

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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Taking Control of Your Career Development

No matter what stage of your career you are in, there are always opportunities to learn and grow.

At our Speaker Series in November, Kat Thompson with PA CareerLink and Deb Eckelberger of the Franklin Industrial and Commercial Development Authority shared their knowledge and wisdom around career development.

Attendee ages ranged from an 18-year-old high school senior, to a President & CEO in their late 50s, and everyone was able to take away something beneficial from the presentation.

Kat touched on topics including soft and hard skills, setting goals, taking trainings and courses, and the importance of networking and getting involved in the community.

“No one starts out being perfect or knowing everything,” said Kat. “It’s essential to recognize your weaknesses, understand why it’s important to work on them, and then practice until you improve.”

Deb has worked for various organizations throughout our region and shared how she got to where she is today.

She started out planning to go to nursing school, but instead went right into the workforce. She got her Realtors license, and eventually went back to school and is now in the economic development industry.

“I always knew I wanted to work in my hometown, and now I have a job here that I absolutely love,” said Deb. “Two of the things that have contributed to my success have included networking in the community and finding great people to be my mentors.”

If you missed the Speaker Series but are looking for ways to develop in your career, you can find resources on the right. You can also find more photos on the back of this FYI.



CAREER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

ResCare Academy: Free courses on a variety of professional topics; Must register through Kat (email Kathryn.Thompson@nwpacareerlink.org)

Occupational Research (O*NET OnLine): Database of occupational information; Visit onetonline.org

FLEX Leadership Development Resources (LDR): Collection of professional books, documents, videos, and more; Visit bit.ly/FLEXLDR

Traitify: Personality and career assessment; Visit pa.careerlink.traitify.com

Big Interview: Free job interview training; Visit pacareerlink.pa.gov (click “Individuals,” then “Interview Practice”)



Ryan O'Neill is originally from Titusville and now works as an Account Executive at Forever Media. He attended Edinboro University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice.

Ryan is also an Army Combat Veteran and served in Iraq from 2003 to 2005.

He is excited to be back in our area and has hope for the future here. "I like how personable, approachable, and helpful people are. You get a real sense of community and genuine caring," he said. "The area is growing and evolving to meet the needs of a changing world and you can see this through the expansion of our industries, cultural centers, and retail establishments."

At his job with Forever Media, Ryan gets to be a part of this growth and work with local businesses, which he describes as a "humbling and exhilarating experience

and one that I truly enjoy doing day in and day out."

In his free time, Ryan reads, lifts weights, hunts, fishes, cooks and bakes, hikes, camps, and spends time with his nieces and nephews. He also has dreams to go into business for himself someday and spends time working on business plans while also learning and volunteering to improve the community.

Some of Ryan's favorite places to visit in our area include the hiking and biking trails and the local libraries, which he says are "a truly valuable resource." Ryan also likes to visit the small businesses and loves to see them grow from startups to viable businesses. You can find him at local festivals and events, too, including Applefest, the Venango County Fair, and other smaller gatherings that occur frequently in our area.

Ryan looks forward to getting even more involved with FLEX, to network and have access to ideas and resources from fellow professionals and entrepreneurs. Welcome to FLEX, Ryan!

Want to be Happy? Be Grateful

We hope you enjoyed your Thanksgiving and are looking forward to the holiday season! During this time of year, it's especially important to recognize what we have and to be grateful. Our last TED Talk recommendation is all about the connection of gratefulness to happiness, and speaker David Steindl-Rast tells us: "It's not happiness that makes us grateful, it's gratefulness that makes us happy."

It's not just about grateful experiences, but grateful living. How do you do that? "By experiencing, by becoming aware that every moment is a given moment, as we say. It's a gift. You haven't earned it. You haven't brought it about in any way. You have no way of assuring that there will be another moment given to you, and yet, that's the most valuable thing that can ever be given to us, this moment, with all the opportunity that it contains," he said.

We can't be grateful for everything, but we can aim to be grateful in every given moment for opportunities we are given. Listen to Steindl-Rast's TED Talk at bit.ly/SteindlRastGrateful.



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Valerie Perry grew up in Oil City and is among the first group of Cruise & Travel Directors for Holland American Line. This company is redefining the cruise industry by changing the role of the Cruise Director and providing education and enrichment on the history and culture of destinations.

Prior to her current job, Valerie worked at National Geographic, where she was the Head of Programming and Production for National Geographic Live—a speaker series where explorers share their stories from the field.

“I got to work at National Geographic which is pretty great, but I also had the courage to walk away when I knew it wasn't quite the right fit anymore,” she said. “It would have been easier to stay—seeing people's jaws hit the floor when you tell them where you work never got old—but Holland America Line offered me a job to do what I really loved doing: public speaking and getting people excited to travel.”

Valerie attended Cranberry High School, where she graduated as Valedictorian in 2003. She then studied at Grove City College where she earned bachelor's degrees in Communication and Christian Thought. She considers herself a lifelong learner and will attend a class or webinar about anything.

In the future, Valerie would love a larger platform to speak to people about travel (a television or digital series is her dream) and someday she'd like to own a travel planning company. She'd also like to start a scholarship fund to help area youth pursue their dreams, too.

Valerie's hobbies include photography, hiking, camping, spending time with family and friends, and visiting National Parks, of which she has visited about 120. She is also a travel writer—theroadlotstraveled.com chronicles her journeys and she wrote a guidebook to Caribbean ports called "Sea More: Caribbean."

There are many reasons Valerie loves living in Venango County. She loves the quiet, being away from crowds and traffic, and being surrounded by nature—much different than when she lived in Washington, DC. She also likes that there is always something to do when she's had enough quiet, like grab a beer at Trails to Ales or see friends in a show at the Barrow Civic Theatre.

Valerie does not technically work in Venango County; she works onboard Holland America Line ships for 3-5 months at a time. During her contact she works every single day, so to make up for the lack of weekends and days off, she then has 1 or 2 months off in-between contracts. This gives her months at a time to explore and enjoy this area.

We wish Valerie the best of luck as she heads back to work, and we look forward to seeing her again when she's back in the area!

2020 Tip of the Month: Professional Development

We hope you enjoyed our TED Talk recommendations this year! In 2020, we plan to share monthly “Professional Development Tips” in each newsletter, on various topics including personal branding, networking, work and life balance, and mentorship.



We want to share these tips FROM young professionals. If you have a tip or advice you'd like to share, please email Tessa at tbyham@venangochamber.org.



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FLEX had a busy month in November! We had a fun night of bowling, learned about career development at our Speaker Series, and participated in Franklin's Light-Up Night parade.



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:

- **Ugly Holiday Sweater Party & Food Drive:** Thursday, December 5, 6 - 8 p.m., FoxTales Pub, Franklin (Bring a donation for the food drive!)
- **Membership Committee Meeting:** Thursday, December 12, 5 p.m., Oil City Library (Heritage Room)
- **FLEX Monthly Meeting:** Wednesday, December 18, 5:30 p.m., Venango Chamber

Find more event details at facebook.com/VenangoFLEX or members.venangochamber.org/events

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

William Woods

Interested in joining? Email Laura at laura.ordaz@mining.komatsu.

Connect with us:

