

Oklahoma Innovations Radio Show

Air Date: December 19-20, 2015

Guests: **Jesse Harlin, Vance Lucas, Ryan Hoegg, Amanda Harlin**, Techlahoma

>> From the OCAST Radio Network, this is *Oklahoma Innovations*, a weekly science and technology radio magazine, brought to you as a service of OCAST, the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology. OCAST is the state's only agency whose sole focus is science and technology. The OCAST mission is to identify and fund promising research and technologies that allow Oklahoma to compete in a global market economy from our own backyard. This program features some of Oklahoma's most gifted scientists, inventors, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, educators and business leaders who all have one common goal: developing technology based economic growth for all Oklahomans. Now, here are your hosts Gary Owen and Chad Mullen.

[Music]

>> **Gary Owen:** Welcome to this week's edition of *Oklahoma Innovations*. Chad and I are going to talk a little bit about software development companies this -- We got some interesting guests this time.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Absolutely, and then I'm probably not going to talk a lot about it, because I don't know that much about it, but I know that I use an IPAD. The recorder that we're using to record this, all of the things in this room uses code and I think software coding, software engineering is becoming a big industry all around the world, all across the country, here in Oklahoma City and Tulsa for sure. You know most of our energy companies in our states our primarily driven by software engineers -- a lot of the new technology that exists because of that. And in fact, I was talking to a retired general the other day, and he was talking about a new plane under development in the military that's going to have millions and millions of lines of code, and we'll probably hear from our guests today that sometimes with code, less is more, not necessarily more is more. But the group we have here today Gary is the Techlahoma Group. They're a group of software engineers that have founded a community to help other software engineers exceed some. I'm exciting to hear about what they're doing and what they have to come.

>> **Gary Owen:** Kin of a networking organization it sounded like --

>> **Chad Mullen:** Absolutely.

>> **Gary Owen:** And then they just hosted a developer conference. I would've never thought about that. It's -- You know you always think of, I guess some of the other types of markets you would think of Oklahoma City is being a big hub for software developers, but we're finding this is big business in Oklahoma, both as you said Chad in Oklahoma City and in Tulsa. The Developer's Conference was called Thunder Plains. We'll learn about that as we go on. So Techlahoma, we're going to talk with first of all Jesse Harlin who's president and co-founder and Vance Lucas who is the treasurer. Welcome to the mics guys. Tell us a little bit about you fellas and how you first of all how you got into software development. Let's start with you Jesse.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Oh, how I got into software development. Well actually, my path was kind of less typical than other folks. I actually started writing music and I like to write algorithmic

music, so music that tries to sort of write itself, so I sort of learned Java Script and a number of programming languages sort of through that avenue. It didn't take long before I eventually went to the industry and started programming fulltime.

>> **Gary Owen:** So what kind of background did you have in computers I mean outside of normal use? When you talk about writing music, that's quite a jump into Java Script.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Well it's really interesting. Whenever you go to the music community, there's folks who are enthusiastic about music and also technology, so these folks at the time -- There's a whole stack of languages related to music programming, you know Csounds, SuperCollider, Maximus P, a whole lot of it. So that's where I first started programming. But now that -- now that I'm in the industry for my day job, I'm a web applications programmer software architect at a company called Telogical that works in the telecomm industry.

>> **Gary Owen:** So how did Techlahoma come about?

>> **Jesse Harlin:** I'll start this off. Basically, there was a number of user groups in Oklahoma City, JavaScript, Java, Csharp, and there were folks that were leading these groups, you know, getting speakers every single month. And we at the very beginning, realized that if we kind of pool resources and work together, all the groups are a lot more durable and a lot more prosperous, you know, logistically speaking, making sure we have a place to meet, we have chairs, we have a projector. There's pizza at every meeting, you know, just stuff like that, right?

>> **Gary Owen:** Uh-huh.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** And it has grown into an actual organization that is kind of a stewardship organization to make sure these groups keep meeting and folks can have a community.

>> **Vance Lucas:** One of the -- one of the challenging things about a group is even just logistical things like where do we meet? How do we feed people that are here?

>> **Gary Owen:** No, you got to feed people to keep them there, you know.

>> **Vance Lucas:** The devil gets more people to come up for sure. But even in that, like how do you -- If you want to start a group, you can't just accept money, because then that money goes through your taxes and it affects you personally, those kinds of things. So one of the reasons we started Techlahoma as a nonprofit, is we want -- we need an umbrella to kind of accept money and donations to support these groups and sponsorships to support these groups in a, you know, community-friendly, nontax way.

>> **Chad Mullen:** And that was for our members at home, that was Vance Lucas just speaking there.

