



Dr. Nicholas Neupauer Guest Column From The Butler Eagle

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While attending a national conference, I heard a community college president say, "community is our middle name."

As the eighth president of the Butler County Community College, I find myself commenting the same.

And for good reason.

BC3 contributes in a variety of ways as Butler County's community college. Strengthening the local economy, training the workforce and collaborating through unique partnerships are just a few of the attributes we bring to our citizens.

Of the College's 16,000 alumni, 8,800 alumni - 56 percent - stay in Butler County. That means after graduation, these alumni use their BC3 education to better our community (there's that word again). According to a CCBenefits study, BC3 graduates lead healthier lifestyles and depend less on social assistance compared to those with a high school education.

The same study indicated the College generates a 33 percent rate of return on government investments and returns \$8.44 on every taxpayer dollar.

I wish my 401K yielded such results.

The accomplishments of our alumni are astonishing. Take Jessica Forsythe and Nick Toubakaris for example. Both are Butler County residents, BC3 alum and proud recipients of the College's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Forsythe received an Associates of Applied Science in Architectural Technology in 1969 before earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Cincinnati. Her educational and professional background helped her succeed in the creation of 4-Most Group, Inc. - Architects. Her firm has completed projects for Slippery Rock University, The Butler Eagle and NextTier Bank to name a few.

"When I came to BC3, my base goal was to get an education, acquire a specific technical skill and obtain a good full-time job as an architectural draftsman," Forsythe said. "Each day brought a new task, a new skill to be learned and a new opportunity to expand my horizon."

Toubakaris took advantage of BC3 as a nontraditional student. Moving to Butler County from Greece in 1970, he enrolled at the College as a part-time evening student at the age of 29. In 1977, he earned an Associate of Applied Science degree. Seven years later, he earned two Bachelor of Arts degrees from Slippery Rock University -- one in Business Administration and the other in Business Economics.

Utilizing his educational and real world experiences, Toubakaris turned O.H. Nicholas Transfer and Storage Company into a successful Butler County business.

"I came to Butler from a completely different country," Toubakaris said. "BC3 provided me the opportunity to strengthen my grasp of the English language and expand my knowledge of business theory. What I learned in the evenings at BC3, I applied in a practical sense to my business during the day."

A key element of our mission is to be "responsive to the needs of the community." A variety of examples validate this statement.

Our Business and Industry/Workforce Development Training Programs provide "safety in the workplace" to area companies like A.K. Steel, II-VI Incorporated and Portersville Valve Company. Similar training opportunities over the last year also included MS Office 2007 for T.W. Phillips, strategic planning for Butler County Tourism Bureau and customer service for Concordia - Visiting Nurses Association.

Training partnerships in professional education and certificate programs demonstrate the true collaborative spirit of BC3 with the community.

The Butler County Center for Community Resources provides instruction in both Personal Care Home Administrator training -- covering community resources, mental health and mental retardation -- and ACT 48 training in drug and suicide prevention for local elementary and secondary teachers.

The Area Agency on Aging provides instructors for the Personal Care Home Administrator program in the areas of abuse and neglect of the elderly.

The Pennsylvania Association of Notaries offers first-time and continuing education training at the College.

Perhaps the best example of a partnership with key County players is a new Manufacturing/Applied Engineering Program. The program involves BC3, Knoch High School, Penn United and the Butler County Manufacturing Consortium. Its focus is to address the need to create a pipeline of workers into a profession recognized by the state as a "high priority."

Students enrolled in the program at Knoch will take BC3 courses during their junior and senior years. These courses will be Introduction to Manufacturing, Manufacturing Processes and Materials and Speech and Principles of Microeconomics.

Better yet, students will be able to get hands-on experience between the summer of their junior and senior years of high school with a paid internship at a local manufacturer. After graduation, students will be guaranteed at least one job interview by a local manufacturer. If they do not decide to enter directly into the workforce, they can use credits already earned to enter BC3's Manufacturing Technology program or transfer to another institution.

Such collaborations often begin in the boardroom. BC3 employees are represented on a variety of boards. My role on the Community Development Corporation of Butler County and the Butler County Chamber of Commerce affords the opportunity for BC3 to be at the table for important conversations such as downtown revitalization, a Main Street manager or the revamping of Pullman Park.

Yes, we at BC3 are proud to have "community" as our middle name.

By NICHOLAS C. NEUPAUER