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DIVERSITY ■ DISCUSSION ■ DEBATE

Downtown's New Beating Heart:
Jim Merkel on The Junto & The Peninsula

Developing a Dynamic Downtown Series
June 14, 2023



Jim Merkel
CEO & Co-Founder, Rockbridge
Rockbridge co-founder and CEO James 'Jim' Merkel has over two decades of experience building and leading successful hospitality, investment, and operating brands. Merkel has always focused on creating great teams while providing a vision for how to grow, lead, and identify opportunities for success in what is an ever-evolving industry landscape.

Rockbridge has raised eight hospitality-focused funds and executed over 290 hotel investments in 39 states with transactions totaling over \$10 billion. Through Merkel's vision, Rockbridge develops, designs, and builds award-winning, independent and branded hotels that have delighted guests and investors, alike, such as Emeline in Charleston, SC (Best New Hotel in the US), Noelle in Nashville, TN (Best Public Spaces, Best Bar), The Eliza Jane in New Orleans, LA (Best Hotel Conversion), and The Cliff House in Ogunquit, ME (Most Beautiful Hotel in the World).

Merkel also formed RBHD, a leading hotel development and construction management business. In 11 years, RBHD has performed \$2.4 billion in renovation and ground-up construction in over 60 hotels.

Merkel's passion and vision extend beyond Rockbridge and drive a strong commitment to making a difference in the communities in which Rockbridge operates. He created and launched RTRX, a leadership and innovation experience that inspires curiosity, ignites conversation, and enables meaningful action. RTRX raises awareness and funding for high-risk cancer research and benefits Pelotonia. Through RTRX, Rockbridge has raised over \$6 million in 11 years.

Over the past 23 years, Merkel has held key leadership positions on multiple, industry boards, including the Marriott Hotels Advisory Board, AHLA Board of Directors, Hilton Hotels & Resorts Owner Advisory Council, Davidson Hotels & Resorts, Hospitality Ventures Management Group, Makeready, FHG Advisory Board, ILC Advisory Board, and the Lodging Industry Investment Council.

Merkel received a Bachelor's Degree in History from the University of Michigan.



Eleanor Kennedy
Assistant Managing Editor, Columbus Business First
@EKENNEDYBIZ1ST @COLUMBUSBIZ1ST

Eleanor Kennedy is the Assistant Managing Editor, for Columbus Business First. Before coming to Columbus, she served as an entertainment report and healthcare and technology reporter for five years at the Nashville Business Journal. She also worked for The News & Advance in Lynchburg, VA, and the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Kennedy earned her Bachelor's Degree from Washington and Lee University where she served as News Editor of the school's paper, The Ring-Tum Phi.

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Audio assist headphones are available the AV table at the side of the room.

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WCBE 90.5 Radio airs CMC Forums on Saturdays at 7:00 AM. CMC Forums are available on the WCBE Podcast Experience website.

Forum podcasts can also be heard on the CMC website or via your favorite podcast app.

WOSU Public Media, CMC's broadcast partner, televises CMC Forums on the WOSU Ohio digital channel and over-the-air on channel 34.2. The most recent Forums air on Mondays at 9:00 PM, Tuesdays at 5:00 AM, and Thursdays at noon.

CTV, Columbus Television, airs CMC Forums on Spectrum Channel 1024, WOW Channel 3, and AT&T Channel 99. You can also watch CTV over the air on WCIZ Channel 22.4.

Forums can also be seen on the CMC website at columbusmetroclub.org/archive/ and on CMC's YouTube channel.

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Upcoming Forums

Unless otherwise noted, all forums are 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM.
For Ticket info, visit columbusmetroclub.org or call 614.464.3220

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2023

The Future of Constitutional Amendments in Ohio

Featuring **Mike Curtin**, Associate Publisher Emeritus, The Columbus Dispatch, and Former Representative, 17th District, Ohio House of Representatives, and **Rob McColley**, State Senator, District 1, with host **Rodney Dunigan**, Assistant News Director, WSYX ABC 6.



In partnership with: **League of Women Voters of Central Ohio**
Livestream sponsored by: **The Center for HumanKindness at The Columbus Foundation**

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2023

Annual State of Nonprofits

Featuring **Michael Corey**, Executive Director, Human Service Chamber of Franklin County, **Courtney Falato**, Vice President and Program Officer, Global Philanthropy, JPMorgan Chase, **Mario Basora**, Chief Executive Officer, Future Ready Columbus, and **Shannon Isom**, President & CEO, Community Shelter Board, with host **Dan Sharpe**, Vice President for Community Research and Grants Management, The Columbus Foundation.



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SAVE THE DAY - WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 2023

No Forum - Happy Independence Day

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2023

Exploring the Promise and Peril of Artificial Intelligence

Featuring **ChatGPT**, Artificial Intelligence Chatbot, **OpenAI**, **Padma Sastry, Ph.D.**, Author, Project Manager, JPMorgan Chase & Co., and **Raghu Machiraju, Ph.D.**, Professor, Computer Science and Engineering, College of Engineering, The Ohio State University, and Founder and CEO, aBiobot Inc., with host **David J. Staley, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, History, Interim Director of the Humanities Institute, Director of the Center for the Humanities in Practice, The Ohio State University, and additional panelists to be announced.



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SAVE THE DAY - WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 2023

Made in Ohio: Deglobalization Is Bringing Manufacturing Back

Featuring **Ryan Augsburger**, President, The Ohio Manufacturers' Association, with **Doug Buchanan**, Editor in Chief, *Columbus Business First*, and additional panelists to be announced.



Livestream sponsored by: **The Center for HumanKindness at The Columbus Foundation**

Livestream in partnership with: **The Columbus Dispatch**



SAVE THE DATE - WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023

Preserving Intellectual Freedom in Public Libraries

SAVE THE DATE - AUGUST 2, 2023

Reimagining Education in Ohio

SAVE THE DATE - AUGUST 9, 2023

More Wetlands, Less Runoff, and Clean Water for All



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