

BC3 Nursing, R.N., grad a mom, 38, who plans to comfort dying as hospice nurse

May 18, 2021



Tara Geibel, 38, of Chicora, is shown Friday, May 7, 2021, in Succop Theater on Butler County Community College's main campus in Butler Township. Geibel, a 2021 graduate of the college's Nursing, R.N., program, plans a career as a hospice nurse.

(Butler, PA) How to recognize Tara Geibel among Butler County Community College registered nursing graduates wearing white scrubs, white sneakers, white carnations and – during a ceremony held in a pandemic – white face masks from others who completed the career program?

“I’m the old one,” said Geibel, 38, a Chicora mother of two teens who is among the college’s 45 graduates of the two-year program in 2021.

Geibel and fellow graduates of the college’s Class of 2021 in a Nursing, R.N., program held on BC3’s main campus in Butler Township and at BC3 @ Brockway in Jefferson County were recognized during a ceremony May 7 in Succop Theater at BC3.

Geibel plans to become a hospice nurse, a career inspired by the visiting nurses who attended to her father-in-law, Jim Geibel, of Chicora.

“It’s a different type of mindset,” she said. “Your goals are completely different. When you take care of a patient in an intensive care unit, you are trying to fix them. And when you take care of a patient in hospice, you’re trying to make the end of their life more peaceful. More comfortable.”

“BC3’s exams are hard”

BC3’s 70-credit BC3 associate degree program was as challenging as the bachelor’s degree program in health science she completed at a private four-year university in Erie 16 springs earlier, Geibel said.

“BC3’s exams,” she said, “are hard. I went through a pretty difficult program at Gannon University. I was actually shocked when I took my first BC3 nursing exam, the level of critical thinking that you had to use and the level of difficulty that the exams entailed.

“It wasn’t easy.”

Additionally, there were the sacrifices the 2001 Karns City High School graduate had to make with her husband, Brandon Geibel, and 14-year-old daughter, Savanna, and 12-year-old son, Maverick.

“They were very understanding and supportive,” Geibel said. “There are things I had to miss or times when I couldn’t help them with their homework because I had my own.

“There were times when I had a lot of things going on. I would question whether or not it was worth it to keep going, or even if I could. I’d have clinical training in the evening, from 3 o’clock to 10 o’clock at night, and I thought, ‘My kids will get off the bus and I won’t be here.’ I need to have someone take them to where they need to be if my husband is working.

“Then I won’t get to see them in the evening because I won’t be home until they are already in bed.”

“So many of those nurses came from BC3”

Students in BC3’s R.N., program make rounds at hospitals as part of clinical training. Allegheny Valley Hospital in Natrona Heights was among the medical facilities in which Geibel attended clinical training, and where she realized the value of her sacrifices.

“So many of those nurses came from BC3,” Geibel said. “It makes you feel good. It makes you feel confident.”

As does BC3's average 90 percent success rate over the past three years with graduates taking the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses for the first time.

"Everyone I know personally," Geibel said, "has passed the first time."

Geibel said she selected BC3 because "BC3's reputation is really good. There are lots of nursing programs in the area. Not everyone makes it into BC3. I wanted to go somewhere that had a very good reputation."

BC3's Nursing, R.N., program accepts only 70 of its applicants a year, according to Dr. Patty Annear, dean of BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health.

Jim Geibel, Tara Geibel's father-in-law, passed away in March 2017.

"And that's when I decided I wanted to go into nursing," Geibel said. Hospice nursing "is a phenomenal field. Those (hospice) nurses can make your day. You had a terrible day and they made things seem better. They were very realistic and so helpful in teaching us what to do, and what we had to do, things that weren't even on our radar.

"It was amazing what they do."