

By KATY SMITH and
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Ginther's heli-venture

Seeing Columbus from above
wooded trade group

Columbus is preparing to host the “Superbowl of meetings” Aug. 10-13 when the American Society of Association Executives comes to town. Convincing the influential group to hold its annual conference here took several years and multiple out-of-state visits by local officials, and ultimately it came down to a helicopter ride with Mayor Andy Ginther.

On this tour-by-air Feb. 22, 2016, the first of its kind, Ginther and representatives from Experience Colum-



File/Columbus Dispatch/DORAL CHENOWETH III

Downtown Columbus,
seen here in a drone shot.

bus and other organizations showed ASAE CEO John Graham around Columbus: The Short North, downtown neighborhoods, the Scioto riverfront, Nationwide Children’s Hospital and more. It was an idea born of necessity —Graham had only one day to visit.

“The mayor did a great job of it,” says Graham. “I wasn’t expecting it and it was very interesting. It was the first thing we did and it was a great way to introduce us to the city.”

Sure, “American Society of Association Executives” doesn’t quite have the ring of “national political convention,” but it has been at the top of Brian Ross’ list since he became CEO of Experience Columbus in 2013. The convention’s benefits to its host cities reverberate for years into the future as its attendees make recommendations for their groups to have meetings in those destinations, generating an estimated \$500 million in revenue down the road.

“These are major industry influencers on multiple levels coming here,” Ross says. “And they are going to take back an experience, an image, a perception of Columbus to their home cities. I truly believe this is going to be transformational for our community.”

After the helicopter ride, Graham and his team were treated to the must-stop at Jeni’s Splendid Ice Creams in the North Market, made the rounds of downtown hotels, attended a reception in Miranova’s Ivory Room and dined that evening at M, Ginther says.

“It was such a blast,” he says. “I think our greatest decade is ahead of us with respect to tourism and conventions. And it all started with a helicopter ride.” —Katy Smith

Sonoma County Wine, Columbus Winemaker

Scott Zanon has his own wine label but no vineyard.

If you ask him what his passion is, he’ll tell you—flying to Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County, California and blending the wine he buys from an

undisclosed family winery to make 700 cases of zinfandel, sangiovese and petite sirah. Zanon then ships the product back to Ohio and sells it here. The Upper Arlington resident says he doesn’t know of anyone else in Ohio or elsewhere with this kind of “virtual winery” setup. He likes to say it’s “Sonoma County wine with Columbus, Ohio roots.” Zanon Zinfandel is now in its fifth vintage, and it’s offered at some pretty high-profile local restaurants, soon to include one of Cameron Mitchell Restaurants’ newest concepts, the Del Mar SoCal Kitchen to open in the Short North’s Lincoln building at 711 N. High St. So, how does an Ohio native come to be a purveyor of wine from the 9,000-acre Dry Creek Valley American Viticultural Area? Zanon says having an Italian, wine-mak-

ing father, working in wine wholesale for years, loving to garden and then owning a business for 18 years selling automated external defibrillators is the right mix.

“It wasn’t like I was just some guy off the street saying, ‘Hey, I want to have my name on a label.’ So I went into it eyes wide open, but with a sense of confidence that I could be successful,” he says.

Other CMR spots where one can sip on Zanon’s wines are both Hudson 29s, The Pearl Short North, The Pearl to be built in Dublin’s Bridge Park, and M. Several local Italian restaurants also offer the wine. Grocery carriers include Whole Foods, Giant Eagle Market District, Weiland’s, Hills Market, Gentile’s and others. It retails for \$19.99.

—Chloe Teasley



Scott Zanon
and his wine

Chloe Teasley