

Youthquake!

All around the Valley, young entrepreneurs are taking a swing at business—their way. Here, meet some of Arizona's most successful—and innovative—millennials.

By Si Robins

Photography by Art Holeman

Across the Valley, there's an uprising underway. People aren't waiting for a midlife crisis to try something bold. Despite the sour economy, a few twenty- and early thirty-something entrepreneurs, leaders and innovators are making a difference *now*. It's a youthquake, and it's helping Arizona become a more vibrant, culturally significant place.

In Tempe, a nationally syndicated cartoonist is writing jokes, drawing at all hours, and reaching an audience of millions—from just a few blocks away from where he grew up.

In a midtown office space, a smart, pioneering nonprofit connects high schoolers with the biggest economic and social issues facing the world; and it's growing, teaching thousands of kids in the process.

In an unmarked downtown storefront, a coffee roaster is teaching customers about his craft, creating java purists one by one.

In a leafy Gilbert subdivision, a multitasking artist is juggling a freelance lifestyle with a grassroots rise to Internet fame and financial stability.

And at fire stations across Phoenix, a young entrepreneur is working around the clock in the name of music education, despite significant city cutbacks.

If young people are the future, then the Valley has a bright one. Though these people are seemingly unrelated, each is a noteworthy cog in the process of the young becoming the significant.

The Cartoonist

Tony Carrillo



“I never planned on doing this as a job.”

Jokes are quietly being written in a Tempe coffee shop, and most patrons have no idea. For today, this is the home base of *F Minus*, a nationally syndicated comic strip rooted in the Valley. Artist and writer Tony Carrillo, a Tempe native and ASU grad, is the guy behind the witty strip, now in its sixth year in publication.

Carrillo didn't really aspire to this position. After receiving a rejection letter for his first comic from his high school paper, he didn't emphasize drawing strips until his sophomore year at ASU, when *The State Press* needed a cartoonist.

"They needed to fill a spot, and didn't think much of it," Carrillo, 28, recalls. "I wasn't actively looking for an opportunity like that, but it sounded fun. I always wanted to write comedy, but how do you go about that?"

After four semesters in *The State Press*, Carrillo applied in a comic strip contest through MTV and won, gaining nationwide syndication.

"Suddenly I'm on MTV with all the bright lights," Carrillo recalls. "I'm sure the interview was terrible. I probably looked like a mannequin. I never planned on doing this as a job. Everything that's happened is a great surprise."

Four years later, Carrillo is syndicated, his work appears in more than 100 newspapers and he has two published books full of strips, but he still faces the same difficulties as other comic artists.

"I'm always fighting deadlines, and writing jokes never comes easy," he says. "The drawing has gotten a lot easier, but coming up with the joke is always tough."

You'd never guess Carrillo writes the funnies. Quiet and laid back, his demeanor parallels the strip's relaxed approach. *F Minus'* trademark is its single-panel, clean look with a simple joke, which differentiates it from a lot of other, busier syndicated strips.

In this economy, Carrillo has to deal with thinning newspapers and wavering subscriptions. Even still, he admits being published in just one paper is more than he ever hoped for, so Carrillo is thankful for each one.

"I think in that wide-screen format, so I suppose it comes naturally," he smiles.

Courtney Klein is proof that your first instinct may not always be the best. Klein, 26, started out in broadcast journalism at ASU and thought she wanted to become the next Katie Couric until a service trip changed her life.

"After my freshman year in college I went to Akil, a rural community in Mexico, and saw what poverty looked like firsthand and how many people in the U.S. have no idea what's happening in other parts of the world," Klein recalls.

It didn't take long for her to act.

"I wrote a business plan, changed my major to nonprofit management and submitted that plan my senior year at ASU to the Edson Student Entrepreneur Initiative," Klein says. "They weren't going to fund nonprofits, but I submitted the paperwork anyway."

In January 2005, Klein started with \$1,000, a little office space and the mentorship of Lattie Coor. New Global Citizens, her youth-service nonprofit, was born.

"What we do is go to high schools and set up teams of students that are passionate about global issues," Klein explains. "We educate them about issues that are afflicting people all over the world—poverty, maternal health, access to water, universal education, environmental degradation, economic sustainability, etc."

At first, four East Valley high schools were involved. Last year, 76 high schools across 18 states were part of the movement. The goal is to grow the curriculum and support structure so the program can be replicated anywhere—in both rural and urban communities. Klein's operations now boast nine full-time staff members, 16 members of her board of directors and lots of volunteers.

Key to the project's growth is a \$1 million matching grant from the Arizona Community Foundation. But Klein's nonprofit has to raise its own \$1 million for that grant to go into effect. Two months in, New Global Citizens is 20 percent of the way toward raising that money within a 36-month time frame.

Confident and motivated, Klein speaks like a true entrepreneur and is clearly moved by her cause.

"The long-term goal is the transformation of high school students," she says. "When their eyes are open to a new way of thinking and a new consciousness, how do they perceive their role in the world for the rest of their lives?"

But guiding the students toward a whole-world view is only part of the appeal for Klein. She's just as excited to meet motivated young people and watch them grow into who they want to be.

"My lifelong dream is that I'm replaced by one of our alumni," she says, smiling. "We didn't do anything to get them where they are—they did everything."

For more information on New Global Citizens, go to newglobalcitizens.org, or call 602-263-0500.

The Philanthropist

Courtney Klein

"The long-term goal is the transformation of high school students."





“I always wanted to own a coffee shop.”

