

Disinvested

Episode 3: Careers Not Jobs

Leonard Lloyd: My name is Leonard Lloyd. I guess my job title; I'm an engineering assistant. What brought me to Connecticut was work, actually. I was a welder. The jobs started drying up, so I had a friend here in Connecticut who said they could get me work. I packed up what little I had and I came to Connecticut, but once I got here, this person flaked on me. I said, well I'm going to stay here and try to make it.

The first job I actually found was working at T.J. Maxx, and I was the maintenance associate. It really means cleaning up, taking care of the floors, emptying trash, and stuff like that. I ended up working for a bakery and I was a mixer. That was a pretty tough job because the mixers were real tall and I'm real short. After that, I found a job I really liked working in a hospital.

Background music...

I had a substance abuse problem and didn't know it. I had become an alcoholic. I ended up losing my job at the hospital. At that time I didn't know it was because of my drinking, but it was. Once I lost that job, I found another job but I still was drinking. I drank it all away. I found myself homeless. I was living out of my car. I was here by myself because all of my family is from Detroit and I didn't want anybody to know I was homeless or anything.

I ended up getting in trouble, so they sent me to prison. While I was in prison I found out about the Open Hearth. Their motto is what caught me -- *Helping Men Help Themselves*, and that's what I needed. I didn't want a handout, I just wanted a hand up you know, somebody to just give me a little help. I didn't have anywhere to go. I was still going to be homeless and I just wanted a chance to get my life together so I wrote Malloy. I wrote Governor Malloy and told him my situation. I said, "I'm trying to save my life."

I remember, I was sitting in my little cell and the warden walks up to my cell and he said, "You wrote the governor?" I said, "Yeah, I'm trying to save my life." He was like, "Why didn't you just say something to one of my staff?" I went and I pulled out a folder I had of all the people I contacted. I said, "Here they are right here, everybody. I wrote you, I wrote everybody and none of you even answered me." I said, "I'm trying to save my life." He looked. He had his Captain with him or whatever and he looked at him and told him, "Get him out of here." I said, "Where am I'm going?" He said, "You know where you're going." The next day I was on a bus to the Open Hearth.

Music...

Tyler Johnson: Welcome to DISINVESTED, a podcast about reimagining a city and building a stronger, more inclusive community. Created by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. I'm Tyler Johnson.

Today's episode is about Skill Attainment and Workforce Development.

I know, I know. This may sound like a dry topic, but as you've just heard from Leonard's story, having the right skills and opportunities can make all the difference in a person's life.

We're facing a critical moment in Connecticut's economy. Manufacturing and other sectors are slowly beginning to rebound from the 2008 recession. At the same time, huge numbers of baby boomers are retiring. What this means is that we have a lot of job openings, and not nearly enough people to fill them. And this problem is only going to intensify over the next ten years.

We're left with two choices: Either we actively work to train people and fill these jobs, or we sit back and watch as companies send those jobs out of state.

A couple episodes ago, we talked about creating a more inclusive economy. Despite our challenges, we have a golden opportunity in front of us. As companies struggle to find qualified workers, people who were never given a chance 20 years ago are now getting the consideration that they deserve.

Leonard Lloyd was one of those people. If companies only looked at his resume and background, he never would have been given a chance. But Leonard was fortunate. He met a couple of people who believed in him and saw his potential. They pushed him in the right direction and gave him the opportunity of a lifetime. One of those people was Roy Mainelli.

Roy Mainelli: I'm Roy Mainelli, Program Manager of the Aerospace Employment Placement Program. I was working at United Technologies for 33 years right out of college as an engineer. While I was still working, I started going to the Hartford Encore Program due to the transition to a nonprofit area. The question that I had in my mind, and this is sort of the question we ask everybody, "How can you take what you've learned in your previous life and help the community?" Part of the program was a fellowship with Journey Home, which is an organization in Hartford focused on the homeless. So as I was talking to Journey Home about their mission, I asked where did employment come into play and they said that it really didn't.

I retired and then about a month later was my actual retirement party. The MC, who happened to be a friend of mine who also was a vice president at a local company, made an off the cuff comment about Roy's going to work with the homeless in Hartford and we're going to hire his clients.

