

**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This is an archived edition when our program was called Leadership Landscape TV.

(music)

**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to another installment of Leadership Landscape where we go inside the minds of local community leaders and allow them a chance to offer some keen insights into how they see themselves and most importantly explore just what makes them tick. I'm Kirt Jacobs host of a Leadership Landscape where previous interviews have included former mayors, state politicians, nationally renowned sports writers, sports legends, and heads of major business concerns, community activists, and developers. Today our guest is none other than Diane McGraw. She is executive director of the Greater Louisville Sports Commission. She was born in Philadelphia and Diane has carved an enviable niche for herself in the world of sports entertainment and event management. Diane was named executive director of the Greater Louisville Sports Commission in November 2006. Upon accepting the position Dianne quoted "it wasn't about the big events." she said. "It was about having a nice place to live and being able to help grow a community, a city, and its sports efforts. I knew that I had the skills and ability to do that." Unquote. Quote "people understand sports here." she said. "They live it breathe it. There are a lot of resources here for me to tap into." But having a famous last name didn't help Diane McGraw land the Louisville Sports Commission post instead it was her 25 years of experience in the sports entertainment industry with experience that includes top positions in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Orlando, Florida. In her various post McGraw has worked to recruit and plan blockbuster events such as the 1992 NHL All-Star Game, the 1995 PGA Championship, the 1996 Grammy Awards, and the 1998 US Senior Golf Open. And that's just a few of them. Her former husband, the late Tug McGraw was a fiery and flamboyant Major League Baseball pitcher and a member of the 1969 York Mets and the 1980s Philadelphia Phillies. Two teams that captured World Series titles.

And not to mention Tug's son and Dianne's stepson is none other than country music superstar Tim McGraw. However, back to her job her primary duties at the Sports Commission are to solicit major sporting events meetings and conventions that stimulate the local economy, to enhance the image of Louisville as an event destination and provide outstanding entertainment opportunities for its local citizens and lastly, I love this part, to put heads in the beds she says by attracting athletic events that fill hotel rooms with guests, local restaurants with diners, and retailers with shoppers. Diane also served as executive director of the Philadelphia Sports Congress from 1988-2004 and from '95-'97 she was president of Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment Commission and prior to that she was the president the Orlando Area Sports Commission. Her board appointments are too numerous to mention but a notable few are she was on the Senior PGA Los Angeles Host Committee, the International Sports Marketing Association, the U.S. Field Hockey Federation and she also serves on the Mayor's Task Force for the 2008 Ryder's Cup. And after all that if she isn't busy enough Diana has three sons named Christopher and Ian Hovenkamp and Matthew McGraw, Welcome to Leadership Landscape Dianne it's quite a pleasure to have you here.

**Diane McGraw:** Thank you.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's a mouthful and I could have gone on for the even more.

**Diane McGraw:** I'm tired already.

(laughter)

**Kirt Jacobs:** Well the first question..

**Diane McGraw:** Thinking about it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I know. The first question I like to ask our guests is what drives you to do what you do? I mean you're in a pretty unique position enviable I would say.

**Diane McGraw:** Well you know I guess since I was a kid I've always loved creating things and putting things together and I have been fortunate in my career to meet some pretty dynamic people in the sports and entertainment industry and some in my own family. And I just love putting the idea together. Making the plan. Bringing all the resources together and then watching it happen.

**Kirt Jacobs:** And you kind of started I was reading your bio didn't mention it when I was reading it but you started at a time when there wasn't this kind of blockbuster event mentality in the country in the late '70s. How has it changed? Is it is it is it much more difficult now to put on events? Is it more political or is it just a different time?

**Diane McGraw:** Right well I did start in the mid '80s and it was the beginning of the Sports Commissions as we are called not. And I was lucky enough to be on the ground floor as they were building those one of the first six cities to start a Sports Commission in Philadelphia. And the way that it has changed it today there are more restrictions or more rules and regulations in bidding on events. There's a lot more cities. We started out with maybe six cities there's now 350 cities that actually actively go out and bid on these events.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Really.

**Diane McGraw:** And now and they're all coming here in October for the team's convention. They'll be here next month and now you have to pay rights fees to host these events and bid fees and in the past that wasn't the case. Committee decided with the U.S. Olympic Committee or the NCAA hey I'd like to go to Louisville it's a great town let's put our next meeting our convention our event there. But today with the Commission's you're actively pursuing them and writing checks to have them come here.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Oh wow. I didn't know that.

**Diane McGraw:** So it has changed a lot.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I bet that will enlighten the audience. I didn't know that. Whom do you credit most influential in your life Diane? It can be more than one person.