The Barista
Jason
Silberschlag

If you walk into Cartel Coffee Lab’s bustling Tempe location in a nondescript shopping mall near ASU, you wouldn’t think a coffee revolution is happening. But thanks to Tucson-born-and-bred founder Jason Silberschlag, the coffee purist’s movement has traction.

Silberschlag, 32, wasn’t always devoted to the coffee craft. He moved up to Mesa to be a youth pastor, but after a few years he was longing for something different.

“I always wanted to own a coffee shop,” Silberschlag admits. “I got a job delivering sandwiches and I’d spend afternoons driving around, scouting out business locations and listening to NPR.”

It was only after Silberschlag went to a “barista jam” in Tucson that he realized how serious he was. A coffee-farm manager was booking a trip to visit Guatemalan coffee farms, and Silberschlag jumped on it.

“It was like going from being serious about coffee to being *serious* about coffee—just unbelievable,” Silberschlag says about his visit. “I went from wanting to own a coffee shop to wanting to roast coffee. So, I spent another six months researching that.”

Over two years later, Cartel has blossomed into a two-store enterprise. The second location opened in downtown Phoenix in late 2009.

“The growth was slow at first, but now it’s very sustainable,” Silberschlag says of the store. “You kind of have to know someone to know where it is.”

The bohemian warehouse feel of the Tempe location hasn’t been replicated downtown. The store is bright, clean and more conventional looking.

“It’s a totally different clientele downtown, so it will be a good test for our business model,” Silberschlag says. “We’ll see if people put up with us, because we definitely have some strange coffee rules.”

He’s referring to Cartel’s coffee-purist reputation. You won’t find a Frappuccino or Caramel Macchiato on Cartel’s menu, because Silberschlag believes in the sanctity of natural coffee taste. The menu does have chocolate and vanilla syrup—used in much smaller quantities than at other coffee shops—but that’s about it.

Coffee is serious here: Barista candidates are put through a stringent 40-hour non-paid training period that allows the shop to find the best coffee-minded individuals.

Even the beans themselves are carefully chosen. Silberschlag only sources from farms in Central and South America—he’s visited about 20—because of the sustainability and the bright taste.

“What sets us apart is the transparency of where we get our coffee—we tend to buy coffee from socially responsible farmers,” Silberschlag says. “When I go to the farms, I see that the living conditions are good.”

The eventual goal: to be the first North American coffee roaster to own a coffee farm. For now, Silberschlag stays busy managing his stores and serving an education to his customers, along with the good brew.

The Crusader

Nate
Anderson

"I'm a horrible employee, but I'm a great entrepreneur," Nate Anderson of Ear Candy laughs. He's not being cocky, he's speaking from experience. The Miami University grad worked in corporate America but couldn't stand it, so he moved to Arizona to start a real estate company with a friend. However, something still wasn't right.

"My heart wasn't in it," Anderson, 27, recalls. "I knew I wanted to use my skills—entrepreneurship coupled with a passion for music—and I created Ear Candy in 2007."

Simply put, Ear Candy's mission is to provide youngsters with musical instruments and to encourage music education.

The nonprofit initially hosted music events to raise money for charity, but after hosting a few, Anderson really wanted to do something for music education directly. That's when the shift happened.

"I didn't see anyone doing anything about musical education to the degree that it needed to be done," Anderson says. "I don't think anyone is reaching the number of kids we're on the cusp of hitting. There are 1.2 million kids in Arizona, and all of them need music education in some capacity."

The operation is still pretty small—a board of directors, a few interns and a few helpers—but Anderson anticipates that changing in the coming months.

"I'm a perfectionist," says Anderson, who works 60-plus hours a week on the cause. "We've experienced a lot of growth for a nonprofit. At the same time, I always want more and I always want to do better. No one is doing this as grassroots and community based as we are."

Surprisingly, Anderson himself isn't a musician, though with his beard and shoulder-length hair he looks like he could be. He's just always identified with music and wants to share the "overflowing positive energy" he's gotten from it.

Now Ear Candy is teaming up with the Phoenix Fire Department to use fire stations as instrument drop-off locations. There will be four drives in 2010, focusing on school districts in particular need. It's all part of making a big musical impact.

That impact has been widespread, reaching thousands of kids already. But as adamant as Anderson is about music in the classroom, he's just as vocal about getting kids out in the world to check out other aspects of music—whether it's meeting musicians, going to concerts or visiting higher-education facilities. Most importantly, he wants to stress to kids that they don't have to be professional musicians to make music a part of their everyday lives.

"I'm not a musician, but I'm involved in music 365 days a year, 24 hours a day," Anderson says. "I don't even know what some of these instruments are that come in! I learn so much every day."



“There are 1.2 million kids in Arizona, and all of them need music education.”

For more information about Ear Candy, go to earcandycharity.org, or call 623-826-0202.

Our panel shares local favorites.

Arizona. "We as a city are finally catching on that local business is what makes a city vibrant," Klein says. "Phoenix is becoming kind of cool, but I don't want it to move backward. Local First is making sure that doesn't happen."

What Laura Says. "I think they have the most potential to make it," Anderson says. "They're consistently the tightest, most evolving band, and I've seen them probably 20 times in the last year. Out of all the things bubbling in Phoenix from a musical standpoint, they have *it*."

Promise Tangeman:
Whatchaseewhatchaget,
a band that plays at Black
Forest Mill in Phoenix on
Friday nights. "The band
has soul like no other, and
they know how to rock,"
Tangeman says.

The Artist

Promise

Tangeman

“I’m just a little design girl who makes stuff.”