

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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

Volume 9 | Issue 9 | September 2021

Showing Up For Your Community

Most of us have spent more time at home over the past year than ever before, and it has gotten hard to get back into the habit of being out in the community.

While we understand circumstances prevent many from doing more—maybe you are being cautious because of the recent increase of COVID cases, or you are feeling burnt out and need extra time at home—we encourage you to show up when you can.

The community needs you more than you may realize. Organizations are struggling to find volunteers, businesses are facing challenges, and your fellow community members miss seeing others out and about. How can you show up? We have some ideas:

Volunteer

This requires the most time and energy, but many organizations can't function without the help of volunteers. According to Will Price of the United Way of Venango County: "Volunteering comes in all shapes and forms. You can do a one-time, hands-on activity, like painting a pavilion or assisting at a food pantry, or you can provide more ongoing services, like mentorship or advocacy work."



Consider what time, talents, and interests you have and find a way you can use those in the community. The United Way has a volunteer coordinator to assist you in finding a good fit, and a website at venangoconnect.org where you can sign up for needs. FLEX also invites you to join us in volunteering at Cranberry Festival on September 18 (see details inside).

Spend Money Locally

Technology has made shopping easy. You can order anything from Amazon, or place your grocery order with a big box store to pick up curbside. Local restaurants and retail shops have been majorly impacted by the pandemic, though, and need support. Consider buying even one thing from a local business that you'd normally purchase online.

Attend Events

Ever plan a party and have just a few people come? It can be discouraging, especially after the time and effort spent on prepping, and excitement to spend time with loved ones. Imagine that on a larger scale, like planning a community event for dozens, or even hundreds, of people.

Attending events keeps organizations motivated to keep hosting happenings, makes our community look like a busy and fun place, and can provide funds for a cause. Just showing up to an event like a concert for an hour can make a difference.

Spread the Word

If you don't have the ability or desire to go out, that's okay, but you can still show up by spreading the word. Share a post about an event on Facebook, give a business an online review, or talk to friends about local happenings. You don't have to physically be somewhere to show up.

Showing up can be hard, especially after most of us have gotten out of the habit of doing as much as we did before. Consider how you can show up in a way that is best for you, because our community needs us.

Professional Development Tip: Stepping Into Leadership

By Jarred Heuer (Executive Director, Clarion County Economic Development Corporation)

New jobs can be intimidating. Whether you are promoted from within or join a new company, there is always some degree of “agita.” When it involves leadership, that anxiety can multiply and dampen what should be an exciting experience. Though, the early going with a new leadership role has pitfalls, it offers a clean slate and can be an opportunity to generate new momentum and capture its propulsion. Below are a few ideas that have served me well in past roles and continue to do so today.



Varying your view is a great use of time, particularly when done early, as it often serves as an investment for future collaboration.

Lean On Others

New leaders can have the misconception that they must re-invent the wheel to find success. There are certainly instances where shakeups and wakeups are needed, but it is key to understand that if those are instituted erroneously, damage can be exponential.

Identifying diverse groups of established leaders, both inside and outside the scope of your role, and initiating mentorship-like relationships is a great step to take.

Actively leaning on others can assist in obtaining that street-level view, while also demonstrating to other leaders that you possess a healthy, assertive quality, which can serve you well in your new role. It shows you are a leader who can come alongside to problem solve without discrediting those who have come before you. This is particularly valuable in a small community.

Cast (and, if necessary, re-cast) Your Vision

A cast vision serves as guiderails for the work you do each day. Inherent with new roles is the uncertainty that the early going may not yield the results you might expect. Or the desired results may be difficult to identify, which can make the early going unsettling. Many jobs don't have well-defined metrics that measure the productivity of a day, week, etc.

Take, for example, farming. Until a farmer knows the yield of their crop and sells it for a price, it is difficult for the farmer to measure the productivity of a single day. To achieve success, they must understand the vision the growing season and complete the work each day, whether that is plowing, rotating, planting, or harvesting. Here, the cast vision enables the farmer to understand the purpose of each task and what it means for achieving success. Too, it grants the farmer freedom to meet the demands and varying challenges of each day without veering off course.

When a vision is cast and established, it can serve as a litmus test for when new opportunities emerge, or when old practices are studied and considered. It prompts a new leader to ask, “does this task/idea/effort bring me closer to achieving my vision.” Though simple, this question is effective in increasing your capacity, and can help prevent burnout, cynicism, and jadedness.

Vary Your View

Google Maps is one of my favorite tools. Much of its worth is its ability to show both a satellite and street view. No doubt, a user has a much better understanding of a place after having seen both. When it comes to understanding the landscape of a new job, whether that is the job itself or the environment it functions within, seeing the satellite and street view is invaluable.