It was off the cuff and about three months later I called him up and I said, "This is what you said. Here's the program. Here's what's ahead of us." He said, "I'll come, I'll help you, and I'll

support you.” It’s officially called Aerospace Employment Placement Program and it’s employer centric, which means we start with the employer, you know, where are the jobs?

Alex Johnson: Thirty years ago an individual could get a good job with a high school diploma, a GED, and really just having good work ethic and good work skills.

Tyler Johnson: Alex Johnson is the President and CEO of Capital Workforce Partners, one of the leading workforce development organizations in the state.

Alex Johnson: Now individuals, because this is a knowledge based economy that’s rapidly changing as a result of the infusion of technology, an individual needs skills. What is changing is that just the desire to work it not good enough that you need to have a series of skills and certifications to ensure that you have the necessary skills to do the job. And that is what has changed in the economy and that’s impacted on the quality of the work and the work we have to do to continue to upscale the workforce to meet the ever evolving needs of the employers.

Tyler Johnson: Right now there are a number of workforce development programs operating across Greater Hartford. They’re training people for 21st Century jobs in fields like healthcare, culinary and other industries. The Hartford Foundation supports many of these programs.

In this episode, we’ll primarily focus on one job sector: Advanced Manufacturing.

Manufacturers across Connecticut are struggling to find enough qualified workers to fill open positions. For anyone looking to gain new skills, advance their career, and earn a family-sustaining wage, advanced manufacturing offers a chance at a better life.

As you listen to this episode, know that the challenges and opportunities that exist in manufacturing also exist in a number of other fields.

Dr. Cliff Thermer: Dr. Cliff Thermer. I am the Dean of the School of Business Management, Advanced Manufacturing here at Goodwin College.

The latest numbers out of Washington would show that maybe 40 years ago, in ‘79, was the highest especially around manufacturing, with those numbers there were 19 ½ million jobs in manufacturing and then we saw a big letdown over the 80s into the 1990s. But it wasn’t that much, it was like 17, 18 million jobs. Then the bottom fell out in 2009, and we saw about 11 ½ million jobs, and only very recently have we seen this resurgence. We’re still a ways off from where we were back in 1979.

Connecticut and Greater Hartford in particular, we have over 4,000 manufacturers in the State of Connecticut. On any given day you’ll hear anywhere from 12-13,000 jobs are unfilled in

manufacturing simply because we don't have the trained and skilled workforce that's out there right now. Many manufacturers tell me there's no skills out there so we can't hire and expand and take new contracts because we don't know if we have enough workers to be able to meet that need.

So really right now in Connecticut is a huge opportunity. I think it's a once in a generational opportunity for us right now to be able to scale up our workforce to take on really good paying jobs and careers in manufacturing to meet this workforce because we don't want our 4,000 manufacturers to leave Connecticut.

Eileen Peltier: My name is Eileen Peltier. I am the Dean of Workforce Development and Continuing education at both Asnuntuck Community College, which is in Enfield, and Tunxis Community College, which is in Farmington and Bristol.

Most people who have been in the workforce long enough have seen a lot of changes already. It used to be that you'd start with a company and you'd stay there for your career. You could really anticipate making a lifetime commitment to that company and the company would make a lifetime commitment to you and that's no longer the case really on either side. The workforce is much more mobile. We're also seeing, of course, the rise of the gig economy, which obviously have certain benefits because you're your own boss and you make your own hours, but these are not jobs that are paying really great wages into a retirement account and they don't give you healthcare benefits.

Jay Williams: There are still gainful employment opportunities that don't require a four year degree or a post graduate degree, but do require something beyond that strong back and beyond that strong work ethic.

Tyler Johnson: Here's Jay Williams, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Jay Williams: So to the extent that we hear employers saying that there are thousands of job openings now and there will be more job openings in the future, we need to continue to invest in those programs that provide those skills, invest in partnerships that can bring that knowledge base to those potential employees, so those employers continue to invest and stay in our region.

Manufacturing, while it has been battered by the global economy and we've seen the expansion of manufacturing, manufacturing is just one example. It still provides a very good opportunity to make a living and provide for one's family, and to enjoy a high quality of life. But what we're hearing the employer say is while you don't need an engineering degree, we do need you to have a certain set of skills and an understanding of how advanced manufacturing works.

Lyle Wray: I think it's the first time that no one has the foggiest clue of what things will look like in 20 years.

Tyler Johnson: Lyle Wray is the Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

Lyle Wray: I'm quite serious. It's like 10 years ago we didn't have smart phones. Ten years ago no one ever heard of Uber or Lyft, so there are things that will happen. But what we do know is that Pratt & Whitney has 30 years of jet engine orders across the river from here. You can walk there from here actually, it's not that far, and they don't have the people. The average age is 55 and the people working and putting it together, they're going to be gone. Do the math. If they need 30 years or workers a 55-year-old is the average, well we're not getting there. But the vast majority of things are so-called middle skilled jobs – people that are skilled but don't have a college degree, but can run sophisticated machinery, who can assemble complicated stuff. That's the group that we need to do a lot better job on and we're probably not up to par in that.

Tyler Johnson: Again, here's Alex Johnson of Capital Workforce Partners.

Alex Johnson: Right now 65% of our jobs require some level of education and certification beyond high school, but less than a four year baccalaureate program. That's what we refer to as middle-skilled jobs. Only about 35% of the current workforce meet that requirement and expectation.

We work with individuals who are single parents, just as involved with individuals who are on public assistance, low literate adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals who are considered second chance individuals, so by definition they have a set of barriers. There's really a call to action and a call to attention, so I would say that we need greater funding and support for a lot of the training programs that we provide.

One of the things that I'm concerned with is that, as I mentioned with the skills gap, it's really a consequence of the fact that we're not making investments in people in this state...

Background music...

...so how are we making investments in people?

Tyler Johnson: When that bus dropped Leonard Lloyd off at The Open Hearth, he didn't know what was going to happen next. That is, until Stephen Haynes, the director of The Open Hearth's Working Man's Center, convinced him to apply to Roy Mainelli's Aerospace Employment Placement Program.

Leonard Lloyd: I said, "Man, I don't know a thing about aerospace." I was scared. You're thinking about aerospace and all I saw in my head was a bunch of numbers jumbling around. I know it's dealing with math and stuff like that and I was like, "Nah, I'm not ready for that."

They had a job fair at the Open Hearth and Bill Gant was there. I handed him my resume. I left and I didn't think nothing else of it. Steve called me to his office and he said, "You have an interview on August 4th. That was 2016. The job fair was in May, so in June he told me that, so I'm sweating for two months.

It started off with 30 guys and I'll never forget they called me name and I went in there. One of the guys asked me, he said, "What are your plans?" I said, "Well, you know, I'm a little older. I don't really have time to be jumping around from job to job." I said, "I want to get somewhere where I can retire." He asked me, "You would retire there?" I said, "Yeah man."

Roy stood up and he said, "You and two other guys will start school in September." I remember I shook Roy's hand and I walked out. The other guys were like, "How did it go?" I said, "Man, I think I got it." It hadn't dawned on me yet, but like you said, it's just like all the stress was just lifted off of me.

Roy Mainelli: Because the employers are in need of people, their first goal would to hire somebody that has experience that looks like them; they can't find them.

Tyler Johnson: Again, Roy Mainelli.

Roy Mainelli: Now the next question is how do I get people that want to work, that want to learn, that we can mold them into what we want to go do? So they've accepted that. When I talk to the employers I say, "Now here's the type of clients, they've either been incarcerated, substance abuse, poverty or whatever. We're willing to train them, as long as you're willing to employ them. We will not train them unless you're going to employ them." So we start with a commitment with the employer.

Once we have that commitment from the employer, now we go to the direct service providers. In this case, the Open Hearth in Hartford that deals with the homeless, Hartford Job Corps, which is more young adults – we're really looking for the brightness in their eyes. Do they want this opportunity? You know the training we send them is usually about two to three months, and it's not necessarily the training that we're trying to see, we're trying to see do they show up, do they have the commitment. It's snowing today, do they still show up to school.

