

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

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to a new partnership between Metro T.V. and Y-Pal the Young Professional Association of Louisville called 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 but most importantly just what makes them tick. I am Kirt Jacobs a current Y-PAL board member and host of Leadership Landscape.

Today our guest is Joan Riehm. She is deputy mayor of Louisville Metro government. She has served as press secretary to the Louisville, excuse me, The City of Louisville, Louisville's mayors in the 1970s. And as the city's deputy mayor from 1986-1996. In the private sector she has been manager of government relations for Human Inc. Has run her own consulting business and public issues, management and communication and has serviced as coordinator of a 23-county regional leadership coalition of area business leaders. She currently serves as vice chair of the Alliance for Regional Stewardship, a national organization promoting regional development.

As deputy mayor for Louisville Metro Government Joan Riehm oversees major improvement initiatives and corrects implementation of Mayor Jerry Abramson strategic plan. She served as co-chair of the mayor's merger transition team in 2002. Since the new Metro government of Louisville in Jefferson County began on January 6, 2003 she has spoken in more than 30 different cities around the country on her community's experience with the merger. Joan is co-founder of the Leadership Kentucky program now in its 20th year and recently was named one of the 50 most powerful people in Louisville by a community magazine.

She is founder and chair of the Louisville store. A nonprofit venture to sell Louisville related products to benefit Metro government, Greater Louisville Inc., the Greater Louisville Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Downtown Development Corporation. Joan holds two master's degrees in journalism from Northwestern University and in community development from the University of Louisville. She is married to Dr Melvin E. Greer, professor emeritus in philosophy at the University of Louisville. Wow what an impressive bio.

**Joan Riehm:** I'm impressed you read the whole thing.

**Kirt Jacobs:** It is interesting history Joan. The first question.. Welcome to Leadership Landscape first off. The first question we ask all of our guests is what drives you to do this? You have a pretty rich political history here. Getting the merger passed etc.

**Joan Riehm:** I have a great interest in cities, especially this city. And I really like to feel like I'm making a positive difference that I'm contributing to change that's going to positively affect people's lives for the better. So that's really where I've concentrated my efforts. Mostly here in this community. But as I see opportunities for improvement that might affect the state as it did with Leadership Kentucky or nationally with the Alliance Regional Stewardship I love to work on those levels as well. I was raised a Catholic and had the benefit of 16 years of wonderful liberal arts education from the Ursuline nuns and one of the things that they inviewed in me was the idea of giving back. That is really really important that everybody can do something. And I got that from my parents in the beginning and then the nuns made sure that it became a part of my .DNA.. So I almost don't know any other way to be.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Well great answer. I like that. Whom do you credit most influential in your life Joan?

**Joan Riehm:** I mentioned my parents and that's probably a standard answer. I think anybody who can say that is really lucky. I admire both my parents very much and I'm a quote them all the time. One of the things my mother said which I have often remembered

is you basically only regret the things you didn't try. And she was a great one as we were younger for trying everything within reason. She didn't want us to try drugs and jumping off cliffs but..

**Kirt Jacobs:** Yes that would be extreme.

**Joan Riehm:** I would be trying to rollerskate. Try to play the piano. Try to take white water rafting. Whatever it is do it once. And her theory was that even if you don't like it as you go back to it in later life you will have avoided that awful first time and it will be easier to take it up again if you decide you want to. And then my dad's among his many great pieces of advice was it's not who you know it's who knows you. And so he made sure that we realize that it was our it was to our betterment to go out of our way to get to know people and to help people understand what we were about and what we wanted to do because it was it was what they thought of you then might help you get involved with them.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Great. On the other note to that, what was the most defining moment of your life Joan? If you could name one. If you can look back, armchair quarterback as I say to all our guests and look back over maybe with hindsight 20/20.

**Joan Riehm:** There were a lot of them but as a pondered that question one of them was. When I was press secretary to Mayor Harvey Sloane. That was my first job in government. That was in 1975 in the fall when we had the within a six week period we merged our city and county school system and we implemented desegregation busing. And there were a lot of citizens who were very very upset about those two decision.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I can remember that as a little boy.

**Joan Riehm:** We had a lot of interest in the national media because at the same time very unfortunate bit of timing we were hosting a national Democratic leadership forum for the eight presidential candidates running for president that year. When Jimmy Carter was running. And so we had a lot of national press here in town and I ran the press room that had included dealing with the national press

and having never done that before and never had to deal with the national media plus dealing with the all the busing controversy in trying to explain that to the media while we are still putting a positive face on Louisville. I came through that and really felt good about my ability to do that and it. I think the moments in your life that helped you realize that you can operate on a higher level of efficiency and effectiveness than you are. Whatever level it is you are going up to a point. Those are the moments that help you move ahead and try to different things and that was one of those moments for me.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Well on the flip side of that, a question we ask all our guest is, if there is one, what is your biggest professional regret? In other words is there something you would do done differently?

**Joan Riehm:** My biggest professional regret is one I still might be able to not have to say at the end about life and that I still haven't figured out a way to do a study at Harvard. I sat down when I was much younger and I made a list of the things I wanted to do in my lifetime. And I've done quite a few of them and one of them was that I wanted to study at Oxford University in England and a number of years ago I found out they had a summer program for adults and so I went and did it for a week. Cross that off my list. It the marvelous. A great experience and so I'm still working on Harvard because that's on my list.

