimum daily allowance to do the work there and the service there. And that allows you to explore different careers and different opportunities, and to actually see what the nonprofit world is like, human services, education environment, and what you can do to help your community, that's what I would say to the young.

E

Ed Clemente 26:47

No, no, it's all solid. I know that. You know, giving beyond to your community is always important for a lot of stuff I know I've seen it in the legislature. The last thing you get to pick one spot, what is your favorite spot in Michigan? It doesn't have to be automotive.

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 27:05

Oh, my favorite spot? Well, I just got introduced to Petoskey, Michigan. So it was so charming



Oh, my favorite spot. Well, I just got introduced to Petoskey, Michigan. So it was so charming and so relaxing and very beautiful. So I can say that's my new go to place, Petoskey.

E

Ed Clemente 27:21

Yeah. Well, alright, thanks again. We had Shawn Pomaville-Size, she's the Executive Director of Motor City's National Heritage Area. Hey, thanks again Shawn, you did great and appreciate you taking the time to do this today.

S

Shawn Pomaville-Size 27:34

Oh, it's my pleasure. Thanks so much for inviting me on Ed.

E

Ed Clemente 27:38

Join us next week where our guest is going to be Ara Topouzian, he is Executive Director for the Michigan Venture Capital Association.

A

Announcer 27:47

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