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## INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS FOCUS ON DAYTON'S RESURGENCE

PG. 21 // BY JENNIFER HANAUER LUMPKIN



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# THE CITY THAT'S TRENDING

## Three Instagrammers shed light on Dayton's gems

By Jennifer Hanauer Lumpkin

**Love it** or hate it, use it or abuse it, take it or leave it, social media plays a daily role in most of our lives. Used mindfully and strategically, it can be a tool for reaching a large audience and affecting change. In a recent article on *Forbes.com*, contributor Drew Hendricks provided a detailed list of guidelines for those hoping to use social media to their advantage. "Social media isn't a soapbox," Hendricks wrote, "but a tool for engagement. It's a two-way street."

That engagement is exactly what's been on the minds of a few local residents as they looked around their city and saw the potential for social media to revive their town. Several Dayton-centric *Instagram* accounts have popped up recently, all backed by Daytonians full of vision and passion. Using the uniquely square-shaped, filter-ready photo and video sharing site, these individuals have stoked the low-burning fires of Dayton's renowned creative pool and are now fanning the growing flames.

*Dayton City Paper* had the opportunity to sit down with a few of these bright young minds on a rainy Monday night patio. Meet the people behind the camera phones who are giving a voice to the Gem City:

### WHO'S WHO AND WHAT'S WHAT

#### DaytonGram

@daytongram

Created serendipitously in July of 2013, DaytonGram came into being after Tom Giliam was inspired by a friend in a neighboring city.

*Gram:* I have a friend named Dave Schmidt that does CincyGram on *Instagram*, and I'd been following him for months. I saw what he was doing with the city, and I thought it was interesting. I hadn't really seen a lot of people actually focusing on one particular subject, meaning even a city, and I saw his page. I saw a bunch of pages with bands and celebrities and things like that, but I didn't really see anything – especially this close to home – that was being showcased like this. So I just woke up one day, in July of last year, saw that the account, DaytonGram, was available and just created it and started running away with it, taking photos. I wouldn't even call myself a real photographer. I mean, I continue to learn as this thing goes on. And part of my thing, though, was just getting permission to go into all these places. You know, I see many photos around town, but there're many hidden areas of Dayton that a lot of people aren't really allowed to go, and so I thought it was important to get a behind-the-scenes look of the city.

#### Dayton Baton

@daytonbaton

daytonbaton.com

Dayton Baton creator Jordan D. Hockett was inspired by TEDxDayton to start the shared *Instagram* account, reflecting Dayton through the eyes of its residents. A calendar on the website allows people to sign up for specific days to run the account, letting them showcase any aspect of Dayton they please.

*Baton:* I thought about bringing this concept to Dayton for awhile, and when I attended the TEDxDayton event, that really inspired me to go ahead and go through with it. My thing was to showcase the positivity of Dayton. Showcase the things, the people, the community, the events, the small businesses. You always hear people saying, "It's boring, there's nothing to do," but there's plenty to do here. Everybody has a phone in their hand, so I figured why not bring what's happening to them right where they're heading. With almost everyone, I've learned something new about Dayton, and I've been here all my life.

#### Dayton's Best

@daytonsbest

web.stagram.com/n/daytonsbest

The elusive creator of Dayton's Best, who prefers to remain anonymous for the moment, started with the simple idea of creating a place for photographers to connect and share Greater Dayton's best photos. Featured photographers on Dayton's Best are highlighted with an interview and a sample of their work.

*Best:* I started it probably nine months ago and just wanted to feature the better photographers I could find in Dayton and help showcase them and make a place for Instagrammers to connect with one another. And that's pretty much all there is to it.

#### Catapult Creative

@launchcatapult

launchcatapult.com

Catapult Creative is not an *Instagram* account, but this creative agency located in downtown Dayton has been instrumental in creating a synergy from all the independently functioning innovative forces of Dayton. Represented in this conversation by Matthew Sliver and Josh Boone, Catapult Creative develops distinguished branding for small businesses and was recently handed the "I Love Dayton" campaign that came out of the April UpDayton summit. They have also been working on a redesign and updated branding of *Dayton Most Metro* and will be launching an *Instagram* portal in June. Partnered with entities such as Dayton Gram, Dayton Baton and Dayton's Best, Catapult Creative is firmly establishing new businesses in the minds of Dayton's young creatives and enhancing the appeal of our city, which has resulted in the retention of area talent.

*CC:* We are trying to come up with a concept that will help the people of Dayton appreciate their city the way all of us do.

### THE IMPORTANCE

#### DGP: What are you accomplishing with what you do?

*CC:* What's become very apparent is there are a lot of people who have contemplated leaving Dayton and going elsewhere because they feel like they're not having what they want happening here right now. So, they feel like they have all this potential and there's this passion that they have, but no way to execute it and no outlet to actually make it happen. So, that's one of the things – when we brought this concept to a lot of people, they're just getting ridiculously excited about it. They're passionate about it because people feel the same way. People want this to actually happen. They are aware of that. There's a vacuum. People feel, I think, very isolated and alone. There are a lot of independent groups in Dayton that are trying to do great things, but there's no real fabric tying it all together. So, kind of taking all of these individual elements that seemingly are disconnected and trying to bring them all together so there is that communal feel and there is that synergy – where it's like "OK, something is, like, really happening." It's not just about changing the perception of Dayton, but it's also trying to get people excited and feeling like they don't have to go elsewhere to get what they're wanting. I think that's really what a lot of the UpDayton side of things is, trying to change that perception and getting people here to be excited.