**Diane McGraw:** Well I guess I'd have to say first and foremost it's probably my faith

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** My faith in God. And then my family.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Great.

**Diane McGraw:** Both kind of go hand-in-hand. You know I've had some great successes but I've also had some some you know pitfalls as most people do and it was through through that my faith and just staying strong and having a strong family background. Come from an Italian Catholic family. My mother was a little spitfire Italian lady who still rules the roost and I and so you know growing up with that kind of faith and and structure and maybe a little bit of the guilt that they put on you and you carry through life.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's another TV show,

**Diane McGraw:** Yeah. No it prevents you.. It always makes you think about what you're doing. And then on my dad's side I would have to say being more the quiet gentler Scottish fellow that he is you know I'm kind of learned how to be more compassionate.

**Kirt Jacobs:** So you are Scotch Italian.

**Diane McGraw:** Scottish Italian.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's an interesting mix.

**Diane McGraw:** Yes.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Very interesting. What was the most defining moment of your life Diane? And it can be more than one, personal or professional.

**Diane McGraw:** I guess it was when I was in my late teens and I decided that I wanted to move to New York and get into the entertainment industry and I packed my bags and got on an Amtrak train move to the Big Apple.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Did you have any family there?

**Diane McGraw:** Didn't have a friend, a family, or a job.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Wow

**Diane McGraw:** And I just went out there and kind of fended for myself and landed a great job working for the president of the Screen Actors Guild. And got an apartments and started my career and by the time I was 22 I started my own event production company.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Serendipity maybe.

**Diane McGraw:** And ran tennis events and that launched me into the sports industry.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's amazing. I did read that in your bio but I didn't mention it earlier. If there is one what is your biggest professional regrets? And it can be more than one and this can be personal as well. Regret's a strong word.

**Diane McGraw:** Yeah regret I'd have to think about that. But I always wanted to be a singer in a rock-n-roll band.

(laughter)

**Diane McGraw:** My brother was a drummer and so I grew up around music and it was always a passion of mine to be this singer. I thought I was Stevie Nicks you know.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Right.

**Diane McGraw:** Be down there practicing on the keyboards but I have to say you know other than that I kind of followed my path, my career and and now I'm here and you know if I could do something again it probably would be maybe more in the entertainment industry. Love producing films and documentaries

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** And so that's maybe something I'll do down the road show.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I got you. I don't know where you are going to find time but OK.

(laughter)

**Kirt Jacobs:** On the flip side of that what is your biggest professional triumph? And again that can be a personal triumph as well.

**Diane McGraw:** I guess it would be starting my own business at a young age. I didn't have any professional training. Actually I didn't even go to college. I started right out of high school went to work and my father always said to me if you're not going to college Diane make sure you have good skills. So I went to night school took some courses and landed some pretty dynamic jobs working for presidents of companies and corporations and that's what really gave me the insight into the world of business. I worked out of the boardroom. That's where I cut my teeth and moving to New York you know help me a lot as well.

**Kirt Jacobs:** When you founded that company I think you said at 22. An events management company is that correct? Were there really any companies of that nature at the time? Was that kind of the rage or were you kind of out there?

**Diane McGraw:** No I was really a fluke that I fell into that. I was working for the Screen Actors Guild for the mayor of New York, Mayor Koch, at the time was actually they started to bring film

production back to New York. They built the Story Studio. They were trying to raise money for the studios to take movie production out of Los Angeles. And I happened to go to a tennis club one day. Saw a tennis tournament with professionals and said why don't I bring celebrities here and raise some money and they said well if you can do that you can have the club for the day. So I actually started the I Love New York Press Celebrity Tennis Tournament. It was the year that the I Love New York logo came out and the song and I wrote to The New York State Department of Commerce and said it can I use the logo if I help bring movie production back to New York. And they said yes. So I started my very first event.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** Had no clue what I was doing and never had any marketing, PR, or event background and just kind of made it up as I went along.

**Kirt Jacobs:** How many people were you overseeing for that event?

**Diane McGraw:** I brought people on as I needed them but I did I really did everything. I sold the tickets. I booked the stadium. I got the players. I got the celebrities there.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I guess the industry's changed today where you'd probably have to pay to get the I Love New York.

**Diane McGraw:** Oh yeah.

**Kirt Jacobs:** As what we talked about earlier rights and so forth. What do you find exciting about all this Diane? In general I mean.

**Diane McGraw:** About

**Kirt Jacobs:** What you're doing?

**Diane McGraw:** The entertainment?

**Kirt Jacobs:** That itself or coming to a market that you've really never been in. To Louisville. You don't have any history here. You're making it as you go now. What excites you about doing that? I mean you can basically arguably stop right now and you've got a heck of a track record but you're still plowing ahead.