>> **Gary Owen:** Right.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Vance, tell us a little bit about yourself, how -- where are you from? How did you get into that programming?

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yeah so I started really early. I started making web pages at 11 or 12 and it really started -- I went over to a friend's house and I saw -- It was like back in the AOL days, and he made this web page out of this AOL builder. I don't remember what exactly what it was called. And I thought that was pretty cool, and I decided I wanted to make one for myself, because it was just a cool thing to make, and I kind of got the burn --

>> **Gary Owen:** You just got hooked is what.

>> **Vance Lucas:** I got hooked and I got deeper and deeper in. Like, I created a - initially a website about a game called Starcraft, and that website eventually went on to get over about 2500 hits a day --

>> **Gary Owen:** Wow.

>> **Vance Lucas:** -- and, so it got pretty. It was relatively known in the Starcraft community, and it just -- it motivated me to keep adding stuff.

>> **Gary Owen:** Just kind of mushroomed, didn't it for you?

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yes, yeah.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah, that's fascinating. You know I -- and I -- Chad, you know this being in your circle, I think a lot of entrepreneurs who are in science and technology but in computers, I can see where this is really big is young teens get attracted to computer technology.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Oh yeah, absolutely. I think with anything, any career, but especially stemmed earlier, that seed is planted, the better the product's going to be in the end, certainly, you know, taking the requisite math courses, science courses, all things you need to do throughout school and your career is very important. One of the things I would like to ask you gentlemen here, you know we talked about community support, a place to meet. You know, traditionally in -- with the industry, the large industry, you have -- things are kind of company-focused, but a lot of probably I imagine members of your community work for a wide variety of companies or work for themselves or work remotely. I know we have one of our managers here at OCAST, her spouse is a computer programmer, and I believe he's employed in Florida, but lives in beautiful Oklahoma. So, who wouldn't want to live in Florida when he could live in Oklahoma, right Gary? So, I mean so tell us --

>> **Gary Owen:** Well now I don't know. Maybe I might go 50/50, live there part-time, live here part-time.

>> **Chad Mullen:** It makes the business travel a little better I guess especially in the winter, but -
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>> **Jesse Harlin:** You're noticing that in the software community that there's a lot of diversity, right?

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Obviously with background, I mean just the two of us come from completely different areas.

>> **Gary Owen:** Sure.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** There's diversity in the kinds of people who are programming --

>> **Gary Owen:** That's right.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** -- and there's diversity in -- and some folks are doing it for business. Some folks are doing it for government. Like you said, everyone needs it. And some folks are doing it for Open Source projects. They're doing it --

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** -- just for the betterment of communities and the betterment of humans.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Now, explain Open Source for those of us who know nothing about computers.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Sure, I'd be happy to. So Open Source is -- There's a number of software licenses that sort of encompass Open Source, so if you wanted to look this up, you have creative commons, MIT, New, and stuff like that. But most of the world's software runs right now on Open Source software, things you probably heard of like Linux, really popular libraries like jQuery and stuff like that are libraries that folks in the programming community have worked on essentially for no pay, just to have a really good tool that they can use for themselves, right? And sometimes organizations will support, you know the development of this because it's mutually beneficial for everyone, but typically speaking, Open Source is a kind of an emergent network of people working together and they just put it out there for everyone to use. And so we have a lot of folks working on that kind of stuff in the communities that we're stewards of.

>> **Gary Owen:** I would think in this kind of organization, you uncover a lot of new ideas in software coding. You could work through stumbling blocks and create also your finding out new niches, new needs out there in the community, in particular in the corporate world, right?

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Yeah, I would certainly say so. I mean, you know, we say that you know, just a few months in the software community is like an epoch -- it's like a big amount of time in terms of innovation.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** I could go into the specifics of it, but just how we even think about rendering inside of our browser is completely different now than it was six months ago.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yeah, as an industry, software industry is still relatively young, you know? People have only been building things in software at scale for 50,60 years maybe. So it definitely as an industry, it's relatively young.

>> **Gary Owen:** So does this -- You know, to those of us who are lay people or people who just use their computers and their mobile devices on a day to day basis, and they're constantly getting updates. I mean every two to three weeks, every couple of months. Chad, I'm sure you're in --

>> **Chad Mullen:** Every couple of hours, something like that.

