

BC3 receives third \$1M commitment in past 38 months



Janice Phillips Larrick, left, is shown Friday, Sept. 29, 2017, with Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of Butler County Community College, after the school announced a \$1 million commitment from the Butler Township resident.

Gift to benefit “this little light of mine,” donor says of school’s competitive registered nursing program

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College announced Friday a \$1 million commitment from Janice Phillips Larrick, matching the two highest gifts in BC3’s 52-year history and representing the third such donation in the past 38 months.

The commitment from Larrick, a former BC3 student, follows her \$50,000 gift in March that also will benefit what BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer calls the school’s “hallmark” program – its highly competitive registered nursing program that accepts only 70 of its more than 200 annual applicants.

“Mrs. Larrick,” Neupauer said, “is an incredibly special person. A former student at the college, she understands our mission, role in the community and the impact of this extraordinary institution. Her gifts have already created opportunities for nursing students. This latest gift will go even further. The impact will be felt for years, not only on our main campus, but in local hospitals, doctors’ offices and in long-term care facilities.”

The \$1 million gift to the BC3 Education Foundation Inc. follows that of Robert R. Heaton, whose July 2014 commitment was used to fund what became the \$6.4 million Heaton Family Learning Commons, which opened in August 2016. It also follows a \$1 million contribution from John L. Wise III and family, whose September 2016 gift is being used to fund what will become the \$2.3 million Amy Wise Children’s Creative Learning Center, which is scheduled to open in January.

“It is pretty unusual for a community college to receive this level of support,” said Ruth Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation.

Added Neupauer: “People believe in this college. Community members understand our role as their college – the community’s college. They appreciate our terrific faculty, quality academic programs, hard-working staff members and – above all – our phenomenal students. There aren’t many local colleges or universities that can match what we are doing with private giving. I say that humbly. It is truly a team effort.”

Larrick is part of that team, said nursing instructor Melissa Griffie, herself a 2008 graduate of BC3’s registered nursing program.

“She has been a blessing,” Griffie said, “and we consider her part of our nursing family.”

Donor’s BC3 instructors “seemed to be truly dedicated”

Larrick worked 10 years as a registered nurse following her graduation from a three-year program at Butler Memorial Hospital. As a mother of nine, she later continued her education at the University of Pittsburgh, Westminster College and, in 1967-1968, BC3.

“I think it is a wonderful school,” Larrick said of BC3. “I attended there for a short time when I was going to get my nursing degree. And I had some of the best teaching and teachers I have ever had. They seemed to be truly dedicated.”

Among them today, Larrick said, is Patricia Annear, who served 18 years as a faculty member before becoming BC3’s dean of nursing and allied health.

BC3’s registered nursing program “has a great woman leading it,” Larrick said. “Good nurses can tell what makes a good nurse. I think she appreciates the people who have attended there and have gone on and done more.”

BC3 students “responsible for human life,” dean says

So rigorous is her program that only 70 percent of the 70 students admitted each year complete the program, Annear said. Forty-seven were graduated in May.

Of the 46 graduates in the Class of 2017 who since May have sat for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses, 44 have passed – representing a success rate of 96 percent and exceeding the state average of 84 percent, Annear said.

“Many educational institutions focus on numbers of students,” said Annear, adding that she receives calls almost daily from recruiters seeking more BC3-educated nurses. “(But) we focus on the quality of our education. We realize that the students we are turning out are responsible for human life.”

Larrick’s gift in March has been used to create a realistic hospital room within a simulation lab inside BC3’s Business & Health Professions building, and to empower BC3’s students to ameliorate life-threatening scenarios presented by a computerized patient.

“With each scenario being taught I could not help but notice how the level of confidence increased in the students,” Annear said. “They no longer were afraid of being in the scenario, but were excited about how much more they were prepared for their roles in the clinical setting.”

Her own sim lab training was extremely important, said Heather Morida, a 2017 BC3 registered nursing graduate from New Castle who in July passed her National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses test and accepted a position in the neurosurgical unit of a hospital in McCandless.

“I think it definitely helped prepare us, especially whenever we had our first (simulated) code” with the computerized patient, Morida said, “because that is always a scary situation and I thought I was better prepared for it.”

The sim lab educates students “so that we are not like a deer in the headlights inside of a patient’s room,” Morida said. “We are prepared to go in there.”

BC3 nursing student: “I have all of my professors’ cell phone numbers”

The Janice Phillips Larrick Scholarship, created in 2002, has helped 23 students at BC3 and is among nine BC3 registered nursing scholarships with annual awards ranging from \$350 to \$1,700, according to Michelle Jamieson, associate director of the BC3 Education Foundation.

With the Janice Phillips Larrick Scholarship, Kasandra Williams, 20, of Cabot, a 2015 Butler Senior High graduate, said she was able to reduce the number of hours she works as a nurses’ aide at a hospital to concentrate on “easily the most difficult” challenge she has undertaken – BC3’s registered nursing program.

Like Larrick, Williams applauds the devotion of BC3’s nursing instructors.

“They are the most dedicated teachers I have ever had,” Williams said. “I have all of my professors’ cell phone numbers. If I ever have a question I can text them. They make themselves available to you. They have office hours in which they will also come in early for you. If they see you struggling, they approach you. They know you as a person.”

Larrick credits the influence of Neupauer, who in his 10th year as BC3’s leader is the longest-serving active president among Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges, its 14 State System of Higher Education institutions and its four state-related schools – Lincoln, Penn State and Temple universities, and the University of Pittsburgh.

“He is a dynamo of a man,” Larrick said. “He is a man of vision and I think he has certainly made things happen at the community college.”

BC3 in 2016 entered into a partnership through which graduates who attain an associate degree can pursue a bachelor of science degree in registered nursing from Chatham University, Pittsburgh, without having to leave BC3’s main campus.

The partnership has attracted four BC3 graduates this fall, according to Amy Stoebe, an admissions recruiter with Chatham. Williams said she plans to take advantage of the partnership following her graduation from BC3 next spring.

Donor prays to be “a light to somebody else”

“I think we point with pride to accomplishment,” Larrick said of BC3’s donors. “And I think the whole community has to share in that accomplishment. The people feel they own a part of it.”

Purcell attributes the spate of \$1 million gifts to Neupauer’s “leadership, visibility in the community and genuine commitment to the college and our students” which “provides a level of confidence that is reflected in our increasing private investment.”

Jamieson on Friday presented Larrick with a rare 1932 British Red Cross service medal during an informal celebration at Founders Hall. The obverse of the medal depicts Florence Nightingale, the mother of modern nursing, holding a lighted oil lamp.

A church organist for more than 50 years, Larrick said she recalled a particular morning with the choir director.

“He had us all singing songs,” she said. “The last song we left on was, ‘*This Little Light of Mine / I’m gonna let it shine.*’ Every day my prayer is that can I be a light to somebody else. And I think this gift is something that is going to work in many peoples’ lives, *this little light of mine.*”