

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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2014 Young Professional of the Year Nominees



Gregory



Griebel



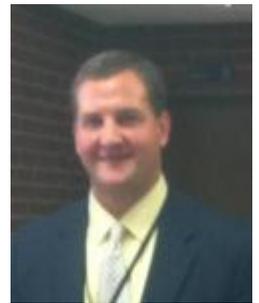
Protivnak



McVay



Martino



LeVerde

FLEX Presents 2014

2013
Young Professional
of the Year
Matt Beith



Intern Mixer



2013 Nominees



Annual Meeting





Sarah McFate Merkel is a native of Venango county and an Associate with Northbridge Environmental Management Consultants (Washington DC) working remotely from Oil City. Growing up in beautiful Northwest Pennsylvania, she has always had an interest in natural resources and environmental issues. After graduating with a B.A. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and working for the Federal government in Washington DC for a few years, she returned to George Washington University in Washington D.C. for a masters degree in Environmental Policy, and was lucky to get a job in environmental consulting. She missed being close to family and having the opportunities available in a small town, as well as, the beautiful natural surroundings. She thinks being able to move back to her hometown of Oil City after living in large cities for 10 years was a big achievement. It took a lot of planning and effort, but is such a nice change of pace.

She is active in Oil City Main Street Program, FLEX Young Professionals organization, Venango Area Community Foundation (Bridge Builders), Oil City First Presbyterian Church, traveling, refinishing furniture, walking the dog, and spending time with her awesome family. She and her husband would like to have their own small farm in Venango County to garden and raise a few animals. If anyone is selling one, call her! She would also like to do my part to keep Oil City a vibrant, attractive and welcoming community.

2014 FLEX Presents Nominees Profiles

Jessica Gregory is a native of Venango County and a graduate of Clarion University with a degree in Liberal Arts. She is employed at Allstate Insurance in Franklin and enjoys her career in customer service where she can help people. She likes to spend her free time giving back to our community, mainly through the Fighter's Ball, a breast cancer awareness event and fundraiser that she started three years ago. She has also volunteered for the Franklin YMCA's youth basketball program, Applefest Spaghetti Dinner and 5K Race as well as a recreational gymnastics coach and volunteering around the holidays as a Salvation Army Kettle Bell ringer and Angel Tree donor. Her most recent venture is becoming a Big Sister through the local Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter where she looks forward to being matched with a young girl soon.

Elizabeth Griebel is a Venango county native, married to Christopher Griebel and a graduate of Clarion University with an A.S. and B.S. Elizabeth works at Urban Insurance Agency in Seneca. She holds a seat on the boards of the Venango County Community Foundation, and is active in Venango Area I-CAP, the Oil Region Alliance Heritage Advisory Council, Oil City Main Street Program's Safe, Green, and Clean Committee, the Venango College Paralegal Advisory Board, and serves as Secretary of FLEX. Elizabeth has also founded the Venango County Runner's Club, a resource to find local running events and to network with local runners. She also volunteers for Precious Paws Animal Rescue and is the proud "mother" of 4 rescue cats.

Leigh Protivnak is a Venango County native and a graduate of University of Pittsburgh with a bachelor's degree in English Writing. Upon graduation she returned home to work for Venango Newspapers then became Executive Assistant at the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce where she continues to work as Communications Specialist. She opened Neverending Stories in June of 2012. The book store has the opportunity to give back to the community by hosting cultural programs and sponsoring many programs with the library. Leigh serves on the Franklin Fine Arts Council board, as treasurer of the Friends of the Franklin Public Library, as a member of the Oil Region Alliance's Young Professionals Advisory Committee, and is one of the founders of the Young Entrepreneurs Society of Franklin (Y.E.S. Franklin) that works to promote the businesses in downtown Franklin that are owned and operated by young professionals. She lives in Franklin with her husband Joel and their son Zak.



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Greg Merkel was born in Niles, IL and has settle in Venango county with his wife, Sarah. 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 is proud to have graduated with honors. After college, he worked as a carpenter for several years in the Washington DC area. Although he enjoyed the work, he and his wife were eager to leave DC and settle somewhere closer to their families. Getting a law degree allowed them to relocate to Venango County. Practicing law has been challenging and rewarding. It's a decision that he is very happy to have made.

