

# BC3 @ LindenPointe grad youngest to lead chamber in three decades

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Olivia Brown, 30, a Greenville resident and graduate of BC3 @ LindenPointe, has become the youngest executive director of the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce in at least 30 years. She is shown Friday, April 23, 2021, at BC3 @ LindenPointe, Butler County Community College's additional location in Hermitage.

(Hermitage, PA) A 30-year-old BC3 @ LindenPointe graduate has become the youngest executive director of the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce in at least 30 years.

Olivia Brown, of Greenville, said the public speaking skills she acquired at Butler County Community College's additional location in Hermitage will serve her as she serves as the public voice of the 400-member Mercer County business association.

Brown succeeds Sherris Moreira, who stepped down Dec. 31 after a four-year tenure.

David Grande was 31 when he began as chamber executive director in 2001 and knows of no one younger than he to be hired in that capacity since at least 1990.

“Rely on her confidence,” Grande, president of the 65-year-old chamber, said of the advice he would give to Brown. “She needs to be confident in her own ability. We didn’t just hire her randomly. We vetted this all. We looked at her qualifications. We looked at her skill sets. She was chosen for a reason. ... And she has an energy about her that I think will resonate well with our members.”

## “It’s a win across the board”

Grande served three years as executive director of the chamber. He and fellow chamber executive board members Diane Gardner and Cindy Vogan reviewed applications and conducted first-round interviews in the search to replace Moreira.

They were joined by executive board members Maggie Horne, Sandi Carangi and Jennifer Bartholomew in conducting second-round interviews.

Brown attended Edinboro and Slippery Rock universities of Pennsylvania, then transferred to BC3 @ LindenPointe. She enrolled in Mary Kay Bernat’s speech course and developed the public speaking skills that she said will be crucial in her role as chamber executive director.

“They are extremely important because I am going to be working in the public eye most of the time,” Brown said. “I have to be able to communicate with businesses and when I am at public events. You have to know how to carry yourself and know how to speak in certain situations. If I didn’t take that speech class, I probably would be lost.”

Brown graduated from Greenville Junior-Senior High School and debt-free from BC3 @ LindenPointe in 2015 with an associate degree in business administration. She since served as administrative assistant and mobility manager for the Primary Health Network Charitable Foundation in Sharon.

“Not only is a community college education a great return on investment for our students, but these students are, for the most part, staying home in their communities to utilize that terrific education,” said Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3. “It’s a win across the board.”

Added Grande: “The more we can do to keep those young individuals engaged in our community, we’ll be much better off. So making sure that organizations like BC3 are connected to the chamber, the job centers, to keep those folks here, that is very important.”

## “Great enthusiasm, a great education”

Through the college’s partnership with Franklin University, Brown expects to earn a bachelor’s degree in business administration in August from the private institution in Columbus, Ohio, which allows BC3 students to transfer 90 BC3 credits toward an advanced degree online.

Bernat is a student services specialist at BC3 @ LindenPointe, a Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce member for 10 years. Bernat has also served for two years as one of 23 board members for the business association.

“Olivia brings with her great enthusiasm, a great education and I think her views will attract like individuals to look at our chamber as having exciting things to offer,” Bernat said. “I think her leadership at the chamber is going to attract the same type of energy. She is going to be the face of the chamber.”

Bernat said there are three reasons to address an audience: to persuade, to entertain or to inform.

“And Olivia is going to be doing those three things almost all of the time,” Bernat said.

Brown graduated in May 2019 from the chamber’s Leadership Shenango program, which creates a forum for the exchange of ideas by integrating the experience of current business and community leadership with the innovation of future community leaders.

She is also a member of Thrive Shenango Valley, which focuses on community and economic development to help retain the region’s young professionals.

Brown and her husband, Anthony, have a 4-year-old daughter, Madi.