



Heather Malarcik, BA '96, stands in front of one of Main Street Kent's recent projects, the "Kent" sign. It was installed in 2021 at the intersection of North Water Street and Fairchild Avenue to emphasize one of the entries to downtown.

Main Street Kent director helps downtown Kent thrive

Three decades ago, as an undergraduate from Hudson, Ohio, Heather Rohwedder Malarcik, BA '96, could never have imagined that she would one day find her dream job in downtown Kent.

After graduation, she worked various jobs in marketing and moved to California. However, once she started a family, she decided to return to Ohio.

In 2011, she was hired as marketing assistant for Main Street Kent, an advocacy nonprofit striving to promote Kent as an ideal place to live, work and visit. Within a year, she was promoted to the nonprofit's top spot. She's held that role for 12 years.

As director, Malarcik creates year-round marketing efforts for local businesses, champions historical preservation and plans regular events—including the Chocolate Walk in February, the Art and Wine Festival in June and the Oktoberfest in September—that drive traffic to downtown and help the business community succeed.

She loves the work but doesn't do it alone. With one other employee at Main Street Kent, Malarcik works in conjunction with a volunteer board and oversees teams of supporting volunteers, including folks from Kent State.

Joshua Rider, BA '99, MEd '05, executive director of Kent State's Center for Adult and Veteran Services, serves as vice president of Main Street Kent's executive board and has worked closely with Malarcik for several years. He praises her hard work and leadership skills.

"She is always asking, 'What will the impact of this be on Kent?'" he says. "Her leadership with Main Street Kent also has helped build connections to Kent State University."

Malarcik says folks from Kent State are always willing to help make downtown events successful by volunteering. And she understands that having a thriving downtown benefits the university, too.

"I went to Kent State when downtown wasn't what it is today. There was not much to do other than get a pizza and a beer," she says. "Now there's public art, live music, events and activities."

"There's nowhere else I would want to live and work."

—Lisa Abraham