

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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

Greg Merkel named 2016 Young Professional of the Year

The Venango Area Chamber's young professionals organization hosted the sixth annual "FLEX Presents" on Friday, April 1, at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Franklin, with nearly 100 people in attendance. "FLEX Presents" is an annual event to celebrate the achievements of local young professionals who contribute to their community through civic engagement.



Greg Merkel and wife Sarah

While all nominees have made an exceptional impact on the community, Greg Merkel's service and engagement in the area led him to the honor this year. Merkel is an attorney at the Law Office of McFate & Merkel in Seneca. 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.

FLEX announces Summer Kick-Off Event at Camp Coffman

Many local businesses and organizations employ college students as interns each summer. These interns provide many benefits to our community and help businesses to function. They bring a fresh perspective, creative ideas, energy, and emerging technical skills to the workplace. In return, the interns gain experience and knowledge from their summer working in a company.

FLEX members would like the chance to welcome your interns to the region in an effort to make their summer in Venango a great one. We encourage young professionals and summer interns to join FLEX at the "FLEX Summer Kick-Off" event, Thursday, June 2, from 5:30-8 p.m. at Camp Coffman. This is an opportunity for the group to get connected and have fun. A pot-luck dinner will start the evening, so bring a drink or dish to share. Then, enjoy a team-building obstacle course, rock climbing, and zip lining led by guides.

Do you have interns at your business? We'd love to meet them and have them attend our intern events! Please contact the Chamber and let us know the best way to reach them or encourage them to contact us, at 814-676-8521 or by email at swilliams@venangochamber.org



Jillian Kellner teaches 4th and 5th grade at St. Patrick Catholic School. Jill graduated from Cranberry High School in 2010 and went on to Clarion University to dual major in Early Childhood Education and Special Education, graduating from Clarion in 2014. She grew up in Seneca, where she still resides today, with no plans on leaving the area any time soon.

Jill has been involved in the Barrow Civic Theater since high school, participating in multiple youth theater and adult shows. Since then, she has assisted in directing the Youth Theater and now has directed 3 main stage shows, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer", "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," and "Charlotte's Web".

Jill is pursuing her black belt in Taekwondo. She plans to obtain her Masters Degree in Special Education and continue teaching in the private school system.

In her free time Jill studies Taekwondo at the Oil City YMCA and is currently a First Degree Blue Belt. She is also a part of the martial arts team, Team Rock Solid. She is an active volunteer at the Venango Museum. Her summer time job has been working at Kellner's Fireworks through college, where she has had the opportunity to shoot professional firework shows over the 4th of July. Jill and her dad Dave Kellner Sr. love amusement parks and belong to the American Coaster Enthusiasts.

When Jill leaves Venango County, she enjoys visiting family in Canfield Ohio. We asked Jill where she would take a visitor in Venango County and she responded that her favorite place to take friends is The Villa and then for a ride on the bike trail from Oil City to Franklin. "But as far as my mom knows the Venango Museum is the go to place I would take a visitor," says Kellner.

Her favorite things about working locally are the very short commute and the ability to work with people she knows well. Jill shares, "Venango County is a very tight knit community where you know, if you need something, someone will be there for you."

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Great Lakes Surfing: A Millennial's Vision for Regional Development

Nick Cianci was the featured speaker at this year's FLEX Presents. If you were not able to join us, you can view Nick's TEDx Talk



Guest speaker Nick Cianci

Visit this link:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nk63YEEaY_A

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Gerritt Rex is the owner of G Rex Wireless LLC, in Seneca and Franklin. A 2005 graduate of Oil City High School, Gerritt learned business from his uncle at an early age, at his used car lot. As a young child and teen he would frequently go to the auction with him. After high school he worked full time buying and selling cars at the auction and on the car lot and then started buying and selling phones on eBay in 2007 and turned that into a full time job by 2008.

Gerritt was born and raised in Oil City. He and his wife Lacy have two children that we are raising in Oil City where he spent much of my childhood playing at Hasson Pool, dirt biking the area trails, and camping.