>> **Gary Owen:** And it's like, why do they keep doing this? I'm tired of updating. Now you got to go to the new iOS system and blah, blah, blah. Kind of talk about that, because that's all software code related, so.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Sure, well there's obviously a lot of, you know, development integration on the way that we write software, the techniques we use and the languages we use. There's also a lot of the duration and development in sort of how we push code from the developer out to the person who's using it. What you're describing is a continuous deployment, right, continuous integration. And everyone does it right now.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** And they do that -- Some places like GitHub deploy every five minutes or every minute or something really crazy like that. And that means, you know, if you're an end user and you find a bug, they can get it fixed pretty much immediately.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** So of course it can seem frustrating when you're end using. You're constantly getting updates, but if you are looking at a model where, you know -- you know in the past, you used to go to a store and pull it off a box --

>> **Gary Owen:** Right.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** -- and if something was broke, it just kind of stayed broke --

>> **Gary Owen:** That's right.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** -- if you're a two. And that --

>> **Gary Owen:** Until the new release came out.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Right and --

>> **Chad Mullen:** And had to buy it again.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Right. So, you know, for all the drawbacks of this kind of a, you know, continuous deployment model, it's actually way better for everyone. So -- But, that is just barely scratching the surface of that entire topic. Barely, barely.

>> **Chad Mullen:** So, I want to go back to the Open Source question for a little bit. That - I think that's something a lot of us don't truly understand. But -- So, Open Source systems are out there. Folks can modify, create new applications of it. They share with the community, but then how does that get integrated back into the business community? How do they take advantage of that?

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yes, they're typically -- Open Source is done in -- There's some really big Open Source projects and some smaller Open Source projects. Most of the Open Source projects are relatively smaller. The biggest one that probably everyone has heard of is probably Linux. It's developed all Open Source all for free. A lot of programming -- a lot of programmers -- most programmers I would say deploy their code, so production servers that are serving you this website content, the vast majority of those are running on Linux, which is Open Source. So what happens at a lot of companies or even at an individual level, you don't -- you may not necessarily set out to say I'm going to make this Open Source thing. What you do in software is you try to create libraries that are reusable within all of your software projects. So if you find yourself doing the same type of thing over and over and over, it'd be stupid to write that from scratch every time. So you create shared libraries and you try to encapsulate all your code in those, and those libraries are sometimes shared with others and that's really Open Source, the gist of it.

>> **Gary Owen:** We're talking with Jesse Harlin and Vance Lucas right now with an organization called Techlahoma. We have a lot more to learn about this organization, and we also if you're a corporate individual out there that might like consider sponsoring these guys, we'll tell you how you can do that as we get into the program. Alright, so we'll take a break. We'll come back and talk more with the guys from Techlahoma when we return on *Oklahoma Innovations*.

[Music]

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>> Now in its' 20th year, this is *Oklahoma Innovations* on the OCAST Radio Network.

[Music]

>> **Gary Owen:** *Oklahoma Innovations* -- our topic this week is a group called Tech -- but it's actually the Techlahoma Foundation. It's a group that supports a local user groups, primarily made up of software development. I would call them gurus, but they're actually very talented people who are helping drive technology forward, and of course almost everything we touch is -- or use or we're around, whether it's a building, whether it's heat and air, whether it's computers, I mean anything -- anything computer driven requires software. It's amazing how many people right here and in Tulsa and surrounding areas have software. I guess you would -- how -- What's the right label for your industry? I wouldn't call them writers and authors, but what do you call them?

>> **Jesse Harlin:** We actually say developers just kind of in the industry.

>> **Gary Owen:** Okay, so we're using the right coin phrase then.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** You are and it's interesting because I'll use that term just kind of freely and then I'll be like, oh, just to be clear, I mean a person who writes software --

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah. Alright, well --

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yeah and -- Oh, sorry to cut you off.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Go right ahead.

>> **Vance Lucas:** One thing I wanted to mention though is we are currently software developers but our mission is for further use of technology, so that doesn't necessarily exclude any other type of technology group including hardware or networking or anything like that. We're just currently software group.

>> **Gary Owen:** But you're going to -- You hope to expand this group to other areas, right?

>> **Vance Lucas:** We hope to, yes.

>> **Chad Mullen:** And tell us a little bit of it. So we talked in the first segment about the Techlahoma Foundation. You visit their website at Techlahoma.org. It's T-E-C-H-L-A-H-O-M-A dot org. And gentleman, why -- Tell us about your organization. Why did you found it? And what's the purpose and who are you seeing join your organization?