There's a number of gentleman who have been incarcerated, there are a number with substance abuse but those are actually being dealt with before we see them. But really, the barriers that we saw was really within the person. They're intimidated. No matter how hard some of these guys are or how sharp some of these young kids are, this environment did intimidate them, especially when we're dealing with a diverse crowd, and most of our employers were organizations that had a bunch of old white males – I'll say it that way – so they

don't know what is perceived to be the right way of working in an office. They just don't have that experience, so it's been a whole learning experience once they're employed. We take more effort in keeping them employed than actually getting them employed.

Leonard Lloyd: I didn't know none of this. I learned it. But the thing was I was willing to learn. I didn't know anything but I asked questions. I went to everybody, everybody. If one was too busy, I went somewhere else. If he was too busy I went somewhere else until I got the answer, and I wrote down every word they said.

I've really grown to where my managers, they've all gotten behind me, wanting more from me. They root me on. I was thinking maybe one day I could be an engineer because after the associates all I need is two more years. We're going to see how it goes. One thing for sure, I will be at Belkin because I'm loyal. They gave me a chance. They saved my life. The program and everything. The Open Hearth, they saved my life. I had to do my part though. I will retire from there. As long as I can walk, or roll or push myself, I will be at work.

Music...

Tyler Johnson: Leonard's story highlights the untapped potential of so many residents in our region. If we can remove the barriers that keep individuals from being successful, and support skills training, we'd not only help a ton of people, but we can also address this major challenge facing our region. The important thing to understand about Skill Attainment is that it's actually a number of smaller challenges wrapped up into one big issue. Addressing this problem requires taking on several approaches at the same time.

In this episode, we'll talk about some of the most common barriers to success, and what needs to change. Then, we'll hear how local colleges are creating an employment pipeline. And later, we'll discuss the need to attract and retain talent to our region.

Let's begin by discussing a barrier to success that affects many people in our region: Reentry. Roughly 2,000 people return from prison to our region every year. Many of them are ready and able to work, if only given the chance. In our last episode, we talked about why these returning citizens deserve a second chance. Since they're desperate for workers, employers are more open to hiring them, but they need the skills.

Again, Alex Johnson.

Alex Johnson: For second chance individuals, we first need to think of it as an economic imperative. We can't afford to leave any group behind with the tight labor force that we have right now. Secondly, we also need to do a better job of promoting and publicizing the fact that those programs that serve second change individuals have been successful in terms of enabling those individuals to get the skills, get connected to employment, change their life's circumstance and become productive citizens. You cannot define someone's future based on what they've done in the past.

Capital Workforce Partners, though its Second Change Program has trained and placed over 300 individuals into employment and 80% are still retained. We have to let employers know that this is a bonafide workforce.

Tyler Johnson: At the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center, Asnuntuck helps to train students, including adults and returning citizens. Joe Marcelino, an instructor, took us on a tour of the center.

Joe Marcelino: Yeah, so we just opened up – it was two years just this past June when we just opened up this building again, because of our high enrollment. Our numbers have been through the roof. We could still accommodate more though, don't get me wrong. We've expanded our Welding Program, our CNC Machining Program, and now our Electromechanical Program. A lot of hands-on our program is structured.

We're five days a week, all three of our programs. It's almost like coming to work. We've been working with the Department of Corrections for three years now. Myself, I actually go to the correctional facilities and a couple of other instructors also, so when they come out they might just be missing a couple of the hands-on courses that they can't take in the facility. They take them here and then within 3-4 months, we're getting them jobs.

The smaller manufacturing companies in Connecticut and Western Massachusetts are willing to give these individuals a chance, and again, it's because of the demand. A lot of these students, for me when I was teaching at the facility, were some of my best students believe it or not. I mean their dedication and the hard work that they were putting in, they wanted a second chance, they wanted something to look forward to when they got out.

Again, we're here for the students and that's our main goal. Our job is to get them a job. That's why we run it as a work ready program. We're trying to give them the skills that they need for the companies to hire them right away.

It is overwhelming at first for a lot of the students. I almost tell them it's like learning another language in a short amount of time. But again, the outcome is getting a job starting off \$45-50,000 a year after two semesters. The biggest thing is the debt that's not following them.

