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“WE’RE AFFECTING PEOPLE’S LIVES. BESIDES JUST HAVING A WARM FUZZY FEELING, THERE’S A REAL CURRENCY TO THAT.” - JOE ROTONDI

Over a decade after leaving his home in Florida, Joe Rotondi is finding ways to make others feel the same sense of ownership and pride in Greensboro as he did when he first arrived. As Executive Director at Forge Greensboro, Joe aims to inspire the community to “own” the city by making it what they dream it can be.

Through memberships and workshops, Forge is a “makers space” where people gain skills ranging from sewing to laser cutting and use tools that vary from pottery wheels to advanced 3D printers.

Joe believes the future of economic development depends on offering technology and training to all people, including those who need a helping hand. According to Joe, when people collaborate on projects that they otherwise could not afford to do alone, great things happen.

He says, “You can’t really strategically plan for alleviating poverty without working hand-in-hand with the people you want to empower.”

Currently, Joe is developing ways to make Forge’s services more accessible to programs funded by United Way and members at United Way’s Family Success Center, a 30 partner collaboration focused on empowering entire families to become self-sufficient.

Thanks to Joe and others at Forge, Family Success Center members have created goods and received training on how to sell them through e-commerce sites like etsy.com. Joe hopes Forge will continue to serve as an outlet for local families to find community, be creative and become entrepreneurs.

Thanks to partnerships like these, Joe says, “Something new is growing in Greensboro. We’re affecting people’s lives. Besides just having a warm fuzzy feeling, there’s a real currency to that.”