

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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

FLEX Presents Young Professionals of the Year

We cannot thank the sponsors, volunteers, venue staff, catering staff, nominees, and attendees enough for the amazing event we had at the Venango Museum for FLEX Presents! The evening was filled with delicious food and great networking and we enjoyed getting to show our appreciation to all the young professionals in our region.

Thank you to all who played a part in making FLEX Presents happen, and congratulations once again to all our nominees and to Casey McVay, our 2017 Young Professional of the Year.





He may originally be from West Virginia and work in Forest County, but **Jonathan Bartram** is happy to call Venango County his home!

Jonathan is a Physical Therapist Assistant with Premier Therapy, the contracted therapy provider of Snyder Memorial Home in Marienville, PA. He received his Associate of Applied Science degree to be a Physical Therapist Assistant from Mountwest Community & Technical College in Huntington, West Virginia, where he was born and raised.

In 2012, Jonathan moved to the Venango Area, and currently resides in Franklin with his wife, Sallie, and their two dogs (Hines and Maz), which are their “pride and joy.”

Jonathan attends First United Methodist Church in Franklin where he sings in the choir and he is a member of a young adult class meeting that focuses on Faith. He is also active in community theatre with the Franklin Civic Operetta Association.

Although he works in neighboring Forest County, Jonathan loves the sense of comradery that businesses in Venango County provide. “It’s definitely a ‘we’re all in this together’ vibe,” he said. We couldn’t agree more and we’re happy to have Jonathan as a young professional here!

Oil Heritage Festival Bike ‘n Brew Updates



The Bike ‘n Brew committee has been working hard to plan the Second Annual Oil Heritage Festival Bike ‘n Brew! This year’s event will be in **Justus Park** in Oil City. Biking activities will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the brewfest will have two sessions, from 1 to 4 p.m. and 5 to 8 p.m.

We welcome anyone to attend a meeting to help with the event! Our next meeting is **Wednesday, May 3**, 5 to 7 p.m., at the Venango Chamber. We are currently working to get sponsors and brewers and welcome any input or help!

If you’re not interested in helping with planning, but would like to volunteer the day of the event, please contact Ashley at acowles@venangochamber.org or (814) 676-8521.

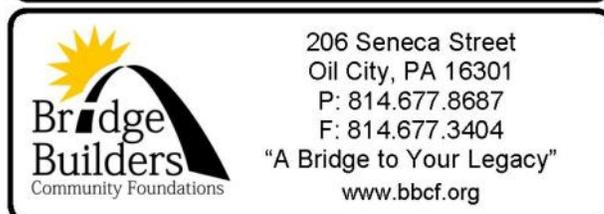


Share with us!

Have you read an article or book, seen a video, or heard a podcast or quote lately you think would be valuable to other young professionals? Or maybe you know of a great upcoming event or volunteer opportunity? Send it our way and we’ll share it on social media, the FYI newsletter, and/or an upcoming email.

Just email Ashley at acowles@venangochamber.org with the information.

Also, make sure to follow us on social media. We’re on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as @VenangoFLEX.





Angela Harriett may be a familiar name, as she was one of this year's FLEX Presents nominees!

Angela is a Reading Specialist at Oil City Middle School (OCMS), where she once attended. After graduating Oil City High School, she received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and master's degree in Education, with a concentration in Reading Specialist, from Clarion University.

Some of Angela's accomplishments include receiving both her bachelor's and master's degrees, graduating Magna Cum Laude, serving at Student Senate president at Venango Campus, and starting the Pay It Forward Clothes Closet at OCMS, which is a classroom filled with donated new and used items such as clothing, shoes, sports equipment, hygiene products, and non-perishable food items, for students in need. Payment for the closet is an act of kindness towards another and all items are donated by members of the community and district teachers and staff.

Angela also serves on the Student Assistance Program (SAP) team, is the program leader for the OCMS Girls Excelling in Math and Science (GEMS), volunteers as a T-ball and softball coach with Cranberry Girls Softball, and previously coached the Oil City Lady Oilers softball and basketball teams.

Her greatest accomplishment, however, is being a mother to two kind and beautiful daughters—Hope (5 years old) and Bell (7 years old). "I want to raise healthy, happy and kind daughters that will go into the world and make it a better place than when they found it," she told us.

In what free time she has, Angela enjoys anything involving the beach or summer activities. She likes to play softball, travel, spend time outdoors, and most of all play with her children. In Venango County, she loves geocaching and hiking in Oil Creek and Two Mile, seeing a movie at the Cranberry Mall, going with her children to youth sports through the YMCA, and visiting the James A Nelles Swimming Pool and Mitchell Ball Fields. When it comes to eating and drinking, Angela is a fan of Karma Coffee Co, Spilling the Beans, Villa Italia, Rocko's Pizzeria, and The Yellow Dog. "I love the small town atmosphere here. I have had relationships with many of the people in my life for my entire life and I feel safe raising my kids here," she said.

