

eCenter director looks to build something different: Has accepted post at GCC

By JOE PINCHOT Herald Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, October 7, 2015 7:43 am

HERMITAGE – Entrepreneurs tend to embrace change.

So, it's only natural that the first executive director of the eCenter@LindenPointe, the incubator for technology businesses in Hermitage, would be stepping down.

“By nature, I am an entrepreneur and a builder, and it's time for me to move on to build something else and to allow someone else with fresh different ideas to make his or her mark on the project,” said Yvonne English.

English, of Hermitage, was hired in the spring of 2011 by the LindenPointe Development Corp., the nonprofit corporation that rents the eCenter from the city and operates it, and moved into her office once the building opened in the fall of that year.

It has been her job to recruit entrepreneurs and businesses to the center, set up the support network of mentoring businesses and individuals and organize other activities designed to bring people into the center.

“Yvonne's done a terrific job,” said LDC Chairman Don Morrison. “I don't know anyone who's not thrilled with the energy and enthusiasm she's brought to the eCenter.”

But, Morrison said he understands her urge to move on.

“She's ready for new challenges,” Morrison said, “I'm never disappointed that someone wants to try a new career path.”

English has accepted an expanded role as executive director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Grove City College, “which will allow me to work on some exciting new projects and to teach more as well,” she said.

“I absolutely love working with the students at my alma mater and am incredibly excited to continue to build what is shaping up to be a first-class entrepreneurship program with colleagues who have



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Contributed Yvonne English, eCenter@LindenPointe executive director, will be stepping down from her position “to move on to build something else.”

passion and drive that is inspirational.”

English, whose husband Kyle has been involved in eCenter activities, called her leaving bittersweet, and said she feels nostalgic for the place, even though she still is working there.

“That having been said, everyone has a role to play in a project of this magnitude, and I’m excited to see what someone new will do when given the resources and support within this fantastic community,” she said.

While the eCenter has been feted by the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association and Jay Williams, U.S. assistant secretary of commerce for economic development, English said her biggest accomplishments has been the work with tenants.

“I have seen these entrepreneurs struggle and triumph,” she said. “They have created companies and jobs. I would say that my biggest accomplishment, hands down, was to play a small role in helping these brave men and women to realize their dreams while building a stronger America.”

Morrison said English’s leaving gives the LDC an opportunity for soul-searching.

“It allows us, as an organization, to ask the question, ‘What’s next?’”

The LDC board has not answered that question, but the process of hiring a new director is part of the process.

“We’re very pleased to be where we are right now,” Morrison said. “We’re excited to take it to the next level.”

The organization has not set a firm deadline for applications, but hopes to generate 50 to 100. Morrison said meetings will start to be held soon to vet the applicants.

“Our drop-deadline is we’d like to have someone on board at the end of this year,” he said.

Nobody understands the importance of asking “What’s next?” better than English.

“The thing about an organization that exists to support entrepreneurship and innovation is that it will always be in some sort of growth stage,” she said. “We have had tremendous success in the first five years, but the point of the incubator is to continue to create viable companies. As those companies graduate from the program, the cycle starts again, and you have to look for more potential clients. In the future, the eCenter will have to continue to tweak its business model to react to the needs of the market – in this case, entrepreneurs and innovators in the region.”

English will stay on as director until her successor is named, and will assist in training and orientation of that person.

Will English maintain a relationship with the eCenter?

“I am sensitive to the effect that my continued presence might have on my successor.” she said. “I

want to clear the way for the new executive director to make the project his or her own. That's difficult to do when the person who originally built the program is in the room. That having been said, who knows what the future may hold? The eCenter will always have a special place in my heart.”