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Okay, that's really good question. So I mentioned earlier that the folks that were kind of bleeding these user groups were sort of working together and they were doing this to kind of increase the durability of the groups, right? So, you know, we're sharing resources, but

we're also sharing best practices as well. And we're finding out that this is the best way to radiate information on social media accounts. This is a code of conduct that assures that there's an anti-harassment policy and just sort of standardizing and templating, you know, things that worked really well from group to group. And the leaders were meeting kind of on a regular basis and saying this worked me. What's working for you? And eventually, we hit this point where we were like, well if someone wanted to like buy us pizza, how would we even do this? And so we said, well let's -- let me form a nonprofit. It's, you know, it's a very transparent way to do this. It allow us to kind of like clarify these things. And if someone came up to us and said, hey, I want to start a group about some particular topic, we could say, okay, well, here's a really good way to do your website. Here's a place where you could meet, and we can kind of get them up and going.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yeah, I think it's important to note this is all about removing barriers. So if you ask the question, what's the best way to get other people to want to start groups and grow this technology seen? The answer is how do -- is removing barriers. So how do we remove all of the barriers so it's easy for someone to get started? And that's really what Techlahoma's all about. We provide a space. We provide sponsorship. We provide financial support. We provide support, setting up basic things like a website, your Twitter account, how do you get people to come and know about First Group? All those kinds of things to where someone can just come in and start whatever group they want to with Techlahoma's full support behind that.

>> **Chad Mullen:** And what is a group? I mean what -- when you say start a group, what kind of groups are the --

>> **Jesse Harlin:** That's a really good question. Typically, they focus around a specific piece of technology of specific sort of technique within technology. So a really good example is the JavaScript user group. JavaScript if you don't know is probably the most popular language in the world right now for coding. It's the thing that runs inside of all our browsers.

>> **Gary Owen:** It's our first group too.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** It was -- yeah, it was our first group as well. And it's pretty large. We tend to get about 80 to 100 people every single time we have a meet-up, which is really good attendance.

>> **Chad Mullen:** That is impressive.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yes, it is.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** So --

>> **Chad Mullen:** Now we're seeing why the logistical issues are so big.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Yes, absolutely.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Five or six, not a big deal; a hundred, big deal.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yes.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Yeah. And that's kind of what was really interesting about this is we did this to improve durability and as a result, because we were, you know, sharing advice, sharing speakers, sharing resources, all the groups started growing a lot and more groups started springing up. And then the need for this infrastructure became more salient as time went on. So we just kind of sort of kept doing it until we eventually started putting on Thunder Plains, our national conference, so.

>> **Chad Mullen:** And so you have the Java group. What are some of the other groups that you have?

>> **Vance Lucas:** I've got a list here. We have 21 user groups that are listed on our site; 12 of those groups are officially and financially or organizationally supported by Techlahoma. We have just -- I'll just name a few quickly.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Sure.

>> **Vance Lucas:** I'm not going to name all 21, but JavaScript user group. We have a Java user group, a Ruby, Python, SQL. We have just general code groups or web development groups. The Tulsa Web Devs is one of those. We have a .NET and our C Sharp group.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Nerdy Girls.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yeah, we have Nerdy Girls group.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Yeah and Code for OKC.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yes.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Yeah. That's a really important one. So we support Code for OKC. Code for America is also a national organization that does what's called civic hacking. So if you look at what the folks in Tulsa have been doing, they've been building applications to better the community and -- So we now have a Code of OKC as well that's trying to do the exact same thing in Oklahoma City. So --

>> **Chad Mullen:** So, I think you use an interesting word there, civic hacking or hacking. And we've heard of hack-a-thons and I think for some of us, it has a negative connotation though. What is a hack-a-thon? Explain that in this program.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Well, I will say first of all, the definition -- the definition of the word hacking is really just modifying computer code, no [inaudible]. So it's not inherently anything malicious. It's the way that it's used in the media.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** But the word hacking kind of implies sort of like, you know, impromptu, informal setting for you to do it, right?

>> **Gary Owen:** Well could you say there's good hacking and bad hacking?

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Absolutely, yeah and I think if you were to ask someone in the industry, they would call it white hat and black hat --

>> **Gary Owen:** There you go.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** -- if you're an InfoSec or something like that. But basically hacking is really the DIY community in folks who like to go kind of build their own things, and I want to make my own vegetable garden that every time my stalk grows up, then it feeds my tomatoes. You know, that is a hacking project. It's a thing that you can't go out and buy, and they're getting a chance to express themselves through creation through using code.

>> **Vance Lucas:** A good use of that word might be hacking something together.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's really good.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Or the Maker Movement.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah, that's really good. We're talking to Jesse Harlin who's president and cofounder of Techlahoma Foundation and Vance Lucas, their treasurer and giving us really an insight as to the -- I would call it a really strong working and educational base for software development companies where they collaborate and share ideas and really have I think what I would say has blossomed into something really great like organization in Oklahoma, and they want to get more participants involved. We're going to take a little break. We'll come back and talk more with the guys, and we're going to talk with Amanda Harlin, the secretary of the group, and she's got some interesting stuff when we return on *Oklahoma Innovations*.

