

# FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

## FYI

brought to you by the **future leaders & entrepreneurs exchange**

## Young Professionals of the Year Named for 2016

While we are very excited to announce the 2016 Young Professional of the Year, as of this publishing, the winner has not been announced. Watch for photos from FLEX Presents in the May issue of FYI. Please join us in congratulating each of this year's nominees. You can read about each one in this issue of FYI.

We want to thank all of our generous sponsors who contributed to making **2016 FLEX Presents** a success and Nick Cianci, our guest speaker.

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## Meet our Nominees

**Brooke Clarke** is the House & Events Director for Wanango Country Club located in Reno, Pennsylvania. She has extensive experience in the food and beverage industry, with over 15 years of knowledge and craft culminating in her current role. With regards to community involvement, Brooke has always focused on her participation in multiple church missionary endeavors, promoting awareness for local charitable needs and helping those less fortunate. Brooke makes sure to connect her two sons, Zachary and Isaac, to community involvement to show them the benefits of giving back. As Brooke begins her second year at Wanango Country Club, she continues to focus on innovative ideas for new community events while joining with local organizations to donate proceeds to those in great need.



**Dr. Kate Eckert** is a Chiropractor and owner of Eckert Chiropractic, located in Oil City, Pennsylvania. Professionally, Dr. Kate is constantly furthering her education by obtaining Active Release Technique, Pregnancy Chiropractic, Infant and Pediatric Chiropractic certifications. Outside of the office, Dr. Kate truly practices what she preaches. She stays active by enjoying the outdoors and instructing yoga classes at Broad Street Yoga in Grove City and upcoming instruction at Impel Pilates and Yoga in Franklin. Dr. Kate has shared her wealth of knowledge by giving presentations on foam rolling, health and the alleviation of symptoms for arthritis and autoimmune disease to multiple support groups and audiences in the area. Dr. Kate is currently a board member for the Oil City YMCA and the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce. Eckert volunteers her services for multiple community functions, including local festivals, lift-a-thons, and triathlon events.

*Continued on page 3 and 4.*

*"The Future of Venango Area Business!"*

**Kevin Harriet** has taught at Oil City High School since 2003 and has been involved in many activities and events in the local community. He has coached high school softball and baseball. He ran a table tennis club at the school for 4 years. He started the Math and Physics Club at Oil City High School that holds a canned food drive every year and PI Day activities. He helps out and emcees at the Homecoming parade and Turkey Bowl fundraiser and also assists with the Cranberry softball league tee ball program and with the YMCA. He is in charge of the "Student of the Week" selection process in conjunction with The Derrick for the Oil City High School. He helps out with mock interviews for Clarion University's math education department. He also helps lead a group of students in volunteering for Oil City's Wash Day.



**Shelly Hart** currently works for the Venango Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) Foundation in Franklin, PA as a marketing representative. Hart is dedicated to her work and to patients served by the Venango VNA. She is also involved in the planning of the organization's annual children and teen bereavement camps: Camp Good Grief, Horses for Healing, and Hope for the Holidays. Hart's commitment to restoring the care hospice patients are receiving and to help the grieving individuals in our community is evident in her everyday professional life.

Outside of the workplace, Hart has volunteered with the VARHA (Venango Area Riding for the Handicapped Association) to organize events for children and adults who have recently lost a loved one. Her other volunteer work includes serving as an annual volunteer for the Thanksgiving Dinner Distribution at the Rocky Grove Fire Hall.

**Trevor Johnson** is a Spanish Teacher at Oil City High School. He has been the head girls' cross country coach for the past 4 years and the distance track coach for the last 3 years. He goes over and above to find extra track events for the students to participate in outside of the regular season, volunteering his time and resources. Trevor has been instrumental in planning student aboard trips to Spain and Costa Rica. Prior to Trevor's organized trips, one had not been taken with the high school since the 2001-02 school year. While in Costa Rica with his students, he led a service learning tour planting mangroves to reforest the shores.

Trevor has served as student council advisor for five years. As advisor, he has overseen the organization of the Homecoming parade, homeless night to raise awareness of homelessness and visiting Golden Living Center to play Bingo monthly with the residents and hosting a prom event for them.





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**Casey McVay** is deep-rooted in Clarion University's Venango Campus community, representing Clarion across the region as an Assistant Coordinator of Admissions and Financial Aid. She is a knowledge-base for prospective students about the university and assists them at every stage of the enrollment process. McVay oversees Venango Campus' social media presence, Student Ambassadors, and Admissions Visit Programs, as well as volunteers as a student club advisor for SEED (Studying, Engaging, Exploring, Discipleship), which organizes campus programming, off-campus events, fundraising, and community services projects, and missions.

McVay volunteers for the Pennsylvania Association of College Admissions Counseling and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce and the Barrow-Civic Theatre, where she also performs and choreographs. McVay is passionate about civic engagement, leadership development, and networking. She holds her role as the President of FLEX (Future Leaders' and Entrepreneurs' Exchange) to be the most important volunteer position. She connects young professionals in the area to opportunities, assists in the development of monthly newsletter, coordinates future leader training, and is diligently working on the First Annual Oil Heritage Bike 'n Brew Festival.

