

S1E15 Transcript

Andrew Fish 0:06

Welcome to CenterState CEO's semi monthly podcast, Talk CNY presented by NBT Bank.

Kate Hammer 0:12

On Talk CNY, you get a look at the people, projects and planning, moving Central New York forward.

Andrew Fish 0:18

I'm Andrew Fish, Senior Vice President of Member and Business Experience at CenterState CEO, Central New York's leading business leadership and economic development organization.

Kate Hammer 0:27

And I'm Kate Hammer, business coach and member at CenterState CEO. We are your hosts for Talk CNY. Take a moment right now to subscribe in your listening app for new episodes every other Wednesday.

Kelly Fumarola 0:40

The great thing about the foundations is we're able to engage our members beyond their membership, but in a way that helps them as business owners and community leaders to have an impact on this community, depending on what their particular interest is and what excites them and where they're looking to go for their own business.

Andrew Fish 1:01

On this episode of Talk CNY we will talk to Kelly Fumarola, Executive Director of the CenterState CEO Foundation, and the CenterState Development Foundation and Development Director about the important role these foundations play in supporting the work of CenterState CEO and its mission to create a region where businesses thrive and all people prosper. Welcome, Kelly, thank you so much for being here with us today.

Kelly Fumarola 1:22

Thanks for having me.

Andrew Fish 1:23

Absolutely.

Kate Hammer 1:24

Kelly, let's start by hearing about you and about the many hats that you wear here at CenterState CEO.

Kelly Fumarola 1:30

Sure. So a little about me. I am originally from what I guess we'd consider downstate New York, just outside of New York City. And I came up to Upstate New York, to go to school at

Binghamton, and lived in New York and Pennsylvania and came back here in 2006, I believe. And my background is actually I have degrees in economics and education and somehow fell into the world of nonprofits and grants and fundraising kind of unexpectedly, but I loved it. And so I served as a consultant to numerous nonprofits and municipalities over the years. And then in January 2020, I came on board here at CenterState CEO as the first Director of Development, so focused on again, grants and fundraising for the organization. And then this January, I took on the role of Executive Director of our two affiliated nonprofits, the CenterState CEO Foundation and the CenterState Development Foundation. So that's that's how I came here. And those two organizations are used to attract grant funding to support the programs that CenterState CEO and Senator State Development Foundation's a little bit different. It's been used in the past to help with some real estate development projects that many people in Central New York will know, including pike block, where we're sitting right here, the Galleries, the regional market, and many other really great economic development real estate development project. So those are the two affiliates that I'm now responsible for overseeing,

Andrew Fish 3:06

That's great, you know, and a lot of our listeners probably don't even realize that CenterState operates alongside these two foundations. Right? And, you know, is there a little bit more you can tell us about kind of why we have these two organizations, and maybe why there is the two of them. I know you mentioned a little bit at some of the different roles. But why is it important for us to have these foundations?

Kelly Fumarola 3:25

Yeah, so they were actually formed decades ago by our two predecessor organizations, the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce and the Metropolitan Development Association of CNY. So both of those were business associations similar to what CenterState CEO is now and in order to engage with the philanthropic community to help support programmings that weren't purely member based, each of those organizations established these foundations, which is what they're called. So we've kept them on when CenterState CEO became CenterState CEO in 2010. And they're slightly different CenterState CEO Foundation is what's called a supporting organization. So it supports the work of CenterState CEO that is not specifically member focused, not chamber focus. So like WorkTrain that folks who have been on here before and talked about WorkTrain last episode, and also Dominic and Amy who lead that work. A lot of the funding that we bring in through philanthropic partners comes in through CenterState CEO also we have a fantastic new initiative, the growth and equity fund and a piece of that that is supporting entrepreneurs who come from disadvantaged and marginalized backgrounds. We've been able to attract philanthropic funding through Senator JCO Foundation to support the growth and equity fund and numerous other small business development neighborhood development programs that CenterState CEO operates itself. CenterState Development Foundation is a separate nonprofit, traditional nonprofit, and as I said, has been used in the past to really pull through some really, you know, interesting real estate development projects with community partners and stakeholders of all types. So now we're actually reimagining that foundation a little bit, we might actually do some rebranding. So it might not be called that soon. Right now we're focusing on fiscal sponsorship. So we actually have a really great fiscal

sponsorship agreement with a local volunteer led project in the valley, and they're looking to increase food access for that area of the city of Syracuse. So we're looking to, you know, really get into the community and really understand some more grassroots needs and CenterState Development Foundation's are really great vehicle for doing that, you know, we'll also be open to, you know, sort of acting as developer of last resort, as we've done with some of these other projects that have been, you know, really great, but we're also looking at other more, you know, community focused community development opportunities where we can really engage more deeply with some stakeholders around the region through CenterState Development Foundation.

