

## Features

### Fueling Cincinnati's Good Ideas

JEREMY MOSHER | TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2010



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What might be the next [Mobo Bike Coop](#) or [Give Back Cincinnati](#), off-beat ideas filling needs and bringing people together in Cincinnati communities? Thanks to a new organization, it might just be whatever you can dream up.

On Thursday, Give Back Cincinnati launches a new venture called [Fuel Cincinnati](#) which will solicit great ideas for the city and help put them into action. According to Give Back Cincinnati chairman Joe Hansbauer, the goal is to use GBC itself as a blueprint for getting city-changing movements off the ground.

"The concept behind [Fuel] has grown out of the model of Give Back Cincinnati, and how it got started," he explains. "It was essentially a small group of young professionals that said 'We want to try to create something to build networks, something more than just a happy hour.' To really engage in relationships, with the intent of that's how we can keep somebody [in Cincinnati]."

For people with unique, worthy ideas, Fuel can provide a variety of the resources that were vital to the inception of "Give Back." Hansbauer details the necessities that drove GBC's foundation, noting, "One was a driven group of individuals who had an idea and were willing to spend the time and energy to make it happen. But also, they needed access to a small amount of start-up capital, and also a group of mentors. What grew out of that has far exceeded what we imagine when we started," he says.

Ryan Rybolt was one of those young and driven individuals back in December, 2000. The idea, he explains, was to find a way to enrich the day-to-day experience of young Cincinnatians who might not have started a family yet, and sought more from life than the 9-to-5 grind. In describing the goal he shared with fellow founders Jamal Masher and Mike Pugh, Rybolt says, "It was giving people a chance to fill that void they may feel at work." However, getting from idea to execution was no simple feat.

"Back then we had a large contingent that wanted to give back to the community,"

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Rybolt remembers, "But finding the opportunities to make large scale impacts on the community was a struggle." Enter Procter & Gamble and Charlotte Otto.

Thanks to connections within P&G, the trio of young men was able to secure a donation of several thousand dollars that enabled them to create the infrastructure necessary to organize Give Back Cincinnati and get it off the ground. That organization gave a good idea an identity, and the ability to connect with the community in that large-scale way they imagined. The aim of Fuel is to do the same. When Give Back was launched, "a very big part of it was timing and luck," as Hansbauer puts it. "Well, we want to strip that down and not let it be left up to luck."

If the ventures that Fuel supports can take after Give Back, the landscape of Cincinnati will be affected in widespread ways. Rybolt talks about one of Give Back's very first projects -- "Paint the Town" -- with great pride. "That was a project that we started and we painted two houses in a single day. And to see that, to create that whole concept where you can impact a whole community, where now you're renting every ladder in Cincinnati and a lot from Dayton and you're painting fifty to sixty houses, there's something to be proud of there."

Although the organization officially launches with a [kick-off event](#) at Northside Tavern, one project is already serving as a pilot program, receiving Fuel aid with the hopes of growing into something great.

Jude Stepaniak first conceived of the idea for an on-line split-the-pot with his brother. "It's called The Daily Dole. My thought was, what if you could do that same split-the-pot concept on-line, but do it daily, so there's the constant turnaround," he says. Stepaniak first thought of it as an idea to help make charitable groups more efficient, by helping them raising funds and awareness.

"You've got all these people out there trying to do something good and struggling to raise money. One of my goals is to try to automate the process and let charities just focus on doing what they do well."

Now, Fuel has helped make that concept a reality. With Stepaniak coming from a background in engineering, he didn't have a single clear-cut path for bringing his idea to life, but after connecting with members of Fuel, he not only received the seed money necessary to prepare The Daily Dole for launch, but was also directed to the knowledge-resources he needed. He explains, "I was able to do some legal background to figure out what it would take to make this happen. And [Fuel] also helped me connect with a lawyer. That was extremely helpful." In particular, Stepaniak's desire to do something that "gives back" benefited greatly from working with Fuel's leadership which, being housed under the Give Back umbrella, had significant experience in charitable fields to offer.

"All of them are so connected with the philanthropic part of [Cincinnati]," Stepaniak explains, "because they work at the Mayerson Foundation, or Children's Hospital, or [ugive.org](#). To have other experienced people hear the idea, to see their excitement: you couldn't ask for a better feeling."

The [Mayerson Foundation](#) is, in fact, providing Fuel the financial support it needs, along with the [Haile/U.S. Bank Foundation](#). Fuel will be able to use the vast network of Give Back Cincinnati to connect those large-scale funding mechanisms at a human level -- with the reach of each grant continuing to grow through its benefactors. Hansbauer hopes that each recipient of Fuel grants will hopefully gain the experience and make the contacts necessary to be better positioned for future successes. "It's an investment in individuals as well," he

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notes. "Even if the idea we funded isn't the next big thing, maybe the next idea from that person is."

So, what next big things might we see coming down the pike, thanks to Fuel? Stepaniak is excited about an incubator space that new entrepreneurs could use for free, while Rybolt is thinking broadly.

"Concepts like bike trails in Cincinnati, anything that is "YP"-focused," he says. "Anything that would make Cincinnati more attractive to young professionals."

With the ability to launch philanthropic, social, and quality-of-life causes, a Cincinnati with a Fuel-powered future looks attractive, indeed.

*Photography by [Scott Beseler](#).*

*Joe Hansbauer and Steve Bentley and [The super idea incubate contraptionator machine](#)*

*Ryan Rybolt*

*Joe Hansbauer and Steve Bentley*

*Jude Stepaniak*

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