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Andy and Carrie Bean

The 'Brain Gain'

By Andrea McCann

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WASHINGTON — When young people return home after college, bringing their knowledge and expertise, it helps energize the area and keep it from becoming stagnant — or worse — dying off.

As the older generations begin to retire from their businesses, the younger generations must step up and take over, or those businesses close and no new ones open, according to Charlie Selby, executive director of the Daviess County Chamber of Commerce and the Daviess County Visitors Bureau. That can be a death knell for a community.

“You have to have young people to grow,” Selby said. “It brings new ideas and new blood to the area, which helps the area grow.”

It creates “brain gain,” quite the opposite of the “brain drain” most of the Hoosier state is experiencing.

Selby is delighted that a number of young professionals have been returning to the county to work, join family businesses or start their own businesses. His own son, Aaron, 29, is production coordinator for Olon Industries after earning a bachelor’s degree in marketing, then an MBA, and coming home to put his degrees to work. Selby said Aaron is soon to be married, and the newlyweds will make their home in Daviess County.

Andy and Carrie (Taylor) Bean are another couple who chose to settle in the county. Both are Washington High School graduates — him in 1996 and her in 1997. He attended Vincennes University immediately after high school, then transferred to Purdue University, where he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in building construction technology. She also attended Purdue, where she graduated as a doctor of veterinary medicine. Both joined their family businesses.

Selby recruited Carrie to serve on the chamber board, along with some other 20- and 30-somethings, and is excited about their participation and input. He said they exchange ideas and build a cohesion that attracts other young people.

“I have a very young board,” Selby said. “They’re very young and very energetic. Their

focus is on creating a community where young people will want to live. If you get a younger board, much like this, you start growing leadership.”

Carrie Bean said one of the pleasures of coming back home to work is being involved in the community. She said she’s asked to speak at high school career days and also to younger students.

“It’s nice to be able to give back to the places where I got my education,” she said. “It’s one of my favorite parts of the job.”

Although she could’ve worked anywhere with her DVM, she never really wanted to live and work anywhere but Washington. Neither did Andy.

“I like the small town,” Carrie said. “I like having close relationships with my clients. These are clients who have known me since I was little, so I have that extra bond with them. It’s comfortable, I guess. In bigger cities, you don’t really get that kind of relationship.”

A self-professed people-person, she said it’s important to her to be able to know and communicate with her clients. She also likes knowing other people in the community and being able to run with her best friend and feel safe.

Though they’re not experiencing anything “different,” they don’t mind. That’s what vacations are for, according to Andy.

“I like to go on vacation, but it’s good to come home,” he said. “I did some internships while I was at Purdue: one in Sacramento, Calif., for a summer, and one in Louisville, Ky., for a summer. It was OK, but I didn’t really care for it. I’m a small-town guy.”

Even though he wanted to come back home, Andy said he interviewed with companies across the country.

Ultimately, he came home to become part-owner of P.R. Bean and Company with his dad, Paul, and brother, Jeremy. Younger brother Luke also works at the family-owned business. The company primarily makes commercial cabinets and countertops for educational and medical facilities throughout the Midwest, although Andy said they also do some work for small businesses and residences.

At the time he graduated, the business was growing, and he said it seemed like a good time to get in. And he has no regrets, although he said being a partner can have its headaches.

“You see the financial ups and downs,” Andy said. “There’s a lot more riding on it than if you’re working for someone else. If I mess up, it directly costs us. I don’t go to the job, put in eight hours and go home. I work nights and weekends. If I take a week off, it takes two

weeks to catch up.”

On the plus side, he said, he knows the business, has only a 2-mile commute to work, and his family is close-knit, so it’s nice to be near them. He said he thinks his dad and mom, Arlene, were excited to have him and Carrie locate in Washington.

“We all live within a 5-mile radius, so we see each other a lot,” he said.

Ditto for Carrie’s family. One brother, Jason, and sister, Katie, also stayed in Washington. Another brother, Adam, is serving with the military in Iraq.

“It’s nice to be able to see my nieces and nephews,” Carrie said, adding that her mom, Cathy Riker, likes having them close. “We have dinner together every Wednesday night.”

Carrie works with her father, Dr. William Phillips, at Eastside Veterinary Clinic.

“I think my dad was excited and somewhat proud I went to his school and into his profession,” she said. “I guess from being around it I always enjoyed it. It allows me to work with people in the community, which I like.”

The Beans said they have no plans to leave Washington.

“We plan to stay,” Carrie said. “I love my clients. I love being able to help them. I love the safety. I don’t think I’d want to change anything about it.”