

### Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!)

The Young Entrepreneurs Academy, or YEA!, is a class that teaches students how to start and run their own business or non-profit organization. According to Royce Boyd, the program’s manager, “The goal of YEA! is to bring the next generation of entrepreneurs into Blair County.”



Shark Tank winner Lani Lazzarri with students before the United Sisterhood Speaker Series Luncheon

Begun in 2017, YEA! accepts applications through July from interested students grade 6 through 12 from any Blair County school. Applicants are interviewed by the program’s team of educators and business professionals, and then students for the upcoming class are invited to enroll. Offered locally at Penn State Altoona’s Sheetz Entrepreneurial Center, the class begins in October and continues for 26 weeks until the end of April.

The YEA! class provides students with introductions to local entrepreneurs and business leaders; exciting field trips to businesses for a behind-the-scenes experience; and meetings with attorneys, accountants, marketing professionals, graphic designers,

manufacturers, internet specialists, and more. All of the resources that students need to start their own businesses are provided. The class culminates with students preparing a real business plan and pitching their plan to investors for funding. Boyd describes it as “a different approach to learning by doing in the business world for students. YEA! is popular with students because they feel like they are in charge of their learning.”



Mike Burgmeirer, owner, talking with YEA! students after a tour of Chick-Fil-A

#### Feedback from Participants

“The best part was all of the connections you make with businesses in and around Blair County. Also, learning how to start a business while in high school really gives you a jump start.” Brad Shaffer, YEA! class of 2018

“It was everything I love about business. The Business Plan development was of great value. I just wrote a paper on business plan development for a college class based on what I learned at YEA!” Conner McConnell was a junior when he went through YEA! He is now at Penn State Altoona majoring in marketing and minoring in entrepreneurship.

“Our association with YEA! has helped us establish relationships with some really exceptional students. Connor is one of those. Our future business leaders will no doubt emerge from programs like YEA!” Donna Bohn, Executive Director of the Sheetz Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence



Troy Claar, of the Sheetz Distribution Center, gives students a tour of the facility