Angela has many goals for the future, including to make OCMS the best environment possible for students and staff, continue the growth of the Pay It Forward closet, help her struggling readers feel smart and make them proud of their accomplishments, help her students to be global citizens that can make the world a better place than they found it, and be a good wife, friend, co-worker and human being. We think Angela already has a great start to those goals and we're excited to see what difference she makes in our community next!

Everyday Professional Excellence - *Being motivated, engaged, and inspired every day*

By Karen Graziano

A rainy day, my computer, a café, and two hours of free time—it was perfection. As a writing professor, I rarely use the word perfection except to state how unhelpful it is to strive to be perfect. In writing, it is more important to work *through* the process, rather than try to come up with a perfect product from the start, and I enjoy every part of that process. That day at the café, though, perfection was appropriate: I had carved out time to create. I was crafting a new training session. I fell into the flow state I cherish so much. The founder of the flow state, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, describes it in his TedTalk "Flow, the Secret to Happiness," and in my time creating, I knew he was right.

Understanding why Mihaly has concentrated on this area of research itself is worthwhile. Forty years ago, he started with this question: "Where – in everyday life, in our normal experience – do we feel *really* happy?" He concentrated on creative people, beginning with artists, and then interviewing scientists and other creatives "to understand what made them feel that it was worth essentially spending their life doing things for which many of them didn't expect either fame or fortune, but which *made their life meaningful and worth doing*." He found they gained a sense of clarity: "You know exactly what you want to do from one moment to the other; you get immediate feedback. You know what you need to do is possible to do, even though difficult, and a sense of time disappears, you forget yourself, you feel part of something larger. And, once the conditions are present, what you are doing becomes worth doing for its own sake." *See*, perfection.

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"The Future of Venango Area Business!"

In my sea of business students, college, law and graduate applicants, and professional clients, the clock drives them rather than the creative process. When faced with an uphill climb, it can be natural to only focus on the destination, but it does not always produce the best results. Impatience for the process can stifle it as quickly as your ice cream starts melting on a summer day. I encourage students and applicants to seize the creative process – and to rediscover their natural creative roots. For many, they need to dig deeply to discover those roots, but they can. That is where the best material is from – the content that connects with *who* they are.

The focus on the product has made me consider Elizabeth Gilbert's question in "Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear": "What is creativity?" What *exactly* is it? I know it's one of the qualities that I value most. It's a quality that brings me right into that flow state, cherishing the opportunity to dive deeply into that training material, students' papers, or any other writing. On the other side of the process, when applicants are celebrating their success, it's common to hear how happy an applicant is that he or she worked so hard through the process. Does creativity require *trudging* through though? For many, the outcome—the destination—provided the achievement high, not the process itself. It was a means to an end. To understand this more fully, I analogized to something that I don't enjoy: completing my taxes. I describe it as tedious and time-consuming, but my accountant, I hope, is *in that flow state*—enjoying the process.

Let's rethink the preoccupation *just* with the product. *Why* does that exist? Is it only time-centric? In her TedTalk "4 Lessons in Creativity," Julie Burstein describes "the embrace of loss, the oldest and most constant of human experiences" as the greatest hurdle to creativity. "To create, we have to stand in that space between what we see in the world and what we hope for, looking squarely at rejection....," she explains. While creativity allows us to *share* our ideas, and ourselves, the judgment and outcome is what can stifle us. To encourage applicants and students to access their creativity, I will be reminding them of Maya Angelou's heartfelt words: "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." Starting a creativity habit is the first start. Flexing our creative muscles can lead to a *joyful* process—and ultimately that flow state. So, grab your computer and a seat next to me at the cafe, although truthfully, I may not notice you there. Cheers and happy creating!

Karen Graziano is President of Graziano Career Works, LLC, an Adjunct Professor, and a PreLaw Advisor. Learn more at www.grazianocareerworks.com.



FLEX Socials

We had another great Coffee Chat at the end of March! Our next social is Trivia & Taco Night on Thursday, May 4, 6:30 to 8 p.m., at Scierka's in Oil City.

Have a fun social idea? Join us at our next monthly meeting or contact our Events & Fundraising Committee Chair Alan McBride at alan.mcbride@joyglobal.com.

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:

Bike 'n Brew Meeting: Wed. May 3, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m., Venango Area Chamber, Oil City

Trivia & Taco Night: Thurs. May 4, 6:30 - 8 p.m., Scierka's Tavern, Oil City

Dinner & Ice Cream Social: Tues. May 16, 5:30 - 7 p.m., Goosebumpz, Seneca

Monthly Meeting: Wed. May 17, 12 - 1 p.m., Venango Area Chamber, Oil City

Check out the Chamber's Calendar of Events: www.venangochamber.org/calendar



VenangoFLEX