MEET & GREET

Who: Dexter Boots.
What: Paul Boots and Sons Heating and Roofing.
Founded: 1963.

Position: Manager.
Address: 108 Hilltop Drive, Ellwood City.
Service: Residential, commercial and industrial roofing and HVAC services.

Why I joined the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce: In order to help build our relationship with our peers and community.

Ellwood City is a great place to live and in which to operate a business because: Of the many wholesome community activities along with two great school districts.

A crowd gathers Nov. 30 during Let There Be Lights Weekend to watch fireworks in the Ellwood City Community Plaza on Lawrence Avenue. More photos! Page 8.

Don’t miss updates on facebook.com/EllwoodCityChamber/
Raymond Santillo, executive director of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, is shown in his office Dec. 28. Santillo retired from the position Dec. 31.

He refuses to take off his rose-colored goggles when it comes to the bright future he believes in for our area.

By William V. Foley
For The Chamber

ELLWOOD CITY—It challenged visitors from the corner of his desk, whose dark wooden surface was interrupted by business cards here, rubber band-bound pamphlets there, and the plastic transparent display folder filled with applications for membership to an Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce he had revitalized in the past three years.

The 8½-inch by 11-inch message, within a protective sheath and positioned atop a miniature brass easel, spoke of Raymond Santillo’s perspective before visitors may have heard it from he himself.

“Dream Big” it read, the cursive letters of red, orange, green and blue captured within a thick, gold border.

Santillo was a big dreamer for the chamber, businesses and the Ellwood City area during a tenure as executive director that ended with his retirement Dec. 31.

“He refuses to take off his rose-colored goggles when it comes to the bright future he believes in for our area,” said Caroline Golmic, the chamber’s outgoing past president.

“Always extremely pleasant and positive,” said Dan Swartz, the

NEW IN 2018!

New members of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce in 2018:

- Allied Rubber & Supply Co.
- Al’s Pizza
- AP Hughes Insurance Solutions
- Bluegrass Kitchen
- Bonniebrook Films
- Children’s Advocacy Center of Lawrence County
- Christine Pelton
- Club Hope Foundation
- Connoquenessing Out-

See Reins, Page 3

See New, Page 3

Page 2

The Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce

“Small Town, Big Living”
Santillo hands over reins

Reins, From Page 2

chamber’s treasurer.

When Santillo talks about this community, “It becomes contagious,” said Dan Franus, the chamber’s outgoing president. “People become excited and passionate about what they hear.”

“Irrepressibly positive” is how David DeCaria, the chamber’s incoming president, describes Santillo.

“Ray of sunshine, that’s how I think of Ray Santillo,” said Cherina Pelissier, the chamber’s incoming first vice president. “His personality is contagious. It’s hard not to have a smile on your face when having discussions with Ray.”

“A problem-solver type of mentality”

Those discussions with businesses – and Santillo’s dream big perspective – resulted in what Swartz calls a “dramatic” increase in membership – a 108 percent spike, from 206 members to 428, during his three-year tenure. That includes 57 in 2018.

“Ray seemed to know everyone in town, probably because he did,” Swartz said. “If for some reason Ray didn’t know someone, he would not hesitate to go seek out an introduction. Couple those two things with a problem-solver type of mentality and one can begin to understand the success we have achieved over the last three years.”

Added Golmic: “His unique ability to build and maintain relationships, coupled with his work ethic and tenacity, doubled our membership and set a new standard for the chamber and our town. Ray came into the chamber without a personal or political agenda and his sincere affection for our area is what has inspired others to join the cause.”

Yet Santillo says his legacy isn’t to be defined by numbers – if, he says, in fact merits a legacy.

“My legacy? I wouldn’t say my legacy has much going on at all,” Santillo said. “I think it is what the office did. It was a real team. The legacy is that Ellwood City has a lot of really great people.”

Among them, Santillo.

“What THEY’RE SAYING

Ray has lived here his whole life and his reputation among his peers has opened doors for the chamber that had previously been untapped. He refuses to take off his rose-colored goggles when it comes to the bright future he believes in for our area. This, along with his strong work ethic, have been the catalyst for change in the chamber.”