Gerritt started competitive boxing in 9th grade and trained at the Oil City YMCA and at Bizzarros Boxing Gym in Erie. He won the Western Pa Golden Gloves in 2003. He stopped boxing after high school and spent many years away from the ring. After getting his business and family going he reentered the ring and won the Western Pa Golden Gloves Title again in 2014 after a 9 year layoff.

In 2016 he became a board member at the Oil City YMCA and was recently named Vice President of the board. Gerritt's future goals and dreams include sustaining and growing his current G Rex Wireless stores in Seneca and Franklin. He would also like to open a boxing gym for youth and adults to pass on his love of boxing. As for his dreams, he would love to open a retail store in Manhattan, NY and at the beach along the Gulf Coast someday. Gerritt spends most of his free time with his family with whom he enjoys dining out and vacationing as much as possible. They do a lot of boating and camping through the summer months and ski and snowboard in the winter. This past year he taught his three year old daughter how to snowboard and she loved it!

When he leaves Venango County, Gerritt likes to visit NYC where he and Lacy got married. They also visit Rehoboth Beach, Delaware yearly.

He thinks the best place to take visitors in Venango is the great outdoors, whether it is a kayak trip down French Creek or the Allegheny, where there is an abundance of beauty to enjoy.

What doe Gerritt enjoy most about working in Venango County? He replies "I enjoy the down to earth people we get to deal with on a daily basis." He invites you to stop into one of the G Rex Wireless stores and check out what they have to offer or help us spread the word that people have options when it comes to their cellular and electronic needs.

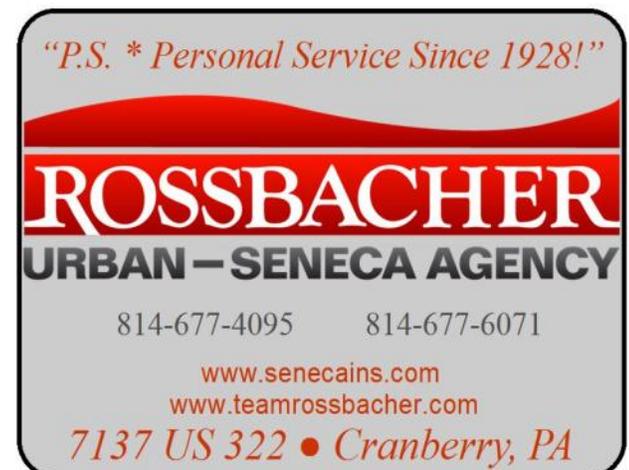
Congratulations Graduates

FLEX

&

Venango Area Chamber of Commerce

extend our sincere congratulations
to this Spring's graduates!



Oil Heritage Festival Bike 'n Brew Plans Continue

The Venango Area Chamber of Commerce and FLEX are teaming up to host the first Bike 'n Brew Fest, during the 39th Oil Heritage Festival, on Friday, July 22, 2016. The day will be filled with bicycling activities in and around Oil City, then a Brew Fest in the evening.

There will be stations in Town Square to educate riders in basics cycling etiquette and maintenance and a shuttle service to various points on the trail will be available throughout the day. Local bike shops and outdoor vendors have been invited to display new cycling products and services. Local businesses, and organizations are invited to contact the Venango Chamber, 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.

The Brew Fest will be held from 5 till 8 p.m. in the Cornplanter Square, also known as the historic Oil City National Bank Building. Microbreweries from Northwestern PA and beyond have been invited to join us to offer samplings. In addition to the Cornplanter Square building, the Brewfest will stretch into the parking lot and Cornplanter Park, along Oil Creek, between Sycamore and Center Streets.

Keep watch in this newsletter and www.OHFBikenBrew.org for more information and to find out when tickets for the Brew Fest will be available. If you have a favorite brewery, please encourage them to join us on July 22, by responding to the information they have received or by contacting the Chamber office at 814-676-8521.



OHF Bike 'n Brew

July 22, 2016

Bike all day!

Scheduled activities TBA

Brew Fest

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 this month:

Monday, May 2, 5-7 p.m. at Chamber Office—Brewer Follow-Up Calls

Tuesday, May 9, 5:30 p.m.—Brew Fest Meeting, Location TBA

Chamber events: Check out the Chamber's Calendar of Events at

www.venangochamber.org

email: flex@venangochamber.org



VenangoFLEX