**Kirt Jacobs:** The final chapters aren't written yet.

**Joan Riehm:** That's right out I have time to go.

**Kirt Jacobs:** On the flipside of that, what's your biggest professional triumph?

**Joan Riehm:** Well the running that pressroom was one. In an earlier before that I went to journalism school I got a master's in journalism at Northwestern because when I was growing up and decided I wanted to be a journalist. I wanted to work for the Courier Journal and they require that you have a master's degree or some advanced training on the ground in journalism. So I chose

to go get a master's in journalism and the first semester I elected to go to Washington and work for a semester on a program that Northwestern had where you cover Capitol Hill. as a student journalist. And it was very. very demanding. I mean I was still it was I was fairly young and certainly inexperienced in working my way around Washington. Senator William Fulbright and all sorts of other important names. Filing stories that were published in papers and I was elected first of the class in that group of people who were there that semester and again that was this idea that gosh I thought I was pretty good but I must be really good to be able to go to the capital of our country and do this work and come out on top and it was just a confidence builder that I've never forgotten.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What do you find exciting Joan about all of this you've done and trying to get to Harvard?

**Joan Riehm:** Yeah. I love ideas. I love all kinds of ideas. I'm intrigued with them and I love mostly connecting ideas. It think that's why I became a journalist because the basic process of journalism. And I still consider myself at heart a journalist. The basic process is to look at all sorts of different bits of information and then to find the connections between them. To find the patterns and then to tell about those patterns in some coherent way that your audience can relate to. And that sense of finding out how things fit together and making connections is something I do almost all the time.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What is your favorite word?

**Joan Riehm:** Yes

**Kirt Jacobs:** Yes. Would you like to elaborate on that a little?

**Joan Riehm:** Well I always...

**Kirt Jacobs:** Speaks for itself I guess.

**Joan Riehm:** ...always been an optimist. I believe in optimism I think it's a huge energy builder and I've been sometimes teased because I because sometimes people say optimist is naive and I think that's

probably part of optimism is the naivety tell you that maybe you still can trust people and things will still work out OK But I just think that an attitude of yes says I'm going to be open to it. I'm going to try it. I'll consider your idea. Maybe I'll take a risk. I can accept failure because it's better to try and fail than not to try it all and I can all of those attitudes are summed up for me in yes

Kirt Jacobs: OK now with the word leadership. Can you define, and that's the focus for our show today, can you define leadership in one word?

Joan Riehm: Vision. End of sentence if you don't have. Is it, is it the bible or some some other famous source says without a vision the people perish.

Kirt Jacobs: If this makes sense.

Joan Riehm: I think a leader is the one who sees over the horizon something that could be better or different than the way it is now. And they had the ability first of all they're lucky enough to see it or they're gifted to see it. Secondly they recognize that it is a vision that has relevance to whatever situation they're in and thirdly they know how to translate that into words and and motivations that will will affect the people who are needed to make that vision possible. And without any of those steps. Either you don't have the vision or somebody who can see the vision. You don't realize that the vision applies to the problems or challenges that you're facing or you don't know how to translate it. Without any of those three things the leadership is going to be much less effective.

Kirt Jacobs: So that's one of the most detailed answers we have ever had. I like that. If you could change one thing over the course of your life, what would that be? Or in general.

Joan Riehm: Yeah there is a wonderful small bill.. I don't there's a billboard I started to say I don't really like billboards, but I should say there's a billboard downtown in downtown Louisville that has a picture of a whole bunch of skeletons on it and they're full full skeletons must be ten or twelve of them and underneath it says

why don't we realize that underneath we are all the same. And I love that billboard. I like that message because I've been fascinated by the studies that have come out about DNA showing that the that the percentage difference of DNA between Anglo Saxons and Chinese and Muslims and Christians and whoever else you want to say is infinitesimal X X X percentage point difference. And when you think about the conflict in the world. It's all about differences and yet underneath from the skeleton on up we're all basically the same. And if we could spend more of our time realizing that and science certainly is trying to help us do that. It seems to me that it be a lot easier to get along a little better.

**Kirt Jacobs:** It would be. Well this is a question that the moment of truth if you will that bring some discomfort to some of our guests and that's one I love to ask our guests when the great day comes how do you want to be remembered?

**Joan Riehm:** OK Now we were talking before the show about being organized. Now you have to understand that is a passion of mine. I like being organized. One of the things I have done is I have planned my funeral. I have got everything ready OK. And one of the things I've gotten ready is what I want on my tombstone. My monument as I should say. My father designed and sold monuments for a living so I grew up looking at monuments and thinking about what was going to be on my monument. So what I want on my monument is I cared. I tried.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's beautiful. It's simple. Beautiful .Well that Joan.

**Joan Riehm:** I have thought about that.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I could tell, you that will influence there from if there from the family business. Well Joan that's you know I want to thank you for being on the Leadership Landscape today. Thank you very much.

**Joan Riehm:** I enjoyed it.

**Kirt Jacobs:** All right

**Joan Riehm:** Thanks Kirt.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you I'm Kirt Jacobs until next time this is Leadership Landscape. Thank you.

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**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)