— Caroline Golmic, outgoing past president

Ray has a level of integrity and dedication that never once was in question. When Ray talks about this area he speaks directly from his heart. There is no rehearsed speech that was practiced before a mirror to perfect. It comes directly from his true love of this community and the people with whom he speaks immediately recognize this.”

— Dan Franus, outgoing president

NEW IN 2018!

New, From Page 2

doors
- Croaker’s Kegs and Corks
- DaVita Ellwood City
- Debbie’s Delicious Deserts
- Denise Canacci Walters, Howard Hanna Real Estate
- Diamond Milling Co. Inc.
- DiMarco Construction Co.
- Eagle TD
- Ellwood City Free Methodist Church
- E-Z Pet Care
- Famous Hair, Ellwood City
- Farm to Fork Café and Catering
- Fleeher Contracting
- Fombell Store and Grille
- Frederick A. Roth D.M.D
- Fun ‘n Fit Mobile Fitness
- Hal Martin, Howard Hanna Real Estate
- Heritage Valley Health System
- Kathy’s Barber Shop
- Lawrence County Drug & Alcohol Commission
- Lawrence County Social Services
- LGNDS Barber Shop
- Lindy Paving
- Main Street Sports Bar & Grille
- McRandal Co.
- MedExpress Urgent Care
- Meng Ling Dong, landlord
- Metro PCS
- Milk House Meats
- Nancy Smith, seamstress
- Paul Boots and Sons Heating and Roofing
- Palate Restaurant
- Penn Town Dogs
- Pine Valley Camp
- Richard Painter
- RiverStone Wealth Management
- Rome Monument
- Route 65 Motors
- S. Lucas Paints
- Specialized Staffing & Industry Recruiters
- The Frisk Law Firm
- The Young Agency
- U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly
- Uprising Physical Therapy
- Vasudevan Rajasenan, M.D.
- Velocity Magnetics
- Victor Rangel
- Western Pennsylvania Landlords Association
- Wetmore Specialized Plumbing Services / Roto Rooter

“Small Town, Big Living” The Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce
**Santillo hands over reins**

*Reins, From Page 3*

from Edinboro State College bachelor’s and master’s degrees in elementary education in 1975 and 1979, respectively, and a K-12 administrator certification in 1983.

He taught fifth- and sixth-graders at Riverside for nine years, seventh- and eighth-graders for nine years, and served as elementary school principal from 1993 until the time of his retirement in 2011 – during which he challenged his students to dream big.

“We used to ask the kids, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ And we are talking about elementary kids. And the favorite Peanuts cartoon that I remember was Charlie Brown asking Linus, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ Linus answers, ‘Outrageously happy.’ When I say dream big, I want people to be happy with the Ellwood City area. You can always do better. You can always do worse. So let’s be happy with what we have.”

Santillo will be missed as executive director, Fransu said, “but he has left behind a fantastic staff and a group of committees that will continue the hard work that he himself has worked on over the past three years.”

That staff is co-directors Jillian Court, who served for two years as executive assistant to Santillo, and Loralei Gallaher-Hink, hired in late fall. Court will become social director of the chamber and Gallaher-Hink, membership director.

“Ray believed in me from the beginning” Santillo left Court with a keepsake that will guide her in the future. “Ray gave me a piece of paper with the quote ‘Don’t fear criticism. The galleries are full of critics. They play no ball. They fight no fights. They make no mistakes because they attempt nothing. Down in the arena are the doers. They make mistakes because they attempt many things.’”

“What they’re saying”

“I may have only had the pleasure of working with Ray for a month but in that time I saw exactly what has made him perfect for this job. He treats every single person with respect and genuinely cares about them. His positive attitude is infectious. Everyone knows Ray and when he walks down the street you hear horns honking and people shouting hello.”

— Loralei Gallaher-Hink, co-executive director

“When I moved back, my husband Josh and I said that we were going to treat Pittsburgh as a new city to explore just like we did in Charlotte. But when I began working at the chamber, I started treating Ellwood City like a new city to explore. Ray always would list what Ellwood has to offer its residents and visitors. Therefore, his positivity of the Ellwood City area greatly influenced Josh and me to buy a house in Wayne Township.”

