

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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Why Should We Set Goals? FLEX Plans to Launch New Program

By Rachel Stiller, FLEX Membership Committee Chair

By now, you are probably familiar with the acronym FLEX, which stands for Future Leaders and Entrepreneurs eXchange. While FLEX certainly knows how to host fun events and socialize, our overall goal is to better ourselves as we become the **future** of our area.

This means we're working hard at becoming the next leaders and our intent is to improve our current skill set, while striving to make our workplaces, homes, and community a better place.

Leaders and entrepreneurs are not made overnight; you must work hard each and every day at it. What makes the difference, though, is much like compound interest—small seemingly insignificant tasks repeated daily can be life changing as time moves on. Before you know it, you'll be using your newly found skills of public speaking, time management, leadership, and more, throughout our community.

Who you choose to be today is forming who you will be tomorrow. That's why FLEX will be offering a new program to engage our members to go above and beyond what they thought was possible.

We want to help you take your goals, both professional and personal, and make them part of your everyday life. It's not always easy to stick with goals, so we will assist you as you make simple changes that can help you catapult your success as a young professional.

This goals program will be officially launched at our Annual Meeting, to be held in the evening on **Friday, October 20**, at Karma Coffee Co in Oil City. The program will be open to all FLEX Members in Good Standing. If you are not a member, we just ask for a one-time fee of \$15, and you can apply at a future event or social or online at bit.ly/FLEXMembership.

We encourage you to start thinking of the small ways you can become a better leader, young professional, community member, and overall person, as we prepare to implement a new exciting program for our group. Accept the challenge, join FLEX, and get ready to reach your full potential!





If you attended our last two FLEX meetings or have shopped at the Tippy Chef, you may recognize **Courtney Stewart**, who is the inventory specialist at the store.

Oil City is Courtney's hometown, where she graduated from Oil City High School then went on to Edinboro University to study psychology. While in college, she worked for Cutco Cutlery and, after having great success and becoming a manager, she decided her interest was in business, so she left college for a full-time position. Courtney enjoyed her duties in her new position, which were in human resources and training, and she also had the opportunity to attend business conferences in Detroit and create new programs for her staff. Because of

Courtney's love of business, she hopes to go back to school someday to get a degree in business management.

After about two years in Erie, Courtney decided to move close to the ocean and lived in Sneads Ferry, North Carolina, and, after one year there, she relocated back home to Oil City where she has been ever since. "Oil City is becoming a great place for my son and it helps that I have family here," Courtney said.

Although her work at Cutco was a great achievement, Courtney is most proud of her family, in which she has a one year old son, Myles, with her husband Dylan. She hopes to expand her family and have two more children, then eventually settle down somewhere near the coast within the next five to 10 years.

While in Oil City, Courtney has enjoyed her time at the Tippy Chef and is excited to help it continue to grow. "The Chef was truly an amazing idea that I am so proud to be a part of and something that can better our community further," she said. Even in her free time, she finds herself at some of the Tippy Chef's interesting classes and events. She and her husband enjoy attending the Paint and Sip classes, as well as the "Food Series" classes, but so far the Cake Decorating class was her absolute favorite. She looks forward to the fall themed classes coming up in October and encourages others to check them out!

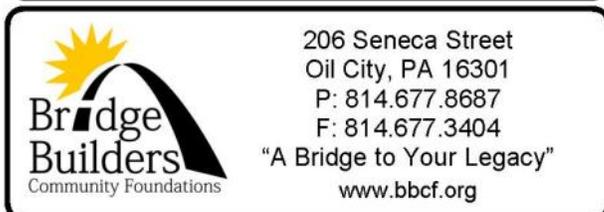
A new friend recently introduced Courtney to Karma Coffee Co, where she now stops almost every morning for a delicious iced mocha. She also enjoys walking the trails with her husband and visiting other local businesses, such as the Taco Shack and Oil Creek Earthworks Pottery Studio, who often teams up with the Tippy Chef for classes.

"My favorite part about working in Venango County is that I get to be a part of the community. Oil City is home to me and I am excited to say that since I moved back, there is a stronger sense of community," Courtney told us. "I love the homey feel of all the personally owned businesses and how unique and special this community is."

We're very excited to meet yet another talented and passionate young professional, living and working right here in Venango County!



On Friday, August 4, we held our Seventh Annual **Student Appreciation Luncheon**, with the most students and young professionals we've ever had in attendance! Thank you to everyone who helped plan, attended, and gave a testimonial at the lunch. What a great opportunity to show our appreciation to the college students who worked or interned in our area over the summer!



View more photos at [Facebook.com/VenangoFLEX](https://www.facebook.com/VenangoFLEX)



Marissa Dechant may be a familiar name to you, as she is a staff writer for The Derrick and The News-Herald and her name is throughout the newspaper each day.

Marissa is a Venango County native who graduated from Franklin Area High School in 2012. After high school, she attended Clarion University and earned a bachelor's degree in Journalism, with minors in Creative Writing and Honors. While in college, she studied abroad in England for one semester and attended the University of Sunderland.