*Best:* You think about when the economy went south, and when it went south again in Dayton, everything shut down. People were super disappointed, and then they had kids, and they just taught them Dayton sucked because there was nothing here. So, now we just have a bunch of kids walking around thinking they have to go someplace else because "Dayton stinks," when in actuality, it's the perfect place to be. It's just teaching people the new mindset – don't be discouraged because something happened, get excited about what's going to happen. It's vision-casting, as opposed to looking back.

*Gram:* People actually forget the great parts of our city's history, because they're so distanced from that. But if they really looked, we're one of the greatest cities on Earth because of the things that were invented here, because of our contributions to the world. Really, no other city can match our contributions to the world with all the inventions that were here. Nobody's come close. The message is basically, "Love the city you're in." What I'm trying to do is show the positivity of the city through social media and basically defeat the mainstream media with positivity.

*CC:* And I think that perception is what collectively we all have in common. There's a common goal of wanting to change the perception of Dayton, more so than anything. Like, "What Dayton can't be" – there's a lot of that. It can all happen here. There's a fantastic foundation for that to happen right here, and we want to help initiate that change.

"I think it's not limited to our phones, it's not limited to *Instagram*, it's just the concept of making people feel better about what's around them, making people inspired or encouraged by the city that they're in, you know, just the world as itself."  
– Dayton's Best

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# THE CITY THAT'S TRENDING

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**DCP: Is there potential for this to grow outside of Dayton? Are there some interconnecting possibilities? Or is this strictly a Daytonians-for-Dayton phenomenon?**

**Baton:** As far as the Baton, it hasn't necessarily connected with any other cities, but it has influenced Cincinnati to start one and the country Sri Lanka to start one. The influence is there.

**DCP: Sri Lanka has an Instagram account?**

**Baton:** A friend of mine I met while doing the Disney College Program from Sri Lanka saw my Facebook post about the ABC22/FOX45 news interview I did for the Dayton Baton. She shared the post, and tagged a friend of hers, went back-and-forth about starting one. I said they should and it would be great let me know how I can help; her friend ended up messaging me on Facebook with compliments and a request [for advice] on how to get started.

**Best:** As far as, if you were to restrict it to a couple of towns or cities, we'd be screwed from the get-go. When you start an idea and you realize it has the potential to reach a lot of people, you need to think bigger than one place. You just think, "All people. How can all people be connected to this?" Eventually, once we expand to a certain level, we can connect with villages in Africa. Like, crazy things. How can you make a community global? And I think that's just a neat idea, like each stepping stone that gets us to something where people feel more connected to each other as a whole. I think it's not limited to our phones, it's not limited to Instagram, it's just the concept of making people feel better about what's around them, making people inspired or encouraged by the city they're in, you know, just the world as itself. Because there are a lot of people who say, "The world's going to hell." Well, if you think it's going to hell, then you're going to go to hell with it. Just, if you think, "This world, there's so much potential, we could build, we could thrive, we could love one another, we could abolish slavery" or whatever this crap is that's still going on, that's what you're going to see happen. It's just not thinking inside of the box that's this city. It's thinking, "All people. How can we do something?"

## FUTURE SO BRIGHT YOU WON'T NEED A FLASH

DCP: What happens when the technology changes?



photo courtesy: @Daytonsbest #Train #MoraineRailroad



#CallahanBuildingClock @DaytonHistory #CarillonHistoricalPark



#SoldiersMonument #MainSt #Dayton

*Best:* The platform doesn't change the concept. The vision stays the same, you just have to find a different way to release it through different avenues. I think changes in technology will actually be to our benefit because that gives us the need to re-imagine how we're going to do it. It always stays new. It always stays something people want to follow, and we're going to continuously have new outlets because things are changing, and I think that's an advantage. Once you get the concept out, people will follow it. Whatever we do is going to take on different faces and different shapes as we do it, but what we're trying to get across will remain the same. And it will probably expand from there. It will remain the same at the core, but there will be more and more to it as we go on.

**DCP: What's next? Where do you go from here?**

*Baton:* From the Dayton Baton, I see it continuously growing and for it to be a good social media platform for new businesses to kind of showcase themselves to a good audience in the Dayton area. And just continue doing what it's doing: Showcasing people. Eventually, I hope more students will sign up, get more students so we can get insight to the college life.

*Gram:* I think with DaytonGram, along the same lines, to keep on expanding, to keep

getting the thing bigger. There's really no turning back now. Great things can be done in Dayton. The Wright Brothers, [John H.] Patterson, [Charles F.] Kettering and other innovative Dayton people like them are gone, but we need to carry this city on that they made great. In the future, if every weekend in Dayton has the energy and excitement of Urban Nights, we know we'll have helped accomplish something special for this city and downtown in particular.

*CC:* What we see is more people that are like-minded, like ourselves, evolving and changing the perception of Dayton as a whole. That's one year, 10 years, 20 years, until my children are grown and the age I am now.

*All photos courtesy of Tom Gilliam, DaytonGram unless otherwise noted.*

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