You know everybody thinks of manufacturing and they think of what it was 30-40 years ago; dirty, dingy, and it's not anymore. Manufacturing is really technology driven nowadays so seeing people coming into the program all different ages and backgrounds is really nice to see. It's changed. It's not just a job anymore, this is a career. It's career- driven again which is really good to see a lot of manufacturing coming back to Connecticut right now.

Tyler Johnson: Another group of people facing a massive barrier to success are low-literate adults.

CJ Hauss is the executive director of Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford.

CJ Hauss: Our first problem, our first challenge is that people don't realize that we have a problem. It's a pretty hidden invisible population, so it can be jaw dropping when they hear the statistics. In our Greater Hartford Community, we have about 40% of adults who fall within the first lowest two levels of literacy, approximately equivalent to 6th grade level or below. That's in the Greater Hartford area.

When you hone into Hartford, that number rises to 70%. It's not just a barrier to success for the individual or their families who are living with low literacy, it's a barrier to success of our whole population, of our whole community. Low literate adults, and we have a lot of them living in Hartford, want to be productive, and engaged members of the community. They want that. They don't expect to succeed. Their experiences in school have been a place of failure. I've never been able to succeed in a classroom. And a lot of the initial learning that happens is a student realizing that I can do this, I can succeed, and I can make it.

One of the key features that keeps adults coming to school is if they feel a sense of community. If they're learning in a class with other people who are also learning at the same level – we teach English for speakers of other languages, basic literacy, we prepare people for citizenship, we teach digital literacy. We have grammar and writing, and we have a new program that actually was an initiative of the Hartford Foundation, which is Career Pathways, which is helping illiterate adults get jobs.

Adult education has demonstrated, that research is out there that absolutely someone who is low literate, who goes to class, who gains those skills, they're going to get better jobs, they're going to be able to contribute back to the community and the economy in a way that they've wanted to all along, they just needed the skills to do that and adult education can do that.

Sandra Garrido: My name is Sandra Garrido and I just started to coming to Literacy Volunteers one year ago, and I'm from Mexico City. I came when I was 18-years-old. That was really hard with the weather; it's really cold, and the language too. The hardest part is that I left my family, my father, my mother, and my brothers. That was the hard part.

My boyfriend back then he didn't let me go to school, so I was used to doing nothing. I've had jobs before but I want to make more money. Like a cashier, I was a cashier long time ago and you don't need a lot of English but every day is the same. You don't get better, so I'm taking the ESA Program and I'm learning everyday a lot of words, how to write, and how to speak. I'm going to try to write essays to go to college and get a career like a dental assistant.

I have three kids. It's really difficult when you have little kids because you don't have anybody in this country to help you out. They like to come to play with the kids in the program so it's easier for me because I don't have to worry about paying money to take care of them and they are with good people.

I am so thankful with the program because they help a lot of people. It's so nice.

Maura: Hi. My name is Maura. I'm a student at Asnuntuck Community College and I'm in their Advanced Manufacturing Program. My dad has been involved in this field for as long as I could remember, so it's pretty much just like in the family. Being a single mom with two kids I can't pass up these types of paychecks, so that's pretty much what drew me in.

They have supported me really well with if I have to bring my child to a doctor's appointment or anything like if I need to leave early or come in late, which was one of my number one concerns coming all the way here from Bristol. I was worried about being able to fit that regular parenting stuff in. The advisors and teachers here have been incredible.

When you see those machines you don't see like a 5'8" girl working on those machines. When you picture it you see a guy. It's a guy's field, so coming in and being a woman, it's automatically intimidating. I don't really know how else to explain it, but it's really empowering and just for us as women to get out there and show everybody we can do this. This not just a man's field.

It made me realize that I have more potential than I thought I did, which is a really big ego boost. That's another really awesome thing. Like I said, it's changed my life and it's changing my kids' life. I'm going to be able to be the person that I wanted to be. I'm going to be able to be the mom that I've always wanted to be. I'm going to be able to provide for my family without help from my parents. I can do it on my own, which is a good feeling.

