

Ann Arbor boy makes good, real good

By Chuck Newman

Editor's Note: Chuck Newman hosts a biweekly series of "Conversations," presented by the Jewish Cultural Arts and Education department of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor. The talk show format of the Zoom presentations highlights Chuck's easygoing style and deep curiosity about science, politics, and connections between our local environment and the world. You can find this interview and other previous shows at <https://jccannarbor.org/event/conversations>.

While growing up in Ann Arbor, Josh Silverman evidenced signs that he was going to do something special, and he has. He cofounded and was the CEO of Evite, and has been the CEO of Skype and Shopping.com, an eBay company. In May of 2017 he became CEO of Etsy when its market capitalization was \$1.5B and under Josh's leadership it has grown to \$28.5B. Etsy is an American e-commerce company focused on handmade or vintage items and craft supplies.

As a bright but bored student at Pioneer High School he often skipped classes, yet he did well on exams. He had the chutzpah to argue with his teachers that he deserved to get an A+ in the class since he did so without attending many of the classes. His chutzpah has served him well. For example, without having the qualifications for a job in Senator Bill Bradley's office, he convinced Bradley to create a job for him. Josh attributes his ability to summarize complex issues to their essential core to the

work he did for Senator Bradley. One of the first things he does upon becoming the CEO of a company is determine what of the many things the company does or plans to do constitutes its essential core. The non-essential activities are often eliminated, and the freed-up resources are used to grow the business to great effect.

Rather than suffer through Pioneer, Josh took the initiative to find and take courses that



Josh Silverman

interested him at Huron and Community High School. After speaking with a teacher at Community High School with the intent of taking

jazz classes there, he was taken by the more personalized teaching philosophy at what he calls "Commie High" and requested to transfer there for the balance of high school. His parents, Gene and Alida Silverman, perhaps knowing that Josh was capable of knowing what was best for himself, gave their permission.

Josh thrived at "Commie High" and felt that it "changed my life for the better." He made a diverse group of friends and loved the permissive environment. It was so permissive that at one point the administration had to make a rule that students and teachers couldn't smoke dope together on the porch.

There must have been other iconoclasts in his family. The family pets included two 6-foot-long iguanas and 20 or so snakes, including one that was poisonous. Josh recounts an occasion when his mother was shouting that there was a snake loose in the house and his father asking what it looked like as there actually were three snakes loose and he wanted to know which one it was. At that point she left home for a couple of days until they were all found and returned to their enclosures.

Of course, these animals needed to be fed, so rodents and insects were raised in a closed room in the house. Cleaning people were instructed to never open the door to that room, but they inevitably did, necessitating periodically hiring new cleaning people.

Josh learned the value of hard work early. He

partnered with his brother Andy at 13 in a lawn mowing business. Being older, Andy would drive them to their jobs and Josh would do the bulk of work. Perhaps that was where he learned that it was good to be the one in charge.

He had many other jobs before he left for college including washing dishes and being a waiter at Bill Knapps and working in a movie theater. He agrees with Warren Buffet that the age of someone's first job is an indicator of how successful they will be as an adult. In his case, he feels that cutting grass in the hot sun for his share of the \$7 charge taught him the value of money.

Josh's mother remembers him as being the perfect child, but he doesn't remember it that way. Having a hard time with structure and conformity, he remembers, caused him to "be a pain in the butt with some of my teachers." Some of his former classmates at Temple Beth Emeth's religious school remember him as being an active participant with some of the boys in their class in pranks that caused their substitute teachers to question whether they really wanted a career in Jewish education.

To learn how Josh successfully applied what he learned growing up in Ann Arbor, his philanthropy, leadership practices and advice to parents, listen to the recording of his interview on Conversations. It can be heard by going to <https://jccannarbor.org/event/conversations> and clicking on his interview. ■

Kerene Moore seeking seat on MI Court of Appeals

Hannah Davis, special to the WJN

Kerene Moore is a judicial attorney in the Washtenaw County trial court, working for Judge Van den Bergh. She previously worked at the Michigan Department of Civil Rights investigating civil rights cases, and at Legal Services of South Central Michigan, where she represented over 1,000 low-income Michigan residents.

