

BC3 selects Geyer, Ihlenfeld as 2018 distinguished alumni

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Kimberly D. Geyer, a Butler County commissioner and Butler County Community College trustee, left, and Sandra J. Ihlenfeld, Butler YMCA executive director, will receive BC3 Distinguished Alumni Awards during the college's Oak Hills Dinner on Oct. 13. Geyer graduated from BC3 in 1984 and Ihlenfeld, in 2007.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College on Saturday will recognize as distinguished alumni a woman so determined to reach class at 19 that she learned to start the family's 10-year-old car by wedging open the choke on the compact vehicle's carburetor, and another who enrolled at 45 because she couldn't wait a day longer to pursue her dream of higher education.

Kimberly D. Geyer, of Mars, will become the second Butler County commissioner since 2016 to be honored as a BC3 distinguished alumni at the Oak Hills Dinner, which also serves to introduce recipients of the BC3 Education Foundation's 120 named scholarships to their donors.

Sandra J. Ihlenfeld, of Butler, executive director of the Butler YMCA, will become the third nontraditional graduate to be recognized in the past two years, following Lucille Shapiro and Ray D. Steffler, who began their BC3 studies at ages 36 and 37, respectively.

Shapiro, a 1973 BC3 graduate, has served continuously on the BC3 Alumni Council since its inception in 1997. Steffler, a 1986 BC3 graduate, has been a BC3 trustee since 1985 and its board chairman since 1999.

Geyer, who is serving her first term as a commissioner, has been an ex officio member of BC3's board of trustees since 2011. Butler County Commissioner Kevin Boozel, a 1991 BC3 graduate, received a 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award and also serves on the BC3 Alumni Council.

Geyer earned an associate degree in liberal arts from BC3 in 1984 and Ihlenfeld, in physical education in 2007.

Geyer, Ihlenfeld to join 49 others honored

BC3 Distinguished Alumni Awards honor those who have utilized their education and experience from BC3 to achieve significant levels of success and who have a commitment to community service.

“I am so humbled and honored,” said Geyer, a three-sport athlete at BC3 who as a student traveled to the college’s main campus in Butler Township at least three days a week and often had to manipulate the carburetor to start a family vehicle that had already been driven 200,000 miles.

“It would stall out constantly,” said Geyer, a softball and basketball co-captain at BC3 who was also a member of the college’s state champion volleyball teams in 1981 and 1982. “And I would have to put the hood up and put a plastic ice scraper in the carburetor. And then run back in the car and start it up.”

Ihlenfeld was a married mother of three working as the full-time health and well-being director at the Butler YMCA when she decided to enroll at BC3 because, she said, of the college’s affordability, accessibility and quality of education.

“BC3 was convenient, and the cost was good,” Ihlenfeld said. “When I was considering whether attending college was even a possibility, the first thing I had to think about was ‘Can I clear my schedule enough to do it?’ And I realized I was going to have to fight that every day. And then, ‘Can you afford to do it?’ I did not take out any loans. I just paid for every course as I went. And I got a very good education.”

Geyer and Ihlenfeld are among at least 23,000 former students in 50 states and in Ecuador who have earned at least 45 credits at BC3 since its first class assembled in 1966, according to Michelle Jamieson, associate director of the BC3 Education Foundation.

They will join 49 other BC3 graduates recognized as distinguished alumni since the awards were first presented in 2004 by the BC3 Alumni Council.

“Positive ripples in the lives of others”

“Our BC3 Distinguished Alumni list consists of individuals who began at BC3, then took the things they learned at BC3 and made a difference in their world,” Jamieson said. “They created positive ripples in the lives of others. Kim and Sandy are perfect examples of this.”

Geyer, a flight attendant for 11 years with USAir, said it was not uncommon for her to visit 21 cities in three days. She works with her husband Bob’s construction and development company,

served 12 years on the Mars Area school board, including six as president, and is midway through her second term as one of four executive officers on the state board of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges.

“I am a person with many interests, and I have always been that way,” Geyer said. “And I still am to this day. Getting a liberal arts degree from BC3 helped to make me more well-rounded. It was a great degree for me because I have led a very versatile life. I have gotten to experience a lot of different things and I have enjoyed all of them.

“It has made for a really interesting life. I have met a lot of amazing people, and I have gotten to travel throughout the world. And now I am home here and able to work for Butler County and give back to the people I care about most, who are right here in Butler County.”

“Commissioner Geyer is a selfless, servant leader,” BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer said. “I really mean that. Her countless hours of dedication to make Butler County and BC3 the best they can possibly be can never be recognized enough. I hope this recognition sheds some light on her great work and commitment.”

BC3 “hometown friendly” with exceptional leadership

Ihlenfeld in late September was named executive director of the Butler YMCA, where she has worked for 21 years and advanced since her BC3 graduation from senior physical director, association healthy living director, vice president of healthy living and community outreach and vice president of organizational advancement.

“As a member of the YMCA board of directors, I have observed Sandy grow in her leadership role with the Y while at the same time maintaining her passionate commitment to health and wellness,” said Ruth Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation. “She has forged collaborations with numerous businesses and organizations in the community that are making a difference in the health of Butler County.”

BC3 is unique, said Ihlenfeld, who earned a bachelor’s degree in exercise science from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania in 2010 and a master’s degree in health and physical activity research from the University of Pittsburgh in 2014.

“It is hometown-friendly,” she said. “When I go on the campus, I still feel welcomed. I smile as I see all the new additions that have come around to BC3 since I have been there. That’s exciting. Because if BC3 does well, the residents of Butler County reap those benefits and that makes for a better community. We know that when someone’s education is higher, their social economic status is higher, it is better for their health, and it just goes on and on in a number of different ways.”

BC3’s students, Geyer said, benefit from dedicated employees and exceptional leadership.

“When I look back on my own experience, it’s not the buildings,” Geyer said. “It was the people with whom I came into contact. What I didn’t realize is that now, on the other side of the coin, you see that it takes leadership and a good team of people to put in a good team, meaning our staff and our administrators, and everyone working together to carry the ball down the field toward the same goals and objectives of making things available and accessible to students.”

BC3’s Education Foundation this year will award \$207,000 in scholarships.

Meghan Hyatt, of Renfrew, received the Mary Jo Mohn Covert Performing Arts Scholarship and the Lynn L. Plaisted Thompson Memorial Science Scholarship this year. The BC3 mathematics major will serve as student speaker at the Oak Hills Dinner.