Andrew Fish 5:54
Great.

Kate Hammer 5:55
That was so interesting to hear about those differences. And they are clear between those two foundations and what's happening here at CenterState CEO.

Kelly Fumarola 6:02
Yep. Yeah, absolutely.

Andrew Fish 6:03
You know, and it's really important because the foundations enable a lot of that work. But the impact is really what's exciting. Is there some particular stories or projects or individuals that you could talk to us a little bit about how that have been impacted maybe by some of these programs that you just mentioned, that the foundation has been working on?

Kelly Fumarola 6:18
Yeah, absolutely. And that's the really fun part of this is getting to learn the stories and like really understanding like, the people that are impacted. So one that I'll say, in particular, there is a woman who is an entrepreneur in childcare space to Taneka Jones, and she's looking to open a second facility, it's called, It Takes a Village, she's absolutely amazing. And she has been looking for funding, obviously, you know, it's a big deal to put together, you know, to have one facility yet, too. So she has been working with the team here at CenterState. And through the growth and equity fund, she was able to access many grants. So that helped kind of get her to the next level of what she needs in her business in terms of, you know, paying for, you know, the myriad costs that go along with, you know, putting together a big facility like that. So, you know, she kind of came to this understanding that there was a big need in the community. And she's, you know, absolutely amazing. Like, you can just tell she loves these kids, she's incredibly interested in, you know, helping out the community, but also making sure that her staff is, you know, well trained, and up on all the latest in education. So it's really just been amazing to see her get to the point where she's just about ready to open up the facilities. When you meet people in the community, who, you know, have such talent and such passion and such drive, and they just haven't had the opportunities, you know, based on a lot of, you know, historical structural issues and barriers to be able to work with, you know, my colleagues here at

CenterState CEO who are doing such wonderful work to kind of break down those barriers and really working with, you know, the clients understanding that they have real talent and real, you know, incredible things to offer for this community. So, I'm excited, you know, for her plenty of other folks that they work with one being Shawni Davis of Luminary. I believe she's coming up soon. So I'm excited to hear her talk about that. So just some really wonderfully talented entrepreneurs out there who are being, you know, assisted through the Growth and Equity Fund and, you know, kind of just being allowed to shine, which is wonderful.

Andrew Fish 8:26
That's phenomenal.

Kate Hammer 8:27
Kelly, what is made possible by the existence of these two foundations that otherwise wouldn't be happening at CenterState?

Kelly Fumarola 8:34
Yeah, so you know, CenterState does wonderful work, working with our members, and you know, from the business community, higher ed nonprofits, and you know, the work that's done through, you know, certainly our team and the rest of the team to kind of help them grow is amazing. What we're able to do through the other work that goes on CenterState programs, such as work train or upstart or small business development programming, what that is able to do is kind of create this like holistic ecosystem for businesses to thrive and all types of businesses to thrive, right, even those that haven't been able to, you know, access the resources that they needed. So what's great about the foundations is they provide kind of that vehicle for attracting the philanthropic funding. And you know, when I say that, it's certainly we work with philanthropic institutions, certainly locally, also, nationally, there's an opportunity there for anyone really to engage and be, you know, what we'd say, is a philanthropist. So, you know, for example, talking about Growth and Equity Fund again, we had a small business owner come to us looking really to pay it forward. It was like, just, we're still kind of in the pandemic and, you know, he has owned a family business and felt just really lucky and fortunate to have gotten where he is. Now, I know he's gotten where he is because of the hard work he's done. His name is John Peter, he's been a really great partner. So he's become a donor to the Growth and Equity Fund. And he's been able to, you know, not only provide funding to help support some of the businesses that are supported through growth and equity, but also, you know, meet with the business owners that are being worked with here and, you know, share his thoughts and his expertise. But also, I feel like he's very open and willing, he's learning from them as well. And it's just created this really wonderful, like, partnership and relationship with, you know, whether you're a big business, a small business and individual, like the opportunity to really be a part of what's happening through programs like this, and the foundation as a vehicle for people to you know, not only donate, but learn about these programs, and the people who are being assisted with it is, you know, it's a phenomenal opportunity.

