



Dr. Nicholas Neupauer

Community Development Corporation of Butler County Annual Meeting Speech

3.28.2014

"People, Purpose and Passion: Butler County's Pathway to Success"

Thank-you for this tremendous opportunity. I am honored as a CDC Board Member and as proud President of Butler County Community College to speak to you this morning.

Our theme is "People, Purpose and Passion." Ken asked me to specifically speak of collaborations and partnerships that foster economic development.

And to get there, I am going to talk about our culture in Western PA and use way too many football analogies. Just like Rocky Bleier paved the way for Franco Harris, Rocky, our speaker last year, paved the way for this speech. Thanks, Rock!)

Not all that long ago, Western PA took pride in its own "segregation." Or, perhaps a better description would be "separation."

In Ellwood City, where I was born and raised, there was a "Little Italy" section of town (they went to Blessed Virgin Mary Church); the Hungarians lived in Ellport (they went to St. Joe's Church); and those of Polish descent lived in Chewton (who went to St. Agatha Church).

While Butler High battled it out on the football field with rivals from New Castle, nearby towns people from Beaver Falls and New Brighton would duke it out on the bridge that separated the towns before the teams would do battle on the gridiron.

The steel mills were filled with workers from different backgrounds back in the day. In an industry where "only the strong survived," mills, like the one where my father worked in Beaver Falls, were doomed because – among other things -- outside suggestions to diversify and cut the workforce were ignored.

Ladies and gentlemen, fast forward to the 21st century – 2014. While we learn from our past and it helps shape who we are, gone are the days of isolation and living in silos. Today, the key to survival is collaboration and diversification.

Way back in 1952, Harry Markowitz created the Modern Portfolio Theory. In it, he introduced a theory of finance that attempted to maximize portfolio return for a given amount of portfolio risk. Diversification in investing was a key tenant in MPT.

Since 2007, Butler County Community College has been aggressive in diversifying our risk by becoming a regional institution of higher learning.

We're proud to be Butler County's Community College – always have and always will be. When we expanded from Butler County to Lawrence, Mercer and now Jefferson County, external and even some internal criticism were tossed our way. But our board members never took their eyes off the prize – understanding the value of providing affordable, accessible and quality education across imaginary county lines.

Partnering with the Commonwealth, local governments, businesses, school districts and donors have enabled us to make an impact in these communities. And, in turn, help with the finances back home at the mother ship, our Main Campus in Butler County.

While today's world of higher education is chockfull of layoffs, furloughs, retrenchments and cutting programs, we are hiring employees, going forward with deferred maintenance projects and finally renovating our Beck Library by leveraging public and private support.

And perhaps our best friend as one of 32 public institutions in the State, you should be happy to know, is our county-neighbor, Slippery Rock University. Dr. Norton and the Rock as a whole treat us like an "equal," partner.

Recently, in a televised House Appropriations Committee meeting, President Norton sang the praises of BC3 and our work with SRU.

Did you know that Butler County is one of only two counties in Pennsylvania that share a community college and a State System University? When transferring, more of our students go to SRU over all other senior institutions. And just about to be announced, is a unique dual admissions agreement between our institutions that takes our work together to a whole new level.

Taxpayers see a 12 percent rate of return on their investment to BC3 in the form of higher tax revenue and avoided social costs. SRU and its alumni contribute approximately \$334 million to the region.

BC3's partnerships aren't limited to SRU, consider the following collaborations:

Butler Vo-Tech -- welding, HVAC and automotive.

Local Automotive Dealerships – to develop an advanced automotive training program.

XTO – provided the College a grant to establish an energy curriculum and an on-site "bricks-and-mortar" presence.

United Way of Butler County – we have delivered a variety of training programs in support of the United Way.

MSA – continues to provide equipment and materials to support the College's fire training program.

The list can go on and on.

Okay, back to football. Do you know that BC3's football team is undefeated since 1965? We actually have a shirt for sale in our bookstore that boasts of this accomplishment.

A common locker room sign boldly states the word "TEAM." Translated, TEAM stands for: Together, Everyone Accomplishes, More.

Respectfully, I believe we can accomplish more as a county. It starts with removing those silos, cutting out any turf protection and working toward common goals.

We have the proper organizations, boards and leaders in place to do so. In the coming months -- with the blessing of Ken and his board chair Jerry Andree – I will be reaching out to the economic development committee of the CDC to study best practices and models that emphasize collaboration in economic development.

Stay tuned.

I'll leave you with this.

Many years ago, I interviewed for a job in sports PR at Northeastern Illinois University. When I met with the Athletic Director, she quickly said, "I want you for the position."

Startled, I asked, "why?"

"Because I see that you are from western PA. People from western PA aren't afraid to roll-up-their-sleeves, do the dirty work and get the job done."

We have an opportunity to go from good to great in Butler County. And we'll "roll-up" our sleeves; do the "dirty work" to get the job done.

THANK-YOU!