**Diane McGraw:** Well I do like to create things. And I like to step in and use my expertise, my background, my contacts, and really help to mold something and develop it. And when I heard about the job here in Louisville I knew that it was something I could come down here and get them where they needed to be. To bring them to their next level of their development. And I saw it as a nice challenge and I had never really been in this part of the country or you know visited as well as lives and I thought you know let's see what Kentucky has to offer. And I'm a little bit of adventurer Told my family that I'd like to move here. My youngest son, Matthew, who's eleven of course did not want to leave his friends, and family, and school. And I said don't worry Matthew this will be a good thing. And just about two months ago he said mom if you ever quit your job is it OK if we stay?

**Kirt Jacobs:** Oh wow.

**Diane McGraw:** So he loves it here. And he loves his school and his friends.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Usually it's the Derby that gets people here. You know they come in and go to the Derby for the weekend and they fall in love with Louisville.

**Diane McGraw:** Yeah actually I have to tell you I was lucky on my first Derby. I won the trifecta, exacta, and the winning horse.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's another T.V. show.

**Diane McGraw:** That's a whole other thing too.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I got you.

**Diane McGraw:** It was a great experience.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What was the best advice ever given to you? And it can be more than one piece of advice. That anyone gave you in your travels.

**Diane McGraw:** I have to say the thing that sticks out the most is someone said life is life. If things aren't going your way don't worry. Tomorrow's another day.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Nice. I like that.

**Diane McGraw:** I actually... You'll be surprised to learn who said that. It was my eight-year-old son Christopher.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** When he was younger. He's twenty four now. I had sent his younger brother Ian to his room for doing something. Ian was quite upset. And Christopher's advice was Ian life is life. We're going to move on tomorrow's another day. and I never forgot that because that is so true. Christopher happens to be one of the most smartest people I've ever met.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Wow

**Diane McGraw:** I'm very proud to be his mother.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's good. I hope he gets to see this interview. Can you define leadership in one word? I mean that is the basis of this show Leadership Landscape. It can be more than one word in the great English lexicon as I always say to our guests.

**Diane McGraw:** It's hard to do that but I would say to me leadership means trust.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** Because if you are trustworthy people will follow

you. And if you trust in your instincts and trust in yourself you can be a good leader.

**Kirt Jacobs:** You obviously trusted your instincts when you went to New York on the fly. That's pretty amazing.

**Diane McGraw:** I was just bold.

(laughter)

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's another word. You can throw that in there too. if you could change one thing Diane be it in your own life or in general what would that be. And you can really interpret that question like on an international level, national, local, personal ,professional. There's a lot of ways our guests kind of interpret that question and answer it.

**Diane McGraw:** If I could change something about myself ?

**Kirt Jacobs:** It can be about yourself. It can even be about Louisville. It can be about United States maybe.

**Diane McGraw:** Yeah if I could change something. It's the way today society and the way people think and the way they probably idolize these celebrities that we put out there...

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** ...and sports figures.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Sure

**Diane McGraw:** I know I'm in that world and I should be promoting it. But what I like to do is you know really take the reverse of that and not put so much emphasis on the people and the celebrity type thing because people just fall into all kinds of traps. You see the young girls following these other young actresses that are getting in trouble today and and young boys wanting to be professional baseball and basketball and football

stars making thirty million dollars a year. And that isn't the real world. And actually having the opportunity to have been on the business side of sports for so many years and then married to a professional athlete. I really have a good inside look at the whole sports industry.

**Kirt Jacobs:** The reality.

**Diane McGraw:** And my biggest thing is stressing education.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** And for young children to make sure that they get an education because even if they're lucky enough to get into an entertainment or sports career like that it could be over at any time for any reason and they better have something to fall back on. So I actually have a mentoring program that I've been putting together and will bring to Louisville.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Oh really

**Diane McGraw:** This coming year

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** For our young students on careers behind the scenes in the sports and entertainment industry.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Great great. That kind of answers one of our other questions but I want to get you on that anyway. Could you describe in detail a particular incident or scenario Diane in your profession or your personal life where you utilized your style and philosophy on leadership. It's kind of a mouthful of a question. Or maybe that boldness where you talked about the trust you talked about and where you applied that maybe. It doesn't have to be an event. It can be anything

**Diane McGraw:** Yeah. I think that's the biggest thing that would describe you know that putting out my philosophy on leadership is

just being a parent. Parenting every day and you just hope that you give out the right advice and that you're you know your children follow you know what you put out there for them and they get it. I think that's probably the biggest challenge is being a good parent.