Kate Hammer 10:52
Yeah, it sounds wonderful.

Andrew Fish 10:53

Kelly, you mentioned it without these outstanding partners, these funders, people like John Peters and others, the foundation from both the Community and Allyn Foundation, as you mentioned, and all the others that have engaged, including some of the businesses that have stepped up. Without them, we don't have the ability to implement these programs. And so, you know, they are really super important, and that engagement is what we're really looking for.

Kelly Fumarola 11:14

Absolutely. And I think, you know, listen, we have a lot of support from our members, as you pointed out, you know, most of our founding supporters for the Growth and Equity Fund were out of our membership, and not only helped by supporting financially, but also helped develop the act, the very program itself. So having that engagement is incredibly important. And I think it just provides another opportunity to really, you know, bring in more resources to bear. Our members are, you know, have been great, they, you know, support the organization through their dues. But we have so much going on here at CenterState, there's never, you know, never a time when we can say that we're done, we've like hit the end of the road. And, you know, we we've done a program and and that's it, there's always more people to engage, you know, whether it's through, you know, more job seekers out there, I mean, we know, we have a huge opportunity now with micron, but even before that, you know, our members have a lot of, you know, job opportunities. So being able to, you know, connect all those people, we're constantly scaling and replicating programs. And the way that we're able to do that is by going out there into the community and really looking at our philanthropy and again, individuals or our corporations who have their own philanthropic arms or corporate social responsibility arms, and they're able to leverage those dollars to really support, you know, the programming that's happening so that we can serve even more people and, you know, create an even larger impact. So, you know, the work is never done as with any, you know, not for profit, we're fortunate that we have such an engaged business community that really been great partners.

Andrew Fish 12:51

Absolutely.

Kate Hammer 12:52

So, just out of curiosity, what specifically do you think is inspiring these funders to give? Is it the projects is that the vision the people, what's your two cents?

Kelly Fumarola 13:04

So I have to say, you know, people around here, and that includes our corporate partners, are really invested in the community. And you can see it, you know, when you listen to the prior podcast, so we've had, you know, a Dave Kaveny on there, like, they're really invested really want to be a part of the economic trajectory of the region. So I think that we're, I think we're fortunate in a way here in Central New York, that there really is that sense of community, I hear it from people who, you know, maybe weren't even raised here, including myself, you know, having moved here. It's such a supportive community and a community that really rallies around

trying to solve, you know, long term and persistent challenges, but I always get a sense that people are really hopeful. So I think that translates when it comes to, you know, needing to support, you know, some initiatives that are out there that are really seeing some, you know, gains, even in the short term as we pilot different projects, but some of them that are a little more long term, as you begin to see the impact. I think people get really excited about that, and also bringing people in, you know, we're not just asking for people to fund the program, we're asking them to be a part of it. So, you know, the our members, our employers, right, whether they're in, you know, a foundation or an institution of higher ed, or, you know, as a business, they have a vested interest in making sure that, you know, we're identifying all the talent that's out there, making sure that they have a supply chain that, you know, they can access when they need to grow their businesses. So I think there's just a really great understanding here for how we all work together. You know, and I won't butcher the United Way's slogan on that, but I know Nan talked about how you know, it just works better when we work together. And I think that's really a sentiment that people embrace here.

Andrew Fish 14:53

Individually we do what we can, together we do more. Nan talked about the history of that giving in this community and it goes all the way back to the 1920s, when they raised over a million dollars, in such a short period of time, it was amazing to me to think about that want to pivot a little bit to more forward facing where we're headed and what excites you about the future of Central New York? And what role do you see the foundations playing in that growth?

