

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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FLEX Looks Forward to Another Year of Helping Young Professionals Thrive

By Hannah Kennedy

The FLEX Annual Meeting was held at Karma Coffee Company on Friday, October 26. The night provided FLEX members and guests, with a total of about 40 attendees for the event, opportunities to network and stay up to date on the various FLEX events throughout the past year.

An array of hors d'oeuvres was provided by Karma, while young professional and photographer Chett DeLong offered free professional headshots. Attendees enjoyed a time of networking, icebreaker games, and drinks, followed by a presentation of FLEX news in 2018, with members voting on 2019 leadership (*see new officers below*).

FLEX President Rachel Stiller gave a presentation of highlights from 2018, including various FLEX events like the Bike 'n Brew, Historical Walking Tour, Dinner and Show Social, and others. FLEX membership increased by nearly 75% in 2018, and has a current total of 85 Members in Good Standing.



The organization offered volunteer opportunities throughout the year to get members involved in the community, as well as a book club and a speaker series to help members develop their own professional skills.

In the upcoming year, FLEX looks forward to offering its members more leadership development resources, including a speaker series on topics such as mentorship, team building,

and entrepreneurship. FLEX hopes to continue to encourage its members to be active in the community, as well as reaching out and staying connected with fellow young professionals.

The organization will continue to help young professionals thrive while living and working in the Venango area.

Find more photos on the back page of this month's FYI.

Welcome 2019 FLEX Officers!



New FLEX leadership was elected at the Annual Meeting in October. The 2019 officers are:

President - Rachel Stiller
VP/Secretary - Kat Thompson
Membership - Laura Ordaz

Events & Fundraising - Hannah McCarthy
Marketing & Community Partnerships - Tessa Byham

"The Future of Venango Area Business!"



Hannah Allman Kennedy is a freelance writer who works with small businesses and other writers in our area. She was born in Pittsburgh, but was raised in Oil City when her family moved here in 1994.

Hannah attended Clarion University for a year, then transferred to Geneva College where she received her bachelor's degree in writing. Currently, she is halfway through a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing with an emphasis in fiction from Carlow University in Pittsburgh. Hannah enjoys traveling and has had the opportunity to spend time in Dublin, Ireland, through her master's program.

Growing her freelance writing and editing business is something Hannah is focused on right now, and she loves helping people achieve their goals through her writing.

"My ultimate goal as a writer is to write stories that connect the past and present, exploring characters like the people I grew up knowing in places like the one I grew up in," she said. "This area has a lot of stories, and I've always wanted to help tell them." In the near future, Hannah would like to publish a few manuscripts that she has been working on.

When she's not writing and building her business, Hannah enjoys reading, knitting, painting, spending time with her husband Alex, being outside (especially at Oil Creek State Park), and doing yoga. She also loves scoping out unique restaurants, two of her favorites being The Blue Canoe in Titusville and Bella Cucina in Franklin.

Building connections and working with other community members has been a favorite part of Hannah's involvement in our area. "I love the feeling that we're coming together to build something great," she said, and we look forward to working more with her through FLEX!

FLEX is What You Make It

By Marissa Dechant

Come to FLEX events, and you'll hear time and again, "FLEX is what you make it." You can get involved as little or as much as you want—want to attend only networking events, only socials, or a mix of both? It's up to you.

FLEX started out for me as a chance to make friends after returning to work in my hometown after college. I went to a coffee chat after meeting Venango Chamber program manager Ashley Cowles in March 2017, and yes it was awkward, and I only knew two people there, Ashley included. But it was a start.

I kept attending FLEX events, becoming a member in August 2017, and being asked to chair the Marketing and Community Partnerships committee for 2018. I became fast friends with Ashley and FLEX president Rachel Stiller (pictured on the right), not only within the group, but outside as well. We met up for coffee and brunch and even had a girls' weekend in Pittsburgh. I also met my boyfriend Chett DeLong at the FLEX Annual Meeting last year, and he continues to be a staple in my life and the best person I know.



FLEX gave me the opportunity to create a social circle and flourish in Venango County, and several months ago, when Chett and I decided we wanted to thrive elsewhere, it helped me, too.