Since graduating college, Marissa has been invited back as a key speaker and judge for the Honors Program senior presentations. As an honors student herself, this was an amazing chance for her to visit her alma mater and give back to the program that gave her such great opportunities.

Marissa has had many achievements during her short career. She has interviewed several noteworthy people, including U.S. Senator Bob Casey when he came to Oil City to discuss the opioid crisis in Venango County; Terry Moran from ABC Nightline for an election story at Redbank Valley High School; and Rob Cope, a New Zealand author hitchhiking across the country last summer who came through Clarion and Brookville. Although she's already achieved a lot, Marissa has hopes to advance in her career, whether it be a promotion at The Derrick or possibly moving onto a job in the social media and community relations field.

Creatively, she has always loved writing fiction and would like to have something either finished or published within the next five to 10 years. She's currently working on a longer fiction piece and trying to manage her work and personal time so she can keep chipping away at it.

Even in her free time, Marissa enjoys reading and writing. Food and fitness are other interests of hers, in which she has started practicing yoga in the past year, rides her bike during warmer months, and has recently picked up baking and cooking. Marissa also does her best to see friends a couple times a week. Karma Coffee is her favorite place to meet local friends and she sometimes takes a trip down to Pittsburgh to see a close friend from Clarion University. Some of Marissa's favorite spots in Venango County include the trail between Franklin and Oil City for an evening bike ride, Karma Coffee Co for work breaks and weekend brunch, Northside Eatery or Amazing Foods for lunch, and Bossa Nova for coffee while in Franklin. She loves the small town atmosphere that allows her to form bonds with the people who work at these places.

After college, Marissa worked in Clarion and lived in Franklin, which made it difficult to make connections in our area. Now that she lives and works here, she has formed many bonds with Venango County community members. She loves her coworkers and appreciates being able to meet so many people through newspaper interviews.

"Without my job, I wouldn't have learned about FLEX and Be Here, and I wouldn't have several of the friendships I currently do," Marissa said. "I'm extremely appreciative of that because it means the world to have friends my age working in the same community as I do." We're glad that Marissa has made so many connections here and we're excited for her to continue to be involved with FLEX and our community!

2018 FLEX Officer Nominations

We are now accepting nominations for new officers! Positions include: President, Vice President/Secretary, Events & Fundraising Committee Chair, Membership Committee Chair, and Marketing & Community Partnerships Committee Chair. To be eligible to become an officer and vote, you must be a Member in Good Standing. You can join membership for a one-time fee of \$15 at an upcoming social or online at bit.ly/FLEXMembership.

Please contact Casey at cmcvay@clarion.edu and Alan at alan.mcbride@mining.komatsu to nominate FLEX members and to learn more about each position. All nominations are due by September 20.



Tips to Engage Volunteers

by Casey McVay, FLEX President

Today, many community members see volunteering as an active and regular practice. They engage in volunteering because they believe in the organization or cause it supports and they enjoy giving their time and skill. Volunteer opportunities help us to fulfill our cause interests and engage in the community. Even though many love to volunteer, organizations sometimes struggle to recruit enough volunteers to accomplish what needs done or identify consistent, active volunteers.



Tips to engage motivated and dedicated volunteers:

TIP #1: Use existing volunteers and members to recruit new volunteers!

Existing volunteers bring some of the best recruits into organizations and projects. Ask them to tell their friends and co-workers about what they do and ask if they have the time or desire to get involved, too. You can also ask them to refer others to you.

TIP #2: Be creative and intentional with volunteer onboarding and retention.

Host a leadership session quarterly to pass on information and gain feedback from volunteers and orient new volunteers. Provide opportunities for volunteers to lead a new initiative, need, or project. You can even partner new recruits with existing volunteers for mentorship. Make sure to ask what volunteers are looking for in their experience so you have the opportunity to make their tasks important to them.

TIP #3: Document processes and information in a central location.

Sometimes volunteers don't have access to the information they need to complete a task, so they drop off. An easy way to keep them informed is to have a website with information tabs, a Google Drive folder (great for young professionals), or a printed handout for future reference. Make sure updated contact information is available. While you're preparing this, it's not a bad idea to include a survey or feedback mechanism.

TIP #4: Keep it real!

Start treating volunteers, which are, in many instances, the lifeline of an organization, more like investors or stakeholders. They can have an amazing impact on your organization or project. Keep them informed with regular communication, try to get to know them on a more personal level and understand why they want to volunteer, and recognize good work often. Be authentic in your approach to working with volunteers.

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:

Marketing & Community Partnerships Meeting: Tues. September 5, 6:30 p.m., Deer Creek, Shippenville

Bike 'n Brew Debrief Meeting: Wed. September 6, 5:30 p.m., Venango Chamber, Oil City

Membership Committee Meeting: Wed. September 6, 7 p.m., Venango Chamber, Oil City (after Bike 'n Brew)

Monthly Meeting: Wed. September 20, 12 - 1 p.m., Barrow Civic Little Theatre, Franklin

**Lunch is available for \$10 a person from Bella's. Please email Zach at genmanager@barrowtheatre.com to RSVP.*

Bowling Social: Thur., September 28, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., Seneca Lanes, Seneca



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