Kelly Fumarola 15:14

So I think along the lines of what I was talking about, what it really excites me is that I see so many people coming together, like across sectors, across political lines, you know, everyone is excited about really getting this right here, you know, certainly we were already experiencing growth before Micron, but now that Micron's here like that growth is going to explode, you know, not just from that company, but its supply chain, and, you know, all the other ripple effects. So just seeing people working together, really coming together, volunteering their time, you know, now we have the Community Engagement Committee. And, you know, it's wonderful to see all the folks there who are true leaders in the community, a diverse group of people, it really gives me a lot of hope that we will get this right, we just have to continue to work together, you know, we have to see the abundance that's coming. I know, not all communities have experienced that. So there's been a scarcity mindset. And I'm, you know, I believe in abundance, but I also understand why some folks don't, so we have a lot of work to do, but incredibly excited about it. I'm hoping that the foundations, you know, we can continue to engage you know, the philanthropic community, we can expand what people think it means to be a philanthropist, right? You know, I think about obviously, we want to bring in more funding, because we want to really, you know, make sure that these programs can scale and replicate and serve more people. But I also, you know, think about for the growth and equity fund, when we had a gathering for the founding supporters, the entrepreneurs came, and they gave their time and spent time in that room and talk about their experience. It was amazing. To me, they're philanthropists, right? It's, it's the love of humankind. And they were there to help everybody in that room get a better understanding. So to me, it's important that we use these foundations to,

you know, gather the funding necessary to do the work. But it's also a great way to just bring people together really have them understand and know how they can work together and what they can bring to the table. So that's what excites me.

Andrew Fish 17:15

That is exciting.

Kate Hammer 17:16

It's the most exciting.

Andrew Fish 17:17

Absolutely, we'll be right back to continue our conversation, and talk more about how our members can get engaged in the work of the foundations. But first, a note from our presenting sponsor of Talk CNY, NBT Bank.

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Kate Hammer 17:59

This is Talk CNY, and we are back with CenterState CEO's, Kelly Fumarola. As we think about the trajectory for this region, and how we all need to continue to level up, think about how we're going to do that. What do you think individuals members, community groups should be thinking about and should be doing to step up?

Kelly Fumarola 18:21

you know, I can speak from, you know, my vantage point as leading these two foundations, we're actually leveling them up right now, along with everybody else. So we've done some really great work fundraising against these programs. And I've talked a lot about the Growth and Equity Fund, but we're right in the middle of trying to recapitalize the fund at a million dollars. And I think I can say right now and be a little bit vague, but we've been able to attract an additional \$250,000 to help meet that goal. I can't say right now, who that will be from but more to come. So pay attention to your-

Andrew Fish 18:53

A litte teaser, there!

Kelly Fumarola 18:53

- your emails from CenterState CEO and the website. But so really exciting things happening, as we're, you know, engaging with our partners and you know, building the capacity of

foundations to really be a vehicle to engage folks. We now have a webpage on the incredible new website that the Comms team has put together here. So kudos to them. And there's a web page that talks about us both have foundations, and we now have a way for folks to donate through that webpage to the CenterState CEO Foundation to some of those programs that we have at CenterState CEO and more to come really as we you know, try to get more engaged in the community, bring these foundations more out to the forefront so people understand what they are. They've been around for a while and have been doing work, but we're really trying to, you know, engage on a larger level and have a little bit more visibility so that people including our members, you know, know how they can engage additionally through those organizations. So very excited work in progress, but we're really seeing some really great gains so far.

Andrew Fish 19:56

It's amazing. So you're going to hear the almost, you know, 25% of the way there for recapitalization of Growth and Equity, that's great. Go to Centerstateceo.com, go to the Foundation's page, learn more about the foundations, donate to the programs. Those are all fantastic ways for people to get involved. Clearly we can hear that I know that you really love doing the work of the foundations and bringing these additional resources to the work that we do. If you were to kind of sum up that experience for you, or the role that you play and why that's so important, in, you know, one or two sentences, what would that be?

Kelly Fumarola 20:32

Oh, one or two sentences, I just really love bringing people together around a common goal and solving problems. So that's something that I really look forward to doing as I get out in the community and meet more people. But really leveraging you know, certainly the expertise and the experiences and the networks of my colleagues, all of you, you know, I've been doing wonderful work with everyone in the community. So that's what I really look forward to is getting to know people and helping them to engage in a way that really speaks to them.

Andrew Fish 21:06

Well, we're thrilled to have you doing this work with us, Kelly, and excited to see where the foundation's go under your leadership and the ways in which it can support the work here at CenterState.

Kate Hammer 21:15

Thank you. Yeah, and thanks for joining us on today's podcast.

Kelly Fumarola 21:18

Thanks for having me.

Kate Hammer 21:19

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Andrew Fish 21:28

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Kate Hammer 21:35

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Andrew Fish 21:40

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Kate Hammer 21:48

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Andrew Fish 21:54

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