[Music]

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>> **Gary Owen:** *Oklahoma Innovations*, this week we're talking about Techlahoma. It's a foundation, a nonprofit organization that really supports a lot of folks who are in software

development. It's a user group organization. We've learned quite a bit about what they do and it's right here in Oklahoma City.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Yeah and Gary it's great things that they're doing. They're really supporting the community. And you know one of the things that OK has and our strategic partner iE2's been involved in a long time is the startup scene. And so in addition I have Vance Lucas with us on this section, cofound of Techlahoma, we also have Ryan Hoegg, board member joining us. Ryan, welcome. Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to be sitting today on this radio show.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** Yeah, thanks Chad. I'm a software developer for two-thirds of my life. I moved to Oklahoma 12 years ago and I was used to the software community we had in Washington DC, where there were lots of user groups. I joined the Oklahoma City Java User's Group right about then, about 2005 when it first got started here in Oklahoma City. So, one important sort of detail about Techlahoma is that the community already is here, but we're trying to make last. We're trying to make it bigger. We're trying to make it more healthy, and so each of the groups have leaders who come in and then move on with their careers, and if those leaders don't do certain things, then the group kind of fades away. We've had that with a couple of users groups. So that's one of the important benefits we're trying to offer to users groups. So my time with the Oklahoma City Java User's Group is coming to an end and some of the Techlahoma infrastructure is going to allow it to carry on with future leaders. So my history through that time is I've started my third startup here in Oklahoma City in April and one of my first employees came as an intern through the Francis Tuttle Software Development Program. And the reason that happened is my involvement with the advisory council, which is yet another place where the community helps startups get going. I found a really good promising software engineer directly because of my community involvement. So, many startups here wouldn't have even happened if it weren't for that. I think Vance started our startups specifically with other community members he met in a co-working facility. Here, you want to talk about that?

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yeah. Yeah, about let's see, 2012 -- I think 2012 --

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** 11 or 12.

>> **Vance Lucas:** -- let's say 11, two friends and myself started a web development company called Bright Bit. We ran that for about four years, so it had to been 2010 to 2014. We ran that for four years, and then that -- we all -- we started in the OKC Coco, which was a co-working facility, and that kind of community that was there allowed us to get started small with just a single office or just general co-working memberships at first, and then we moved to an office and we eventually found our own space as we grew and employees. And then after that, just freelancing on my own and then I'm employed now. But yeah, I was -- it was the community that allowed kind of us to come together and then us to found that space and the co-working space that facilitated that community that allowed us to grow.

>> **Chad Mullen:** And let me talk a little bit about that and ask you guys a couple of questions. So in the past, and when I -- past, you know, 30, 40 years ago, a company that was developing a new product or a new technology, the way you would go about doing that is everything was top secret. You'd lock everyone out, and only a few people in the company -- you would have a lot of times firewalls between groups within company so no one could go out and spill it to the competitor. And then we saw, you know, 15, 20 years ago, Venture Labs and accelerator spaces coming on, and still even with those, companies were, you know, apart from each other and

those, but they would meet for once to talk about financing issues or something. But now the co-working spaces that exist today and 36 Degrees North is opening up in Tulsa, I think in a month or two and we worked with them. I mean these are -- There are no offices to speak of. There's a couple of conference rooms maybe that everyone sits around a table. I visited one in Claremore a few weeks ago, the exact same way, you know? There are four or five companies in that area around just a giant table for a lack of a better term, so how important is that kind of openness in the spaces? How does that help you work across -- And I'll ask you both since you both had startup experience.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** Well right now, my startup which is only four people works out of the 404, which is a co-working space on Film Row, right in the middle of other freelancers and companies. So coworking spaces, both sponsored bootstrap startups like mine, established startups like Ozberg and who else is out of there? Tailwind comes in there sometimes and also companies can have off-sites where they work there too. And what we've kind of realized about that sort of secret risk is that if you have a lot of money and a lot of time, then your secret's pretty important, especially if your competitors do as well. But a lot of startups are fast. So if I have an idea that I want to bring to market in six weeks, it does not matter if anybody else knows my idea, because the most important -- 99 percent of it is making the idea real --

>> **Chad Mullen:** Sure.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** -- and testing the idea against real customers. Secrecy is the opposite of that. I can't test the idea against real customers once I tell them about it.

>> **Gary Owen:** That's true.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** So the whole model has to flip. You have to go and -- go completely open and get -- let your idea morph according to reality. And if you're concerned about someone else outcompeting you, then partner with him.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** Because they're not going to be able to outcompete your time and effort, focusing on this one idea. They've probably got their own ideas. And you're not going to go steal those, because you're too busy with this one.