Tyler Johnson: Nearly everyone we spoke with in the manufacturing sector said that they were seeing more women than ever joining their programs.

Women bring diversity to these workplaces, and several people told us that women displayed greater attention to detail, which made them excel in roles such as quality control.

Manufacturing is still a male-dominated field, which keeps a lot of women from applying. But another major barrier is child care. Even in 2019, women assume a majority of child care duties. The responsibilities that come with raising children keep many people, especially women, from pursuing better careers. The good news is that companies and training programs are starting to realize this, and things are starting to change.

Here's Cliff Thermer of Goodwin College.

Dr. Cliff Thermer: We have our Child Center and we just recently did a Career Readiness Training Program with 17 folks from the East Hartford area. They would come in and in order for them to participate, they needed the support with the child care. We did the classes right across the hall from the Child Care office, so they would be able to bring in their kids, someone would be able to be there and watch them. On a break they can check on them, and these 17

students really excelled in the career readiness space because we were able to take that one distraction off their plate while they were learning a skillset.

Some people may say, well you know, those are unnecessary or this is not important. But if you want to help people change their lives and give them the opportunity, you have to have those support services that they can access so that we can get them to that area where they don't need them anymore.

Tyler Johnson: To address our skills gap we need to create an employment pipeline. This starts with our colleges. The Hartford Foundation has worked with a number of local colleges to create and fund training programs.

Colleges have always prepared students for the future. What's different now is that their preparation has become more responsive to the needs of local businesses. Schools work with companies and economic development organizations to figure out what the job market will look like 5, 10 or 20 years from now, and then train students accordingly. This increases the chances that students will find jobs, and that both students and companies will remain in Greater Hartford.

We spoke with the heads of several local colleges about the new economy. Here's Eileen Peltier, Dean of Workforce Development and Continuing Education at Asnuntuck and Tunxis Community Colleges.

Eileen Peltier: We're really looking to see where are the jobs? Are there good wages? Is it an industry that offers a lot of growth, and can we train people for an industry level credential that an employer would recognize? Not just a certificate signed by me saying you sat in a seat for 12 weeks, but something that would really be meaningful for any employer you take it to in that industry.

Dr. G. Duncan Harris: If you get an email from me, the bottom of my email says, "First job a better job, your career."

Tyler Johnson: Dr. G. Duncan Harris is the CEO of Capital Community College.

Dr. G. Duncan Harris: One of the things we recognized here at Capital is that oftentimes our students coming in need assistance with that first job, and I don't refer to them as soft skills, but what are essential skills required to be successful? Coming on time, understanding the culture of an environment that you might be in, nonverbal and verbal communication. A part of our work should be to help our students get that first job, and so we have a clothing closet.

It's funny, you may see students wearing ties that I wore last semester. It gives me an excuse to shop, but I'll donate certain business attire that students might need. We have specific workshops on interviewing skills, kind of work culture related skills. The second part of that continuum is a better job, and certainly we're desirous of our students going from \$10.10 to

\$20.20, or a job that might provide medical benefits, etc. Then the last part of that continuum is your career. And our students want what you and I have, which is this idea of a particular career field, you know the big difference between a job and a career, hopefully as a result of our students spending time with us, we're able to help them identify a desirous career field.

Tyler Johnson: Here's Dr. Cliff Thermer, Dean of the School of Business Management and Advanced Manufacturing at Goodwin College.

Dr. Cliff Thermer: Boy, what are we doing? Right now in manufacturing, we're working on the skillsets that gets people jobs. What I'm referring to there is CNC machining, quality inspections, supply chain and logistics, and welding. We came up with those not because that was our idea, but that's what the manufacturers we'd talked to – and we talked with hundreds of them about what do you need, and then how do we get there? They involved themselves in creating the curriculum that we're now delivering to our students to get them out there.

We teach them how to take an idea that they have in their head and then to learn how to design it on Mastercam. Then they'll take it and prototype it maybe on a 3D printer or maybe bring it right into the machine shop and make it.