I started looking for jobs in Pittsburgh in late August and continually made reference to my work with FLEX in cover letters and interviews. My employers at the job I landed were impressed with the marketing and leadership skills I learned through FLEX and asked that I utilize those talents at work.

For those young professionals who call Venango County home, I say take the opportunity to get involved in FLEX to whatever degree suits your schedule. It can give you a step up in more ways than you know.

Congratulations on the new job, Marissa! Thanks for being a huge part of FLEX the past two years!

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As Communications Specialist at Child Development Centers (CDC), Inc., **Saxon Daugherty**, spends his work days communicating about opportunities for child care in our region, while he also prepares for the arrival of his first child very soon.

Saxon grew up in Venango County and graduated from Cranberry High School in 2011. He then studied at Edinboro University, where he graduated with his bachelor's degree in Communications and Media Studies and was named the "Most Outstanding Graduating Senior in Journalism/Public Relations."

After graduation, Saxon began working for the The Derrick. & The News-Herald, where he was fortunate to interview Governor Tom Wolf and cover the Little League World Series when Seth Apel of Knox threw out the first pitch to celebrate his recovery from an arm injury in a woodcutting accident.

In July of 2017, Saxon took his current position with CDC, and appreciates the impact the company is making. "The teachers and staff are helping to lay a solid educational foundation for the next generation of workers that will benefit the area for years to come," he said.

Sports are a passion of Saxon's and his dream is to work in the sports sector. "I have always envisioned myself as a play-by-play announcer that can share exciting moments with fans watching or listening from home," he said. "Although my early career has not placed me there yet, I am determined to use my communications experiences to eventually reach that milestone."

However, Saxon's career plans might take a back seat as he and his wife, Carly, are expecting their first child in December and raising a family will take priority over any career goals moving forward.

Saxon's free-time also revolves around sports—his first "true love" when growing up. When he's not watching games, he's reading about his favorite teams or discussing the industry's biggest stories with friends. He also enjoys playing video games and checking out local eateries—Trails to Ales Brewery being his current favorite spot.

As a Venango County native, Saxon is happy to have settled down here. "My entire professional career has been spent in Venango County and it is evident that that there are intelligent and kind people everywhere who work together to make this area a great place to live," he told us.

We are excited to see growth in Saxon's career and family, and we're glad to have him here in Venango County.

FLEX Member Highlight: Alan McBride



Congratulations to our current Membership Committee Chair and past Vice President & Secretary Alan McBride for a recent job promotion! Alan is now the Global Manager of Inclusion & Diversity at Komatsu Mining Corp.

In this new position, Alan will focus on customer engagement, design for diversity, formal mentoring programs, recruiting and hiring practices, and inclusion and diversity elements of core leadership training programs throughout the organization.

He will be developing and leading projects with support from Komatsu's Global Inclusion & Diversity Advisory Council, which is made up of 18 employees from 9 different countries. Alan will also work with Komatsu Limited's Diversity Department in Japan and their Global Women's Network.

Alan has worked at Komatsu for about 7 ½ years. He started as an intern in 2011 and moved into the Talent Management Department in 2016.

"If I can make a positive difference in the lives of employees through our inclusion and diversity initiatives, as well as continue to support their career development and professional goals, then I feel like I am effective in my job," he told us. Best of luck with your new position, Alan!



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The past month has been full of exciting activities and events for FLEX, including the **Tailgate Social** and our **Annual Meeting**. More photos can be found on our Facebook page: [Facebook.com/VenangoFLEX](https://www.facebook.com/VenangoFLEX).



Annual Meeting photos taken by Chett DeLong

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.

Upcoming Events & Meetings:

- **Monthly Meeting:** Wednesday, November 14, 12-1 p.m., Topsy Chef, Oil City
- **Happy Hour:** Thursday, November 15, 5:30 p.m. - ?, Double Play Sports Bar, Oil City
- **Ugly Holiday Sweater Party:** Thursday, December 6, 6 - 8 p.m., FoxTales Pub, Franklin | Please bring canned goods to donate to our food drive

Connect with us:



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please join us in welcoming our newest FLEX members:

*Jon Byham
Anthony Faraone
Ben Hart*

Interested in becoming a member? Ask for a form at the next event or meeting, or join online at bit.ly/flexmembership.