— Jillian Court, co-executive director

“Raymond has definitely been a blessing to our community. That spirit of optimism has helped drive the chamber events to new levels. His gregarious spirit is a natural encouragement for people to join in and say ‘I want to be a part of that!’ He’s a person to whom you can’t say no! We’re so blessed and grateful for his commitment to our community!”

— David DeCaria, incoming president

was attending a strategic planning meeting before she officially began as the chamber’s membership director.

“It was the first time I was meeting most of the board and it was really overwhelming,” Gallaher-Hink said. “During a break, Ray came up to me and put a pin on my sweater. It read P.I.E. He told me it meant ‘Pride in Ellwood’ and ‘to wear it proudly because I earned it.’

“I’m not sure if he realized how much that small gesture meant to me, but it calmed my nerves and am feeling defeated, I just think about that pin and how Ray believed in me from the very beginning.”

“Not every day is a good day” Santillo also left with Court and Gallaher-Hink the perspective he has gleaned as an educator, and as the chamber’s executive director.

“Not every day is a good day,” Santillo said. “Sometimes you get turned down. And being turned down is their decision.

“You cannot let it beat you down. It may be what they are going through. Maybe they are having a bad year. Maybe they are having a bad day. But you still go on to the next person and keep trying.

“It’s like the high school dance. Not every girl is going to dance with you. But you have to keep asking.”

In other words, just like the message on the 8½-inch by 11-inch message within a protective sheath and positioned atop a miniature brass easel on the corner of his desk: Dream big.
LOOKING BACK | LET THERE BE LIGHTS WEEKEND DEC. 1

PHOTOS BY WILLIAM V. FOLEY | FOR THE CHAMBER
‘A great team’

We instantly clicked and already have fun with one another, which is so important. We are going to make a great team.

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Jillian Court, left, and Loralei Gallaher-Hink, the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce’s new co-executive directors, are shown at the chamber’s annual dinner and meeting on Dec. 3.

Chamber names first co-executive directors

By William V. Foley
For The Chamber

ELLWOOD CITY—Loralei Gallaher-Hink, 29, and Jillian Court, 28, the first co-executive directors of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, say they are excited to work together to promote the advantages of living and working in the Ellwood City area.

“I am still new to the job, so I am literally excited about every single thing and I feel like the sky is the limit for me right now,” said Hink, a 2013 graduate of California University of Pennsylvania and the chamber’s executive director of membership. “I am also so excited to get to work with Jillian. We instantly clicked and already have fun with one another, which is so important. We are going to make a great team.”

Court served for two years as the chamber’s executive assistant, is a 2013 graduate of Allegheny College and the chamber’s executive director of social media. She said she is “most excited about continuing to transform and revitalize Ellwood City into a town that people will want to visit, shop in and live in.

“Hopefully we can hold more events that attract young people as well. This is most exciting to me because I never got to see shoppers walking up and down Lawrence Avenue like my parents did and I’d like to see that happen again in Ellwood City. I am

NEW IN 2019!

Meet the Ellwood City Area 2019 executive board members:
President: David DeCaria
Vice president: Cherina Pelissier
Treasurer: Dan Swartz
Past president: Dan Franus

See Team, Page 12
ELLWOOD CITY—Up to 20 vendors and a crowd exceeding 200 are expected at the third Winter Wine and Brew Fest, whose proceeds will fund maintenance to a brick wall behind a waterfall at the six-year-old $2.2 million Ellwood City Community Plaza on Lawrence Avenue, according to Brad Ovial, president of Ellwood City Revitalization and an organizer of the Jan. 26 event.

The Winter Wine and Brew Fest is set for 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Sons of Italy Lodge 608 at 808 Lawrence Ave.

Tickets, which enable visitors to taste wines and beers and appetizers from Mary Jo’s Catering, can be purchased for $25 in advance from the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce and from Kimpel’s Jewelers. The cost of admission at the door will be $30.