**Nick Hess** is the owner of an Oil City antique shoppe called The Printer's Cabinet & Curiosities. Hess is passionate about providing quality merchandise so he travels extensively in and out of the country looking for items he can bring home for his shoppe. Most recently, Hess spent time abroad in Europe and annually sets up a pop-up shoppe in Brooklyn, NY. He sells and promotes his business at other various flea, antique, and artisanal markets from Pittsburgh to New York City. He also creates jewelry, art, and up-cycled goods for resale.

Outside of his business, Hess volunteers at the Barrow Civic Theatre, where he is a new member of the Board of Directors, and participates in theater productions as an actor, costumer, set builder, and assists with the maintenance of the warehouse facilities. He has acted for Community Playhouse and is a sit-in Director for St. Stephen's School's annual play.



**Greg Merkel** is an attorney at the Law Office of McFate & Merkel in Seneca. Merkel holds a B.A. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a J.D. from the Charlotte School of Law, where he graduated with honors. His community involvement includes service as the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce; a member of the Board of Directors of the Venango Museum of Art, Science and Industry; a member of the Board of Directors of the Oil City Salvation Army; a member of FLEX; a member of the Board of Directors of the Open Door Cafe; and a member of Petrolia Lodge 363, F. & A.M. Most recently, Merkel has taken a leadership role in the efforts to save Venango Catholic High School. He resides in Franklin with his wife, Sarah, and their two young children.

**Chris Simms** is the Associate Vice President of Investments for Stifle Financial Corporation, where he builds long-lasting relationships with his clients and their families based on trust and transparency. His area of focus is Investment planning with an emphasis on 401(k) rollovers, IRA consolidation, retirement income strategies, retirement planning, wealth management strategies, asset management strategies, and estate planning strategies.

Simms is also Chairman of two boards, the Keystone Community Education Council and the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce, which he also serves on the Applefest Core Committee. He is the Vice President of the Oil City Civic Center and a board member of the Franklin High School Alumni Scholarship Committee.

Before his current career at Stifle, he was a law enforcement officer. Also in the past, Simms has volunteered for Franklin Middle School as an assistant football coach, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Indiana County, and the Franklin Elks Lodge.



**Aimee Thompson** is a current First Grade Teacher at Hasson Heights Elementary School in Oil City, Pennsylvania. Aimee grew up locally in the area, attending Titusville Area High School before enrolling at Penn State Behrend and Clarion University in obtaining her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education. Next month, Aimee is on track to graduate from Edinboro University with her Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education. Prior to joining Hasson Heights Elementary School on a full-time basis, Aimee was a substitute Teacher within the Oil City Area School District and a certified Kindergarten Teacher at the Titusville YMCA.

Along with strengthening and mentoring the knowledge of her students in the classroom, Aimee is committed to growth and development initiatives outside of the classroom. She is the Co-Chair for Membership at the Seneca Reading Council and a member at both the International Reading Association and the Pennsylvania State Education Association. She currently volunteers her time to lead and support activities and field day events at Hasson Heights Elementary School. Aimee Thompson's undeniable drive and passion for teaching has given the next generation a positive role model in which her students can look up to for guidance and support as they begin the foundation of their educational paths.

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# Oil Heritage Festival Bike 'n Brew Update

The invitations have gone out and details are progressing for the first annual Oil Heritage Festival Bike 'n Brew.

We are planning a day bicycling activities in right in and around Oil City throughout the day, during our 39th Oil Heritage Festival, on Friday, July 22nd 2016. We hope to establish stations downtown to educate riders in basics cycling etiquette and maintenance. We hope to offer a shuttle service to various points on the trail during the day and we are going to put together a set of Strava (online app) challenges in our area. We would love to show off new cycling products and services, offered by local bike shops and outdoor vendors. We invite you to find out how you can be involved, in helping to organize the day's event, as a volunteer or as a rider that day.

Our area has locations for multiple cycling disciplines. The Erie to Pittsburgh trail system runs through our towns. Both Two Mile Run County Park and Clear Creek State Park offer mountain bike trails for all abilities and our miles of rural roadways are a plus for road cyclists. Your participation with this endeavor would help in making this a successful event.

We have confirmed the location of the Brewfest, which will be held from 5:00 - 8:00 PM, to be Cornplanter Square, also known as the historic Oil City National Bank Building. Microbreweries from Northwester PA and beyond have been invited to join us to offer samplings.

Watch this newsletter and the Chamber website for more information and to find out when tickets for the brewfest will be available. If you have a favorite brewery, please encourage them to join us on July 22nd, by responding to the information they have received or by contacting the Chamber office at 814-676-8521.



## OHF Bike 'n Brew

July 22, 2-16

**Bike - all day! Scheduled activities TBA**

**Brewfest - 5-8 PM, Cornplanter Square Building**

### OUR MISSION

FLEX represents the needs and interests of Young Professionals by positioning ourselves as leaders, entrepreneurs and advocates for the sustainability of the Venango Area through civic engagement, leadership development, and networking.

### Where you'll find FLEX:

Friday, April 15, 6 p.m. -- FLEX Social Friday - Location TBA  
Wednesday, April 20, Noon - Regular Meeting at Chamber Office

**Chamber events:** Check out the Chamber's Calendar of Events at [www.venangochamber.org](http://www.venangochamber.org)

**email:** [flex@venangochamber.org](mailto:flex@venangochamber.org)



VenangoFLEX