**Kirt Jacobs:** It's never dull is it?

**Diane McGraw:** No

(laughter)

**Kirt Jacobs:** Never dull.

**Diane McGraw:** Just ask my parents.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Yeah yeah. Is there a difference today you kind of touched upon this. Is there a difference today in our leaders than there was in past generations? You know the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s. I mean it doesn't have to be political. It doesn't have to be local or national. Just leadership in general. People that maybe you've worked with on different organizations. Do you think they approach to leadership differently today than they used to?

**Diane McGraw:** I think that we're... The young people today are so smart and really are our future leaders and I'm just amazed at some of the young interns that we have coming in the office that really are together. Much more than we were I guess at that same age.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Sure

**Diane McGraw:** You know years ago. So I think there is a bright future for our leaders. I wish that some of the people that I've met along the way did things more on from their own you know gut instinct and for the good of things and not for personal gain or a personal agendas. I've seen a lot of that and that doesn't always work. And so I think integrity is the the thing that's missing a lot today. And a lot of leadership people

**Kirt Jacobs:** Why do you think that is? Because their pace of society has gotten so quick with technology. Do you think that's what it is or what do you think?

**Diane McGraw:** I think that I think money drives a lot of people. You'll see in all the big cases the Enron's and all of that. I mean people are just out for you know personal gain. Now not everyone. There's some great leaders.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Sure

**Diane McGraw:** And I don't want to suggest that at all. I find here in Louisville there's a tremendous amount of great leadership and in fact a lot with a lot of the females that are here. When I first arrived in town I learned about this Women for Women group.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Diane McGraw:** My good friend Cissy Musselman had started. And um there are so many dynamic women leaders here in this town it was just really amazing to me.

**Kirt Jacobs:** We are working to get them on the show. Like yourself. Working on getting Cissy too. I love asking this next question because it gives great insight into our guests. Diane if you were granted two weeks right today. No obligations. No commitments. How would you spend this two week mini vacation from life? In other words they shut down the Sports Commission here for whatever reason. They take away your Blackberry. Call us in 14 day. What would you do with that two weeks? And you can do anything you want.

**Diane McGraw:** The first thing I would do is go home and organize my life there and organize my closet and you know make sure everything was all set at home. And then I'd pack my bags and I probably would be on an airplane to Italy or Europe or someplace exciting like that.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Would you take family or would you fly solo?

**Diane McGraw:** If I could do it I would love to just go myself for a while just to kind of..

**Kirt Jacobs:** decompress

**Diane McGraw:** Yes decompress and and all of that and then maybe have my family join me for another week.

**Kirt Jacobs:** There you go the first week then the next week.

**Diane McGraw:** Yeah yeah.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's an honest answer. I like that.

**Diane McGraw:** Yeah I've been working very hard. It's something I'm used to but I

**Kirt Jacobs:** Sure

**Diane McGraw:** feel like that now is the time..

**Kirt Jacobs:** You are doing what you love too so.

**Diane McGraw:** to take a little break.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I may not be hard work. I mean it's hard work but to you it's a labor of love. I can already tell that in the short time we've been interviewing.

**Diane McGraw:** My brother once said to me I had mentioned to him a few years ago that I wanted to maybe move someplace quiet maybe somewhere in the mountains in Colorado and just kind of sit back and run a bed and breakfast and he said Diane knowing you you'll be throwing parties in the barn.

(laughter)

**Diane McGraw:** You'll be organizing parties in the barn. I guess I

just can't stop.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Now this next question we ask all of our guest whether younger or older. When the great day comes Diane how do you want to be remembered? You know God forbid you walk out of here something tragic happens. How do you want to be remembered by family, friends, colleagues, or just in general.

**Diane McGraw:** I think first I'd like to be remembered as a great mom. As someone who was a good friend, a hard worker, and and someone who really you know lived their life and didn't just pass through it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I think you've done that. You're still adding chapters to the to the book of your life.

**Diane McGraw:** I hope I don't stop for a while.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I don't think you're going to. I can tell in the short time I've known you. It's quite a pleasure having you on Leadership Landscapes.

**Diane McGraw:** Well thank you.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you for being here.

**Diane McGraw:** Thank you for inviting me.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I want to wish you all the best. Thank you very much.

(music)

**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you for listening to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This episode was archival audio from when we were known as Leadership Landscape TV. If you have any feedback, general comments, or a recommendation for a suitable guest feel free to email me at [kirt@moxietalk.com](mailto:kirt@moxietalk.com) or catch us on Facebook under MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs, or on Twitter under [@kirtjacobs](https://twitter.com/kirtjacobs) or our extensive website at [www.moxietalk.com](http://www.moxietalk.com)