>> **Gary Owen:** I was going to ask and wonder how many mergers have happened because of you know, whether there'd been private entities or companies that have had developers where they've kind of come together. Have you had any of that happen as the outcome of some of these user groups?

>> **Vance Lucas:** I'm not sure. I don't -- I know we don't have any like stats on that that I can give you, but I will say that there certainly has been an increasing amount of collaboration. So, even if there's not mergers, there's contact sharing. There's, hey now I know someone who can do this for me --

>> **Gary Owen:** Right, there you go.

>> **Vance Lucas:** I can outsource it to you. So there's been that kind of thing definitely going on.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Yeah.

>> **Gary Owen:** Jesse?

>> **Jesse Harlin:** I'll just kind of add this -- It might seem obvious just to point it out, but you know, companies can come and go, but the talent that is the backbone of these companies --

>> **Gary Owen:** That's right.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** -- you know, they're still living here.

>> **Gary Owen:** That's right.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** -- and they're still raising their families and being prosperous. I mean it's no different if you were to have a music scene. If you're a very good guitarist, you might play in one band and then another band and then another band. And everyone knows Dave here is a great guitarist, you know? So obviously, that's going to be a very similar thing with developers, you know. So and so is really great at UI development and we really need that, so we're going to go find this person. So, you know, to think of this as this company's doing this and this company's doing this, is a fine abstraction on one level, but in reality, the people who are actually driving the stuff are -- you know, they're talking to each other. That's just the reality of the situation.

>> **Gary Owen:** I don't know whether you -- I don't know that our listeners can pick up on this or not to Chad, but one of the things it used to be is, oh, these are a bunch of geeks that sit in a room somewhere and write all this software. One of the things I pick up on and I would assume this probably happens in your user group meetings and collaborations is enthusiasm. I mean you guys are very passionate about what you do and you're changing the world, as well as your own local communities. And so I want you to elaborate about that, because I would assume there's a lot of energy in that room on a lot of occasions where things all of a sudden, wow, that's really cool, right?

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** Well yeah, I think the enthusiasm, it's somewhat infectious. There's been times that I've been alone, like when I first moved here --

>> **Gary Owen:** Sure.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** -- in my basement, writing codes.

>> **Gary Owen:** Sure.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** After three of four months, you try to --

>> **Gary Owen:** You got to get out.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** -- on the internet --

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** And you get text messaging back and forth and it just -- it wears on you. You're drained. But when you go to a meeting and you --

>> **Gary Owen:** That's human one on one interaction.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** Right and you learn about a way someone else is solving your problem, that's different. It jazzes you up.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yes.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** And if you go to a whole conference where there's all these other people doing what you do and all these ideas about how to do it, then I -- every time I come out of a conference, I come back ready to go, ready to change things --

>> **Gary Owen:** Exactly, that's what I'm talking about.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** -- which is kind of why we put them on.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Vance Lucas:** I would say if you could imagine someone in Tech moving here for the first time from somewhere else, they're not plugged in, they don't know anybody --

>> **Gary Owen:** Right.

>> **Vance Lucas:** -- that's one of the big reasons why we support user groups so much is because we're trying to get people to feel a sense of community, to get plugged in. You can get that at a coworking place, but you know, everyone there might be working on something completely different or have completely different skill sets, and it's not -- it's a really good community, but if you have a, you know a love for a particular language or a coding in a particular language, it's also really important to get to know people around you that are also doing that same kind of thing just as your peers. And that's something that's traditionally been largely nonexistent in Oklahoma. So that's -- It's really one of the reasons we started the Techlahoma Foundation.

>> **Gary Owen:** Well it's great you guys are making that change. It really is.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** Yeah, I kind of appreciate the question. It occurs to me that the reason I spent more than half my life in software is that it's kind of this blend between hobby art and work.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** When I first found out when I was 17 that somebody would actually pay me to get -- to do software, I was blown away.

>> **Gary Owen:** I'm sure.

>> **Ryan Hoegg:** So, we want to sponsor -- we want to stimulate both the business, hobby and art side of software in this community.

>> **Gary Owen:** Sounds like this is going to be part of the new innovation community down around the OCAST here we talk about so -- We got to take a little break. We'll come back with our last segment and I believe we'll get Amanda on when we return on *Oklahoma Innovations*.

[Music]

>> This is one of the longest running weekend radio talk shows in America, *Oklahoma Innovations* on the OCAST Radio Network.

