

My Benesch My Team – SPIRE

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Jeff Orloff
Chief Operating Officer
SPIRE Institute

Located in Geneva, Ohio, just 25 minutes from downtown Cleveland, SPIRE Institute and Academy is one of the most unique and comprehensive athletic, academic, personal, and career development organizations in the world. It is among the largest indoor multi-sport, training, education, and competition complexes in North America. The following is a testimonial from Jeff Orloff, Chief Operating Officer of SPIRE.

Tell me about SPIRE.

SPIRE consists of four main components. First, we have an Academy for grades 9-12, plus a postgraduate year, for basketball, track and field, swimming, wrestling, Esports, and drone. We’ll be adding lacrosse in September 2022. Most of our students board with us, though we do have a few who commute. Second, we have camps in all of those sports that are year-round, but most active in the summer. Third, we are a major event site, hosting competitions such as the Big Ten and NCAA Track & Field Championships; swimming events including Atlantic 10 Swimming & Diving Championships, US Futures Championships, and US Masters Swimming Championships; USA Wrestling events and championships; and more. Finally, we offer regional programming, which is everything from swim lessons and a swim club to a premier soccer league, Ohio Valley region volleyball, and many basketball events, including a men’s league. We also have a 30,000 square-foot banquet facility that can serve up to 750 people.

It sounds like a huge complex!

We have 750,000 square feet under roof, which is 17 acres. And we’re on over 500 acres of land. There is not much we can’t do in the realm of sports.

How did you start working with Benesch?

We were looking for help on some issues, and [Ira Kaplan](#) was recommended to me through a mutual friend. I knew about Ira based on all his impressive involvement in the community, but we hadn’t met before. We’ve now gotten to know each other, and we have worked closely with Benesch ever since. It’s been amazing.

What kinds of things is Benesch working on with you?

We work with Ira and others, including [Rachel Winder](#) on government affairs matters and with [Rob Zimmerman](#) as well. Every single person we work with is exceptional. Right now we're concentrating on government affairs. SPIRE was built with all private money and never went to the state to ask for anything until very late in the process. So now we're trying to create more visibility for SPIRE. Many people in the Ohio state legislature don't know who we are or haven't been here, so we're trying to create an awareness campaign and also look at where we may be able to work with the state on some of our projects.

We have also worked with Benesch on how we can access scholarship dollars and how that would actually work so we can bring athletes from all demographics to SPIRE. Benesch has been very helpful there, and we are now set up for that through our school partner, Grand River.

What do you like about working with Benesch?

The professionalism. The attention to detail. The knowledge base, both of the law and in terms of having contacts within multiple areas to answer just about any question. Benesch is very well connected on anything we're talking about, which is really helpful. They're also very responsive—you don't wait for anything. Whatever they put together is done professionally and in a very expedient manner. The entire team is very personable and easy to deal with.

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What value does Benesch bring to SPIRE?

It's the value of knowing that you never have to question their work. I know when I'm talking to the Benesch team that they either have the answer or they're going to dig and figure it out. When they come back to you, they've looked into it, they've done their work, and if there are questions or open areas, they tell you that as well. In my experience, it's not always like that, so it makes life easier and gives us a sense of confidence and comfort in whatever we're working on.

What are the plans for SPIRE? What do you want to do?

We're going to continue to introduce new Academy programs, not all of which will be about playing sports. We're looking to create SPIRE TV, which would be online streaming of our events and programs. This would present opportunities both on-camera and off in announcing, production, and editing. We will also continue to grow our Academy, our numbers in camps, and our event space. We have over 500 acres of land, which will allow us to add additional outdoor fields for lacrosse, football, soccer and baseball in the next few years. We will also be building more dorms on site to accommodate our growth

In addition to expanding our opportunities with USA Wrestling, USA Swimming, and USA Artistic Swimming, we're also looking at how we can work with the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee to bring more events here.

It's a fairly significant master plan that will impact not only the Academy and our events, but the surrounding communities. We want to continue to make sure the community feels very welcome here. We're just finishing a disc golf course. We have a group that utilizes the pond for remote

control sailboat competitions. We're going to continue to increase our drone presence because that's going to become a bigger and bigger area of growth and we want to be on the cutting edge.

We are always looking for opportunities to partner with and be involved with the community. I see this as a legacy project because of the impact it will have not only in the local area but also throughout the region. Benesch is very involved in the community, and it's an easy and natural relationship in that sense. We value their help in that area as well as legally. It's not only about the business, but also what we all can do to be a bigger and better part of the community.