

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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Excellence in Venango County

More than 20 FLEX members were in attendance at the Venango Chamber's Annual Dinner in February. It was awesome to have so many local young professionals represented and it was also a great opportunity for all of us to witness the many successful people and organizations of our region.

This year's Citizen of the Year, Dr. David Wagner, serves the community through his optometry practice and volunteers his time in the community and even globally through mission trips. 2020 Citizen of the Year, Lisa Winger, was also recognized at the dinner. She works for a hospice company and brings compassion and comfort to families, while serving multiple community organizations in her free time.

The Business of the Year, Morrison Funeral Home, has been in business for nearly 100 years and goes above and beyond for both their clients and the community. The Partner in Business of the Year, the United Way of Venango County, focuses on health, education, and income for



our community, and funds 23 programs throughout 15 different agencies, while also running eight of their own programs. Rebecca Beach, FLEX member and volunteer, was also recognized that evening as the Chamber's Volunteer of the Year.

These are just a handful of the many people and organizations in our region who make a huge difference and show that amazing things can be done in our area. Even looking at just young professionals in attendance, we had entrepreneurs, engineers, county commissioners, a mayor, educators, doctors, a police officer, photographers, and so much more.

While we often hear that people need to move away to find success, we know that that is anything but true, and we are so proud of the people in Venango County.

We will be recognizing excellence again in April at our Annual FLEX Presents event. We hope you'll help us celebrate the many amazing young professionals of our region by submitting a nomination for the young professional of the year (due March 4), sponsoring the event, and/or joining us at the in-person event (details coming soon).

Learn more about FLEX Presents at venangochamber.org/flex-presents.



FLEX Feature: Milliken & Company with Simon Neft

Our third interview in our “FLEX Feature” series is with Simon Neft, an Advanced Process Improvement Engineer at Milliken & Company, located in Franklin.

Tell us about the Milliken & Company.

Milliken is a privately owned global textile, chemical, flooring, and healthcare company headquartered in Spartanburg, SC. There are a lot of locations spread out globally, although the vast majority are located in South Carolina. It was founded by Seth Milliken in 1865, and is currently in its fourth generation of the Milliken family. The facility I work at, Hawthorn, does batch reactions of over 100 different products. We primarily make catalysts and driers for the paint industry, although our facility, just like Milliken as a whole, has a very diverse product line.

What all do you do in your position?

I use my chemical engineering skills to solve problems, and improve the process anywhere I see fit. I'm currently working on polishing our training program for new associates, and I have a lab project to test out a new catalyst for some of our reactions. One of my goals is to eventually get my Professional Engineering (P.E.) license in chemical engineering.

What is your favorite part about working for Milliken?

I really appreciate Milliken's ethics and morals. You constantly see in the news how other companies are either breaking the law, lying, or putting themselves first before making the world a better place. Not with Milliken. They're constantly striving to invest in their people and help the environment. And in the end, it shows with how there are a lot of great people in the company. We currently have a streak of being listed by Ethisphere as one of the world's most ethical companies.

What would surprise people about the business?

The one thing that surprises everyone is that you touch up to 50 Milliken products a day without even knowing it. Whether it's upholstery, automotive lining, fire retardant clothing, or chemicals, our products are everywhere. We make over 48,000 products, and the list goes on and on. If you get the chance to visit Milliken's headquarters in Spartanburg, SC, the Innovation Gallery describes really well all the different products we have.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Very few of our products are direct-to-consumer, but one of them is our napery (a type of linen). I really like the napery we have, it's made out of polyester and there are multiple patterns available. I've been meaning to buy a set for a while now!

Thank you, Simon, for telling us about Milliken & Company! You can learn more about his employer by visiting Milliken.com.

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Member Profile: Maggie Schwabenbauer



Originally from Lucinda in Clarion County, Maggie Schwabenbauer currently lives in Franklin and works for IA Construction Corporation as the Assistant Environmental Coordinator.

In her career, Maggie hopes to continue expanding her knowledge of the asphalt industry and the environmental impact her workplace's operations have. She attended Kent State University and graduated in 2020 with a Bachelors of Science in Chemistry.

Over the COVID-19 pandemic, Maggie has taken the opportunity to gain some new skills. She taught herself how to make quilts and found much joy spending afternoons with her sewing machine. She mainly makes quilts as gifts for family and friends, which has been extremely rewarding. "I still have a lot to learn, but I am proud of all the progress I have been able to make in the last year," she said.

Also in her free time, Maggie enjoys taking her wheaten terrier, Finley, for walks and spending quality time with loved ones, including her fiancé Damien. She's also a fan

of hot yoga classes at Impel Pilates and Yoga in Franklin, which has inspired her to start a 200 hour yoga teacher training.

Other favorite local spots include Trails to Ales for a delicious beer and a soft pretzel and Karma Coffee Co for anything on their menu.

"Venango County is a wonderful place to work. Aside from the beauty of the area, there are tons of places to visit on a lunch break or after getting off work," she said. "There are also so many beautiful places to take a break and go for a short walk during your work day! I love strolling through downtown Franklin or the Justus Trail."

Maggie has been a FLEX member since August and has especially appreciated the opportunities to network and get to know people she may have never met. "I think networking is an invaluable tool in everyone's professional life. I hope to continue networking and learning more about all of the wonderful things the people of Venango County have to offer the world."

Celebrate St. Patty's Day with FLEX

FLEX is celebrating St. Patty's Day on Thursday, March 17, and we invite you to join us! Meet us at Double Play in Oil City anytime between 5 and 7 p.m. Come and go as you please and grab a bite to eat and/or drink while you're there.



Throwback to our last St. Patty's Day Party in March 2020, just days before the state shut down because of COVID-19.

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"The Future of Venango Area Business!"

Event Photos: First Friday Lunch, Dinner and Show, & Super Bowl Party



March Events & Meetings:

First Friday Lunch: Friday, March 4 • 12 p.m. • El Toro, Cranberry

Events & Fundraising Committee: Tuesday, March 15 • 12 p.m. • Zoom

St. Patrick's Day Social: Thursday, March 17 • 5-7 p.m. • Double Play Sports Bar, Oil City

Membership Committee: Monday, March 21 • 12 p.m. • Zoom

Marketing Committee: Thursday, March 24 • 4:15 p.m. • Zoom

FLEX Monthly Meeting: Monday, March 28 • 12 p.m. • Zoom

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

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ashleigh Bennett
Daniel Newbury
Kelly Seibert
Devin Zagar

Interested in joining?

Email the FLEX Membership Committee Chair Joslyn Dechant at joslyn.dechant@gmail.com or join

FLEX 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.

CONNECT WITH US: VenangoFLEX.org • flex@venangochamber.org