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[Music]

>> **Gary Owen:** If you've just joined us or getting on kind of the back end of the program, we're talking about Techlahoma. It's a foundation, nonprofit group that supports and sponsors user groups in primarily the software development arena. And what we've learned in this program Chad is that software development companies are becoming big business in Oklahoma and they just -- in fact, they just had a national conference recently called Thunder Plains, a developer conference and it was on a national scale I understand.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Yeah, absolutely Gary, a great conference here in Oklahoma City. It's the third year that it was held. And I'm excited to welcome Amanda Harlin to the show. Amanda, tell us a little bit about yourself, how you go into coding and then tell us about Thunder Plains, the conference.

>> **Gary Owen:** And by the way, you Jesse's wife, right? And congratulations. We understand you had a new baby.

>> **Amanda Harlin:** Yes Sir, thank you.

>> **Gary Owen:** Congratulations guys.

>> **Amanda Harlin:** So, my name is Amanda. I got into coding through Jesse actually. When we met, I was a security guard, and all my life, I had thought, you know, STEM is difficult, coding, you need a lot of math background. It's a very academic kind of field. Jesse told me, you know, all you have to do is start teaching yourself, start learning. So we programmed together for a few years, and I wanted to share the same kind of experience with other people in tech, people who are interested who thought perhaps it wasn't the field for them, but, you know, that's where their skills and their passion actually lie. So --

>> **Gary Owen:** That's okay. So what led you -- what led you down the path where you are now, because I understand you've taken on secretary support, you've taken on a lot of network marketing support for like getting the Thunder Plains Conference going. A lot of the sponsors -- there's some very impressive sponsors on there and I understand you did most of that yourself, right?

>> **Amanda Harlin:** It was team effort with Jesse and Vance.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** She is being modest. I would say she probably did my share for --

>> **Gary Owen:** Okay. Well, it takes a group effort to do that, so.

>> **Amanda Harlin:** Oh God.

>> **Gary Owen:** What was your challenge? What were some of your challenges during this conference, putting it together?

>> **Amanda Harlin:** I -- Some of our challenges included outreach to the community. A lot of students, women in tech, women who want to go into tech from college or from Vertechs, just reaching them, getting to know them and having them apply to scholarships, making sure we lower our barriers for entry to tech and getting the word out, kind of creating a community of people who want to learn, getting them excited about Thunder Plains and about improving their skills.

>> **Gary Owen:** And what about -- You know -- like Chad and we think about or when we talk about writing software, we don't think about whether it's more men than women, but a lot of women are getting into this, right?

>> **Amanda Harlin:** Yeah, yeah. We've had more women than ever at our last year. Even attendees started noticing. It was an excellent effort. We've tried to curate a community of women in STEM through Nerdy Girls, Code Club and having really accessible user groups really welcoming.

>> **Chad Mullen:** And tell us a little bit about Nerdy Girls. What's --

>> **Gary Owen:** Oh Nerdy Girls, yeah. This will be good.

>> **Amanda Harlin:** So Nerdy Girls is a nonprofit social networking group. A few years ago, three years ago, we started Code Club, and it was an effort between myself and a few other women to teach women intro to coding, best practices and eventually help them either kindle a love for tech or you know, a professional interest. Some of the women who've attended over the last three years are now working in startups. They're teaching others. They're speaking at user groups. They're speaking at conferences.

>> **Gary Owen:** Wow.

>> **Amanda Harlin:** It's been a great effort.

>> **Gary Owen:** That's very cool.

>> **Chad Mullen:** And Gary, I mean you certainly seen, you know, one of the vice-president's Google now president of Yahoo, a female. We have one of our more successful startups out of Oklahoma, a company called WeGoLook, started by a female [inaudible]. I think some of the, you know, some of the past efforts are beginning to pay off and certainly as you know, we work with the GE Foundation and that's one of their main missions is to increase that gender diversity in the tech fields, because it is -- it's a real issue. It's an issue that needs to be addressed, and so Amanda, thank you for the work that you're doing with Nerdy Girls. And tell us -- and this -- Amanda or Jesse, whoever wants to jump in here, the Thunder Plains Conference, it was last held November 3rd and you had speakers from around the country or around the world. You had attendees. Tell us about the success of that event.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Sure. So we had a lot of folks -- You know, we get the call for papers basically. And we had hundreds come in. And so these folks were pretty much from all over the country. Really, they were from all over the world. And so at the actual Thunder Plains Conference, we had -- there were some folks that made it past sort of the, you know, the audition to get in that were from Oklahoma and other folks were from other areas. One thing that was very interesting that I'd like to point out about this year and previous years is a lot of the speakers were either from Oklahoma or used to be in Oklahoma and then left and went

somewhere else. Our keynote speaker this year for instance used to live in Mustang and then moved to Austin early on his career.