When you see them hold what they've made for the very first time, to see the light come on their eyes and they say, "Wow, I can do something really significant, really important." Those are the kinds of supports that I think help people get out there and make an opportunity for themselves because once they're in those jobs, they change their personal economy. When they change their personal economy, they change that economy for their families, their kids, and their grandkids; that's what it's all about.

Tyler Johnson: A lot of this episode has focused on giving our local residents opportunities and harnessing the untapped potential of our region, and that's critically important.

However, to fill this surplus of job openings, and to make our region a better place in general, we also need to attract more people to move to our region, and convince people, especially recent grads, to stay.

Kim Bishop is the Executive Director of Talent Attraction and Retention at HYPE, which stands for Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs.

Kim Bishop: Millennials are such a different generation, and so if you look at kind of the scope of the age of millennials, it's a really long wide range, but so much happened in that timeframe, especially around technology. Because of that, they have so many more options. They kind of get to pick and choose where they want to be. So in order to attract them, you have to kind of be offering what they are looking for, and I think that's very different from any other generation.

What I always like to say is that Hartford is not New York and Hartford is not Boston, and it's never going to be and that's okay. Hartford is a really fantastic mid-sized city with fantastic suburbs and a lot to offer young professionals and beyond. Your impact can be felt so much greater in Hartford because it's such a small knit community.

The one thing that we hear a lot about millennials right now is that they want to be connected. They want to feel invested and that's one of the other things that draws them and keeps them to certain places, organizations and companies is the ability to be heard, the ability to kind of make their mark within a community.

When young professionals are relocating here, they'll Google what to do, or a young professional group and they find us, and then we do everything we can to get them connected to whatever matters to them whether it's sports, whether it's arts or culture or community, and I think that's what makes them want to stay here and grow here and they have a sense of ownership.

I think we can kind of all take a page out of that book and think about how do we treat newcomers, not just young professionals but everyone? How do we treat other people in our community? Are we all working towards making sure that everyone here can be and are connected to those things that matter to them? Because that's a lot of times what drives people away.

Tyler Johnson: We've covered a number of approaches that will help teach people skills, grow our economy and produce a more inclusive region. But beyond these approaches, we also have to change our mindset. It's time to update the way we think about jobs, the economy, and who can be a successful employee in the 21st century.

Jay Williams, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Jay Williams: First there was a mindset that these were sort of secondary or less than desirable jobs. That if you weren't going to be a doctor, a lawyer, go work on Wall Street, or go into computer science that these jobs were the fallbacks, and nothing can be further from the truth. We need individuals who have those skills. We need individuals who also bring an entrepreneurial type of thinking to those skills, so even in manufacturing on an assembly line 20-30 years ago they gave you a set of simple instructions; follow the instructions, don't deviate, don't ask, don't think, just do.

Now what they're saying is, if you are there and you think that you have a better idea of how to make this product better or how to make it more efficiently, we want to hear that. We want you to bring that type of entrepreneurial thinking, making sure that we're supporting the type of creative and innovative thinking that has propelled this country forward for 200+ years that we can't get away from, we can't seed that ground to other areas of the country. And as a country, I don't think we should be seeding that ground to other parts of the globe.

Maritza Santiago: My name is Maritza Santiago and I am here representing Hartford Job Corps. For the APP Program and I work for Belkin over in Windsor Locks.

I was originally born in Brooklyn, New York and from there my single mother actually moved around a lot. I finished high school in East Hartford High and graduate in 2012. I did try going to college, but it didn't really fit into my life and when I joined the Hartford Job Corps program, I actually got introduced to Roy, who told me about the APP Program and Belkin as a job.

Previously, I used to work two jobs. It's gone down to one job. I'm able to pay my rent and not be worried about what I'm going to do for the next month. When I first got the job, my first goal was to get a car. I just got my first car and I've already started my five year plan to get a house.

As for moving up into the ranks, I was actually like a second in command for my manager on my team. I'm able to support my family and all that. My mother has a lot of physical and mental ailments, but she also takes care of my 82-year-old grandfather, who I also help. Then there's my older sister who is also a single mother, and her 14-year-old son, so I also help take of him and raise him.

Last Christmas was like the first real Christmas that I was able to provide presents for everybody. Seeing the faces on everybody when they opened their presents and they were screaming with joy made me realize that this is why I do what I do.

