



**Small Business  
Development Center  
Gannon University**

*Helping businesses  
start, grow, and prosper.*

**Hannah Kirby**  
Owner, Ember & Forge  
(724) 825-9949  
emberandforge@gmail.com  
Erie County

**Industry:**  
Coffee shop

**Year Founded:**  
2017

**SBDC Assistance:**  
Business plan, financial  
projections, loan application,  
branding

**Additional Partners:**  
Bridgeway Capital  
Kelly Byers, Schaffner,  
Knight, Minnaugh, &  
Company, P.C.  
Christopher Feran, Phoenix  
Coffee, Cleveland, OH  
Kim Vargo, Yellow Brick  
Home Interior Design  
Consultant  
Matt Giesting, Branding  
Consultant

**Gannon University SBDC**  
Center for Business Ingenuity  
900 State Street, Suite 100  
Erie, PA 16501  
P (814) 871-7232  
F (814) 871-7383  
gusbdc@gannon.edu  
www.sbdcgannon.org

## Engineer Follows Her Passion for Coffee and Community Building



*"I so appreciate the help of the Gannon SBDC in making my dream of owning a coffee shop a reality. I had no idea where to start and now I feel ready to take on the challenge of being an entrepreneur!" – Hannah Kirby, Owner*

A Gannon University graduate with a Master of Business Administration degree, Hannah is an employee at Erie's LORD Corporation as a quality engineer. For many years, Hannah sought to follow her passion for helping to rebuild the Erie community by her volunteer work and projects she tackled in her free time outside of work. But within the last year or so, she realized that just wasn't enough.

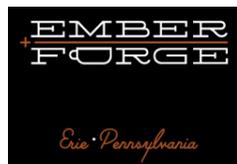
Hannah, after working in a coffee shop as a barista throughout high school, has always enjoyed the nuances of a well-made cup of coffee. It was only after she realized she could connect her passion for coffee and her desire to make a mark on Erie's redevelopment that she decided to tackle opening her own café and coffee house.

Hannah sought help from the Small Business Development Center in the creation of her business plan, financial projections, and with navigating the lender landscape, trying to determine what loan programs existed and what might be a good fit for what she was trying to accomplish.

In late June, Hannah completed her business plan and projections and submitted them to Bridgeway Capital for review. She took great care in crafting the plan, employing help from her SBDC consultant but also a private consultant specific to the café/coffee roasting industry out of Cleveland, OH. She also brought in assistance from her CPA at Schaffner, Knight, Minnaugh & Co. and the coffee consultant's accountant for her work on the projections. Additionally, Hannah is working with a branding designer out of Boston who is a family friend and another friend who is an interior designer out of Chicago to design the logo and physical spaces of the shop, respectively.

The location of the coffee shop is where her love of community redevelopment comes into play as it is a corner shop in the heart of downtown Erie right next to the Erie Art Museum. This heavily trafficked area boasts a building that has been vacant of long-term tenants for several years since a local bank branch closed in 2010. Being located in such close proximity to Gannon University, Erie Insurance, UPMC Hamot, the Erie Art Museum, and other large downtown employers and attractions will likely garner a diverse and exciting audience for Ember & Forge to serve.

Hannah will likely hear back from Bridgeway Capital about her loan in mid-July with plans to start leasehold improvements on the property immediately after closing. The SBDC will continue to assist her with marketing the business and a grand opening event in the fall of 2017.



**Success Story**