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Tara and Jess Brower

The 'Brain Gain'

By Andrea McCann

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WASHINGTON — Though much of Indiana has suffered from “brain drain” — college graduates putting their degrees to use in other states — Washington has benefited from “brain gain” in the past two or three years.

“They’re seeing the opportunity to come back and invest in the community,” said Mayor Larry Haag. “They’re seeing they can make a living here.”

Haag believes these young businessmen and women see the potential for growth with the planned I-69 corridor coming through the county and “want to get in on the ground floor rebuilding Washington’s future.” He pointed out they pay taxes and provide jobs, but they also bring their leadership skills back to the area.

“They’re not only talking,” Haag said. “They’re walking the walk. They’re great mentors. It gives us all hope. It gives younger people hope, and it gives older people hope because they believe in us and want to be part of our growth. It means a lot to the churches, nonprofits and schools. Kids see a future here, even those that don’t go to college. We need all walks of life to be strong.”

The young professionals coming back to Washington aren’t just running businesses and providing jobs, Haag said, they’re getting involved in the community. He said they’re donating their time and money to sponsor things and serve their community.

Jess and Tara (Singleton) Brower are a good example. Tara, who has an Edward Jones office in Washington, is on the Junior Achievement Advisory Board and the United Way Board of Directors. Jess, a chiropractor, sponsors the North Daviess Youth Basketball Program and the high school game broadcasts. They’re both active in Christ United Methodist Church.

“As we’re here longer, we plan to do community outreach,” Jess said.

The couple has been back in Daviess County less than two years. Both graduated from high school in 2002 — Jess from North Daviess and Tara from Washington. Both attended Purdue University, where Tara earned a bachelor’s degree in finance management in 2006.

She had additional studies to become a chartered life underwriter and chartered financial consultant. Jess earned his bachelor's degree in movement and sports science, also in 2006. He graduated from Logan College of Chiropractic three and half years later.

"I decided in college I wanted to be a chiropractor," Jess said. "Just through my studies I knew I wanted to be in the health field. I thought chiropractic was the best fit and gave me the most opportunities."

The original plan, Tara explained, was for her to come back to Washington right after college and be a financial advisor for Edward Jones with her mentor Alan Bubalo. Jess' decision to pursue chiropractic threw a monkey wrench in that plan. However, it opened up a whole new opportunity for Tara because Edward Jones is headquartered in St. Louis, the home of Logan College of Chiropractic.

"I worked there until 2009 when we relocated back here," she said.

Tara always knew she wanted to come back home, but Jess wasn't so sure.

"At first I thought I wanted to work in a larger metropolitan area," he said, explaining that once graduation drew near and the couple had their son, Jack, in 2008, he decided he'd prefer to raise their children near their own families. The couple is expecting their second child in September. "We plan to stay here forever. This is where we want to raise our family and where we want to retire. We're not going anywhere else."

Although they gave up some personal conveniences moving from a larger city, Tara said it's a trade-off they were willing to make because of their values. Her parents, Joe and Susie Singleton, live in Washington, and Jess' parents, Darrell and Debbie Brower, live in Odon. Jess also has a younger brother, Trent, in Odon. Tara's younger brother, Graham, is at school in Orlando. Jess said their families were ecstatic to have them move back home.

"We have a really good relationship with our parents and extended family," Jess said. "One set or the other sees us about every night."

As it turns out, their family and other local ties have benefited both their businesses through referrals.

"Our local ties have helped us out a lot," Jess said. "The advantages on the business side far outweigh the disadvantages."

Another one of the advantages of working in a small community, he said, is the collegial atmosphere among professionals. He said it's easy working with other professionals in the area. Tara added that people asked them if Washington really needed another Edward Jones office and another chiropractor, but they maintain there's still a need for their services.

“So many people tell Jess and I ‘We’re so glad you’re back. It’s so good to have young people in the community,’” Tara said.

“Our passion is helping people. Who better than people you grew up with and go to church with ... We both provide, hopefully, an unparalleled local service.

“My main focus is retirement planning and helping those retirees make their money last. But because I’m young, I also have a passion for helping young people save and grow their money and educating them on what they need to retire.”

With his degree in movement and sports science, Jess hopes to carve a niche helping athletes recover from their injuries.

“One of the things I wanted to get into in the chiropractic area was to help young athletes with their injuries, and being in a small area helps that,” he said. “In addition to treating common low back and neck pain, my practice focuses on musculoskeletal injuries. I incorporate into my practice rehabilitation and a lot of soft tissue treatment and muscular therapy. That’s also why I like the sports aspect of it.”

The Browers said business is picking up little by little, and they expect it to continue.

“I see a future for growth here,” Jess said. “With I-69, the town itself is going to grow. There will be more people to serve.”

Even if people don’t relocate to Washington, Tara added, the county will benefit from the ease of travel that will allow people to come from farther away for services offered here.

“When we came back, built a house, started two new businesses, two new jobs, we thought ‘We’re crazy,’” Tara said. “But we’re grounded in our faith. We said if we’re going to jump, we might as well use both feet. We have faith the community will support us.”