>> **Gary Owen:** Well that's pretty cool when you have them come back full circle. Of course they haven't been here awhile. They're kind of like I'm sure looking at the -- mimic the areas that have grown in Oklahoma, going, wow.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** His exact words -- He did a keynote in 2012 for their [inaudible] one and his exact words were: If this community had existed when I was living here, I wouldn't have left in the first place.

>> **Gary Owen:** Wow.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** So that was really nice to hear from him and so yeah.

>> **Gary Owen:** Well we've interviewed a lot of guests, Chad and I that the Oklahomans have come back and moved back here. They brought -- they found careers.

>> **Chad Mullen:** We've attracted some talent to the state as well that were born -- In fact, one of our guests on our other segments from Washington DC, so you know, I think it's important to know that especially with this career field, many folks work remotely and/or they can't work remotely so they don't necessarily -- They can choose where they want to live. So how is your group helping to, you know, in addition to the conference, the network, are you seeing folks locating here or choosing to stay here because of that?

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Well certainly because you can work remotely. That means you can live in Oklahoma and you can, you know, raise your family or not or whatever you want to do and you can work for a whole host of companies including Oklahoma companies. I think a lot of folks would be really surprised to know how many folks in Oklahoma are working for the Mozilla Foundation or used to be working for GitHub and are working for, you know, simple, and these things that you've heard of, and they're just living somewhere in Oklahoma and doing their thing. So -- But they come out to the user groups and we get to meet them that way and they get to share their knowledge with everyone else here.

>> **Amanda Harlin:** One of our speaker is actually -- wrote blind post recently. The Little Fiber Coming to Oklahoma. I know that was one of his deciding factors to stay here instead of moving to Kansas City. His startup really relies on internet availability and with Oklahoma getting it with the tech community forming. He thought this was the best place to stay.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** He runs the most used Minecraft servers in the world, if you ever of that game.

>> **Gary Owen:** Wow, absolutely.

>> **Jesse Harlin:** That's here in Oklahoma City.

>> **Chad Mullen:** Now tell us -- So for folks that did not go to Thunder Plains this year, what's in store for next year? It may be too early for that. And how can you get involved with your business, your GR Foundation, you want to support this group. Tell us a little bit about how to do that.

>> **Gary Owen:** Who would like to do that? Okay, Vance.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yeah, first of all Techlahoma -- Techlahoma Foundation is a nonprofit. We got our official IRS status about three weeks ago, 4513C. And so if you want to support us, you

can go to our website at techlahoma.org or donate.techlahoma.org. Your money will go to supporting local user groups and the advancement of technology and technology-related training. That includes events like Thunder Plains that we put on. There's also another conference this year in Tulsa called, 200 OK that we're in along with Luke Crouch and some other -- some other developers up in Tulsa that are very community-minded as well. So if you want to donate, your money goes directly to -- right now a hundred percent. So Techlahoma, we haven't said this yet on the podcast, but Techlahoma is completely volunteer. We put on this conference and all these user groups. We don't take any money at all whatsoever. So, all of your money will go to supporting user groups, supporting meeting places. Some of that cost goes to food, to meeting places; some meeting places you have to pay for. Some of these groups are very large.

>> **Gary Owen:** Primarily the amount of the money goes into help host the conference --

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yes.

>> **Gary Owen:** -- that's in their groups.

>> **Vance Lucas:** Yes, absolutely. So it's all local tech training. The conference -- there's a lot more cost-related with the conference --

>> **Gary Owen:** Sure.

>> -- because we fly speakers in from other areas and things like that.

>> **Gary Owen:** Yeah. Then on top as far as your local user group, meetings and those kinds of things, you guys sometimes have to pay for facility, that kind of thing. Listen guys, we're running real close to getting out of here. The website again for Techlahoma is --

>> **Jesse Harlin:** Techlahoma.org.

>> **Gary Owen:** Just techlahoma.org, a lot of information there. So you're pretty much a basic website to tell what the group is about and how you can get involved. And if you're a business or corporate out there that would like to learn more about this organization, it's a worthwhile organization, and if you're a software coder out there, somebody that wants to do development, we encourage you to get involved with this group. Come to some of their meetings and collaborate and let's grow this thing. It'd be cool to talk to you guys next year and see how much you've grown, right Chad?

>> **Chad Mullen:** Yeah, absolutely Gary and make sure you attend the Thunder Plains. I didn't do it this year, a couple of people in our office did. I wish I had. I will next year.

>> **Gary Owen:** It's nice that OCAST supports this type of organization. Thank you so much ladies and gentleman for joining us and we bring you another idea. There's some of those little nuggets going on in Oklahoma. You have a great week. We'll talk to you next time on *Oklahoma Innovations*. Have a great week.

[Music]

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