The satellite view shows you boundaries of your job and the role it plays in the big picture. It helps to contextualize what fits and where, whether that is your company, department, or your job itself. The street view offers you a different perspective, often acting as a motivator or inspirer, which can give better meaning and purpose to your job. Understanding the street view also grants you credibility from your community, since many are often appreciative when leaders take time to get granular.



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Member Profile: Jessica Hilburn



Jessica Hilburn is Executive Director at the Benson Memorial Library in Titusville, which is her hometown. She attended Mercyhurst University and earned a bachelor's degree in both History and Political Science. She went on to Edinboro University for a master's degree in Social Science/History, then Valdosta State University for a master's degree in Library and Information Science.

Jessica has published many works, including her first book *Hidden History of Northwestern* and two academic journal articles in the *Oilfield Journal*. She is also a writer for *Information Today Magazine* on library-related topics and a book reviewer for *Library Journal*.

Jessica is a KINBER Toward Gigabit Libraries Fellow, which works to increase and strengthen broadband capacity and connectivity among PA public libraries. She's a board member for Titusville Renaissance and co-chairs the Technology Team and Branding/Marketing Team for Titusville Placemaking. In addition, Jessica runs social media and the website for Hydetown Borough and has worked to help eliminate overdue fines for all patrons in Crawford County libraries.

Looking towards the future, Jessica hopes to continue serving her community in a variety of arenas. "I am public service oriented and want to lend skills and knowledge to helping our area be a wonderful place to live and work," she said. "I'd like to see libraries become even stronger centers of their communities and partner with local organizations to help people with literacy, services, education, and information. Being a part of working together as a region for a strong future is very important to me. I chose to come back to the region and I want young people to know they're welcome and valued here."

Volunteer with FLEX - September 18

Looking for a way to get involved in the community? We invite you to volunteer with us at Cranberry Festival on Saturday, September 18, at the Cranberry Mall!



FLEX will be helping with the children's activities, basket raffle, drink booth, and more. There are two shifts—10:30 to 1:30 & 1:30 to 4:30—and volunteers will meet outside of the old Sears entrance. If interested, email flex@venangochamber.org.

When she has free time, Jessica can be found reading, listening to audiobooks and podcasts, spending time with her cats and family, watching sports, and "consuming all things pop culture." She especially loves going to the movies with friends and inhaling "all things Marvel."

She's a big fan of Drake Well, The Movies at Cranberry, and the Kennerdell Overlook, and enjoys supporting friends in shows at the Barrow-Civic Theatre and taking beautiful scenic drives and walks through the great nature Venango County has to offer.

Jessica gets to experience both Crawford and Venango Counties and appreciates how both do things a bit differently, but each place deeply cares about its people.

"Titusville is unique in that so many of us split time between the two counties and are intertwined with organizations in both. I enjoy that the vast majority of people are willing to work together to solve problems, be creative, and accomplish important things," she said. "No matter whether you're from--Franklin, Oil City, Emlenton, Pleasantville, Titusville, or anywhere in between--we are all neighbors and want the best for each other."

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As fall and winter approach, FLEX is preparing to bring on new leadership! The group is led by a President, Vice President/Secretary, and committee chairs. For 2022, we are seeking the following

Membership Committee Chair

This committee focuses on attracting & retaining young professionals, and also plans the FLEX Speaker Series.

Events & Fundraising Committee Co-Chair

The role of this committee is to plan and execute FLEX events and socials. The co-chair would serve alongside current chair Lyndsey King.

Marketing & Community Partnerships Committee Chair

This committee is responsible for promoting the group, through online and printed media, like the FYI newsletter. They also plan volunteer activities.



FLEX officers gain professional experience and learn skills such as delegating, leading meetings, public speaking, and planning events and other activities. Plus, it looks great on a resume and is a fun way to get involved in the community and spend time with other young professionals.

If you're not ready to serve as an officer, we also always welcome new committee members. If you have an interest or questions, contact us at flex@venangochamber.org.

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.

September Events & Meetings:

Events & Fundraising Committee: Tuesday, September 7 • 12-1 p.m.

FLEX Food Tour: Saturday, September 11 • 10:30 a.m. • Franklin, PA

FLEX Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, September 14 • 12-1 p.m.

Cranberry Festival Volunteering: Saturday, September 18 • Cranberry Mall

Membership Committee: Friday, September 24 • 12-1 p.m.

Marketing Committee: Tuesday, September 28 • 12-1 p.m.

Contact us for meeting zoom links at flex@venangochamber.org, or find links in our Weekly Update email.

WELCOME NEW FLEX MEMBERS

Maggie Schwabenbauer

Interested in joining?

Email the FLEX Membership Committee Chair Laura Ordaz at laura.ordaz@mining.komatsu or join online: VenangoFLEX.org.

CONNECT WITH US:   