“This is a can’t-miss event because it breaks up the winter with an afternoon in which guests can socialize with one another, listen to music, enjoy a catered buffet, taste interesting wines and beers, participate in 50-50 drawings and in Chinese auctions,” Ovial said. “What we have seen is that people want to get out in the winter and this is a perfect afternoon.”

Music will be provided by DJ Frank Pezzi and his 250,000 available selections.

The Ellwood City Community Plaza in 2018 hosted seven performances during its concert series from June 16 to Aug. 11.
LOOKING AHEAD | MEET THE CHAMBER’S NEW CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

‘A great team’

Team, From Page 10

also excited to work with Loralei. She already has so many great ideas.”

Those ideas involve the continued use of social media, which in the past two years have included Facebook photo contests, engaging posts and Facebook event postings that have increased the chamber’s followers “tremendously,” Court said.

“A whole different way of thinking”

The chamber’s promotional videos have had more than 255,000 views on Facebook.

“We also use social media to promote our marketing videos and they were a big hit with current Ellwood residents and Ellwoodians who moved away,” Court said. “It made us feel good about what our office was doing when Ellwoodians who moved away would comment or share the videos saying they were ‘Proud of my hometown.’”

Gallaher-Hink said she will be proud to promote the advantages of the chamber to Ellwood City area businesses, adding that membership will help support the local economy; provide exposure through the chamber’s weekly happenings and social media, and through sponsorship opportunities and networking events; and that chamber and community members support one another.

The most important selling points for living, and working, in Ellwood City, Gallaher-Hink said, are its “school districts, the sense of community and the support system that comes with living and working in Ellwood City, and the small-town feel with all the big ideas and events that you see in larger towns.”

The chamber will thrive under youthful leadership, said Raymond Santillo, 65, who retired as the chamber’s executive director Dec. 31.

“I always said if I wanted to hire a head coach for a high school football team, I would want someone who is about 30 years old,” Santillo said. “They have enough experiences, and they still have the energy. They can relate well. That is what we have here.”

Having millennials spearhead the chamber represents “a whole different way of thinking,” Santillo said. “I came in here and I thought, ‘Small town, big living.’ Let’s get a billboard. They said, ‘You don’t want a billboard. It is the same people who drive up and down that road. You have to do social media. I’m like, ‘Social media? What is that?’

“For every 100 envelopes you mail out you are looking at $50 in postage. We have 800 or so people who we email regularly to with our weekly happenings. We would be looking at $400 a week to get that word out. Now we are doing it through email and with social media, Facebook and Instagram. I have already heard people say, ‘I have seen things on Instagram that are new.’ I said, ‘Yes, we have a new person and we are going fast-forward.’”

The advantage of being “new”

Social media, said Court, a 2009 graduate of Lincoln High School, “is the way of the world now. ‘So the chamber needed to change with the times and become more engaged on social media. That’s something I hope I helped with and will continue to do so as the executive director of social media. People in different age groups are on social media. We can reach a broad range of people. However, there seems to be a lot more young people using social media, which also helps target and show what events are going on or what amenities Ellwood City offers.”

As executive director of membership, Gallaher-Hink said she may have to become accustomed “to hearing the word ‘No’ real quick, but that makes hearing yes that much better. I am just going to keep approaching new businesses and even go after ones that have dropped out over the past few years. That is one advantage of being new.

“They may have said no to Raymond but until they say no to me, they are fair game. We also have some new and exciting perks in the works to offer our members and to entice new members to join.”

2019 EVENTS!

Thank You Picnic | May 8
Park-A-Palooza | May 13
Employee Lunch | April 24
Walking Tour | May 14

Golf Outing | June 24
Chef, Wine, Ale | Sept. 9
Small Biz Sat | Nov. 30

Fall Fest/Cruise | Sept. 28
Storytelling | Sept. 21
Lights Wknd | Dec. 6-7

| April 20
| May 14
| April 24
| June 24
| Nov. 30
| Sept. 28
| Sept. 9
| Sept. 21
| Dec. 6-7

| April 20
| May 14
| April 24
| June 24
| Nov. 30
| Sept. 28
| Sept. 9
| Sept. 21
| Dec. 6-7

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“Small Town, Big Living”