Merkel enjoys spending time with his wife, Sarah, and their daughter, Amelia; grouse and deer hunting; fishing; golf; and metal detecting. He is involved in FLEX; Petrolia Lodge 363; and Rotary. Also, he is a member of the board of directors of the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce and the Venango Museum of Art, Science and Industry. On a personal level, he and his wife look forward to raising their family in Venango county. They are also eager to try their hand at farming. Professionally, his goal is always to provide excellent service to his clients.

THINGS YOU WOULD MISS ABOUT VENANGO COUNTY IF YOU WERE NOT HERE: "Winter. Just Kidding. I would miss friends, family and the easy access to the outdoors."

Casey McVay is the Assistant Coordinator of Admissions and Financial Aid at Venango College of Clarion University. She received her B.S. Mass Media Arts and Journalism from Clarion University. Born in Altoona, PA, McVay now resides in Franklin, PA with her husband and daughter and is active in community theatre at the Barrow-Civic Theatre, performances at the Taste of Talent vocal competition, and choreographs a competitive dance number for Studio 22's FUSION team. She also serves on the Board of Ministries at Franklin Alliance Church as Outreach Coordinator, assisting with many community events and communications. Casey has also partnered with Roger's Gymnastics in Oil City, PA to open the Diamond Dance Company, offering dance training centered on fundamentals and self-discipline that promote creativity and a healthy lifestyle. Her biggest reward comes from being an advisor for the Venango College student club SEED (Seeking, Exploring and Engaging Discipleship.)

Amber Martino is a special education teacher at the Franklin High School and Middle School since 2001. Within the schools, she serves as Class Council advisor, Broadcast co-advisor, Courtesy Club advisor, Homebound instructor, and (former) school play director. She is the Alumna Chair of the Franklin High School Hall Of Fame Committee. She is the coordinator for the Venango/Forest County Animal Response Team, a volunteer group of emergency responders responsible for responding to disasters and emergencies affecting animals, both domestic and livestock. She is a member of the EMMCO West, Critical Incident Stress Management Team, a board member for the Venango County Humane Society (VCHS). At the VCHS, she serves on the building committee, fundraising committee, and the chairperson of the pet shows, as well as, a member of the DukeFest team which holds an annual dog walk/fundraiser to benefit local animal organizations. The Reality Tour is one of my newest volunteer ventures. It is a drug and alcohol prevention program for teens in the county.

Matt LaVerde is a graduate of Mount Union with a B.S. in Mathematics and a graduate of Cal University with a Master's Degree in Education Leadership. He has served as the principal of Rocky Grove High School for the past six years. He spent six years teaching mathematics in the Rocky Grove and Franklin schools. He spent six years as the assistant football coach at Franklin HS and six years as head football coach for Oil City HS. He is the co-founder of the Northwest Pennsylvania Coaches Association, founded in 2012. He is married to Jessica LaVerde and has a three year old daughter, Macy.


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"The Future of Venango Area Business!"

For your information, there is so much to do in Venango County!

A regular feature of FYI will be announcements pertaining to opportunities for employment, volunteering and activities well suited for the young professionals, but not necessarily exclusive to any age group. Chamber members are invited to submit notices to be included in future editions of FYI. We request that items be brief but informational (as opposed to advertising), and include contact information for follow up.

Volunteer:

FLEX has established a team for Relay for Life. The Relay for Life will be on May 31st at the Oil City High School, please consider donating to the American Cancer Society of behalf of the FLEX team or becoming a member of the FLEX relay team.

Please contact Bobbie Haag at bhaag@venangocareerlink.org or (814) 516-1383 for more information.

Social/Recreational:

FLEX Presents will be on March 28th at Wanango. This is a great networking event to meet other young professional, as well as, our supporters. Please contact the Venango Area of Chamber for more information.

Workforce:

The 2014 Oil Region Career Fair will be held on April 9th at the Cranberry Mall from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Job-seekers are encouraged to attend a Job Fair Readiness Workshop on March 4th or 18th to assist you in making the most of the career fair. Topics will include, resumes, first impressions, elevator speeches, and follow-up. Please contact the Pennsylvania CareerLink - Oil Region at (814) 678 - 5050 to register.

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 in March:

First Friday Lunch - March 7th @ noon, Leonardo's Restaurant in Franklin

Monthly Meeting - March 15th @ 5:30 p.m., Venango Chamber Conference Room

FLEX Presents - March 28th @ 8:00 p.m. at Wanango Golf Club

Chamber events - Check out the Business Connector Calendar of Events or www.venangochamber.org



VenangoFLEX

Text FLEX to 42828 to be added to our email list

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