"It's great to be able to help people with the least resources access the justice system," she says. "My entire career is about access to justice."

Moore is beginning her campaign for a seat in the Third District of the Michigan Court of Appeals. The seat is currently held by Judge David Sawyer, who is not eligible after this term but who has held the seat uncontested since 1986. This is a unique opportunity to shift the makeup of the court, she says. "Right now there are no people of color on either our Court of Appeals or Supreme Court in Michigan." There are two other open seats on the court this year, both of which will be filled by appointment by Governor Whitmer. This is the only seat that will go to a general election.

The 25 judges on the Court of Appeals are elected from four separate geographical districts across the state. Judges sit in panels of three to decide cases and rotate among panels, deciding cases statewide. Washtenaw County is in District 3, which mostly includes counties on the west side of the state, as well as Calhoun, Jackson, and Washtenaw. According to Moore, Kent County — home of Grand Rapids — is the largest county in the district and as a result tends to win open seats when there is an election. And once an election is won, the incum-

bent is very hard to unseat: "No sitting court of appeals judge has ever lost a race, so generally



people don't challenge them." The last time a judge was elected by voters in District 3 was in 1995.

Moore said this is an opportunity for her to make a broader impact in her career. "I've spent my career helping people one by one. As great as it is to be able to play whack-a-mole, I think it's important that we change the justice system so that everyone can access." She cites the Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court Bridget Mary McCormack as an inspiration: "[McCormack] has set a great example. I would love to follow in her footsteps and be one of those judges who doesn't just sit back and watch

the system act on people, but acknowledges what the system is doing, what it's not doing well, and who plays a role in making the system work better ... I think there are always winners and losers, but it's the difference between losing because you have no idea how to engage the system or what your rights are ... versus losing because you had a fair opportunity to make a case, but you were wrong. I want to make sure everyone has a voice in our system and that's why I decided to run."

Moore cites her years of bipartisan work as a key part of what she will bring to the bench, saying, "I will talk to anybody." She is used to having difficult conversations with communities who are on different sides and working toward solutions that work for all perspectives. In addition, she states that "I actually would like to do the work!" Appeals court judges are responsible for taking the lead in writing decisions, usually around eight a month. Sometimes, she says, judges "end up relying on law clerks to do all the work and [don't take] an active role in the decisions and in the system. I don't want to do that. I want to be a judge who cares, who's committed to the work for years to come."

Moore's campaign reflects a broader trend in Michigan of movements for justice system reform, including the establishment of the nonpartisan redistricting commission, the package of early and absentee voting measures passed in 2016, and Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit's campaign, which focused on a variety of decriminalization and diversion programs. Moore notes that prosecutorial elections are getting national attention and

support, which she is excited about. Campaigns for judges are part of that movement, but are not as visible: contested elections are much less frequent, and candidates cannot state policy views explicitly, since judges are not allowed to indicate bias or partisan preference. However, Moore hopes that "my background and values speak loudly enough that people understand that my goal is to make sure that the justice system works for everyone." She mentioned that she is grateful for Savit's support in her campaign and that he is someone she reaches out to regularly.

The campaign hasn't officially launched yet: the first step is getting on the ballot, which requires the collection of 6,200 signatures (most campaigns aim to collect closer to 8–10,000 signatures since many will be stricken) by April 15. She says this will be an "uphill battle" since it is too late to take advantage of the good weather during the summer or the crowds of football season. In addition, judicial elections are not allowed to fundraise until February. But her campaign, called the "Moore Justice Campaign," is working on signatures now.

If you are interested in helping with the campaign, the first step is adding your signature to the petition to get on the ballot. In light of the risk of COVID and the need to maintain social distancing, Moore is asking volunteers to commit to "4 for 40": get four petition pages filled out from your own social circles, each of which have space for ten signatures. Sign up on the campaign website, [Moore2022.com](https://moore2022.com), to get petition pages or to be notified of other volunteer opportunities. ■