Nobody was willing to work with my potential. When I look online and I see the job listings, they're telling you, you need to have a bachelors or 15 years of experience, and here I am coming with zero to no college experience, no real manufacturing experience. Roy definitely gave me an opportunity on a golden plate.

Roy Mainelli: It took the personal relationships because, to be honest with you, Maritza's background and when you talk to Leonard, it wouldn't justify an HR Department bringing that person in, it just wouldn't until you get to know the person, what they can do. Then once they're in there and performing, then the doors just keep opening up. This is just a start for her, for her aspirations that it's a journey. Eventually, and I say eventually but probably in another year or two, she'll be on her own. She won't need our support really. She'll know what she wants to do and what she can do.

Martiza Santiago: That's something that I feel like I'm already doing. I don't come to you like, "Hey I need bus passes, but..."

Roy Mainelli: Right, right...

Martiza Santiago: ...I'm like, "No, I can afford these. Let me let you guys focus on the other people who might need your help."

Roy Mainelli: Right, yup.

Maritza Santiago: So you're definitely letting me become more self-independent.

Eileen Peltier: So I was working out at the gym and there was this kid, a young guy there who would open up the gym at 4 a.m. Not that I was there at 4 a.m., but he had been there since 4 a.m.

Tyler Johnson: Again, Eileen Peltier.

Eileen Peltier: He always had a big smile, very nice. So he did that starting at 4 a.m. and then in the afternoon and into the evening he delivered pizzas. I said to him, "You're such a hard worker, you're here every day, you've got a great attitude, you should look into our Advanced Manufacturing Program. Ten months later I see him, he shakes my hand; he's making \$75,000 a year at a major aerospace manufacturer in the area.

So success story, that's my personal antidote and it was so satisfying for me. Of course, now we had to find somebody new at the gym, but that's okay.

Alex Johnson: You know the difference that I like to see is a dedication and commitment to all residents of this community.

Tyler Johnson: Alex Johnson.

Alex Johnson: So I think we really need to think hard about how do we ensure that all individuals have opportunity so individuals can do what they feel God has given them talent to do, but at the same time enable them to take care of themselves and their family and be positive citizens within the community. So I see lifting up the individual as a strategy to uplift the neighborhood, the community, and the family.

Dr. Cliff Thermer: I think one of the worse pieces of untapped potential is when people themselves think that they can't do it.

Tyler Johnson: Here's Dr. Cliff Thermer.

Dr. Cliff Thermer: When we bring folks in and, "Oh I'm not good at math." Well let's work with you on that. People don't realize what they're capable of doing because they're afraid to try. Don't think that you have to settle for where you are. There are places like here that will help you achieve that next level for yourself and we want to do it. We need to do it. We have 12,000 unfilled jobs today and it's only going to get more. Connecticut needs you. We need you.

Tyler Johnson: Everyone in our region deserves more than just a job. They deserve the chance to have a successful career, one that gives them satisfaction and pays a family-sustaining wage.

We can make this happen by supporting training programs, helping people gain skills, and removing the barriers that prevent people from being successful. In doing this, we can improve our region's economy and change a whole lot of lives in the process.

Background music...

If you need a reminder of why this is so important, just think of Leonard Lloyd.

Leonard Lloyd: Coming from where I came from, some of us never make it out of there. Prison is not the end of life, it can actually be the beginning of a new one.

I used to write stuff down and paste it on the wall – this is what I'm going to do. You look at it every day and it motivates you. It had me motivated and driven. That's what I was man, and that's it. I'm thankful.

To anyone out there that may be going through something, don't give up. You hear it so much that you're don't really pay attention, but it's true. If you put your mind to it, you can do anything you want to do. Just don't give up. Anybody, please don't give up.

Tyler Johnson: Thanks for listening to DISINVESTED. I'm Tyler Johnson.

If you've enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe and share it with your friends.

Next week, we'll talk about Education. When we were growing up, students were divided in two paths: College and non-college. That type of thinking has changed. How do we ensure that everyone gets a quality education and goes on to a successful career in life? You'll hear from educators and students, next time, on Disinvested.

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