

Health care consortium picks 2 BC3 nursing students for 2021 honor

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Butler County Community College Nursing, R.N., students Olivia Girdwood, of Portersville, left, and Marcie Delaney, of Zelienople, have been selected as 2021 Health Care Students of the Year by the Butler County Health Care Consortium. They are shown Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2020, in Butler.

(Butler, PA) A single mother of three who contemplated nursing studies for a decade, then decided to return to her alma mater and join her 19-year-old daughter in Butler County Community College's career program, and a BC3 scholarship recipient who's "kinda all over" attending clinical experiences, tutoring human anatomy and physiology, and entering the workforce are 2021 Health Care Students of the Year.

Marcie Delaney, of Zelienople, and Olivia Girdwood, of Portersville, were among those honored Jan. 28 by the Butler County Health Care Consortium during its virtual Health Care Worker Recognition Event.

Delaney and Girdwood are the fourth BC3 selections among seven Health Care Students of the Year in the past three years. The college's Nursing, R.N., students are joined in 2021 by student Emma Starr, Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School's third honoree.

Delaney and Girdwood follow BC3 recipients Philip Green in 2020 and Marissa Marsh in 2019. Green and Marsh earned bachelor's degrees at Clarion and Indiana universities of Pennsylvania, respectively, before graduating from BC3's career program in Nursing, R.N.

Students in BC3's career programs can develop the skills needed to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation. Green is employed as a neuroscience nurse and Marsh, as a dialysis nurse.

"The future of our health care workforce"

Mary Salony, secretary of the Butler County Health Care Consortium and assistant director of the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board, said students have been recognized since 2019 because "They are the future of our health care workforce in this county."

The 19-year-old Butler County Health Care Consortium has grown to include 36 employers and resource partners, Salony said.



Butler County Community College Nursing, R.N., students Marcie Delaney, of Zelienople, top, and Olivia Girdwood, of Portersville, have been selected as 2021 Health Care Students of the Year by the Butler County Health Care Consortium. Delaney is shown Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021, in Zelienople Community Park. Delaney has worked as a medical assistant since graduating from BC3 with an associate degree in medical assistant in 1997. Girdwood is shown Friday, Jan. 22, 2021, near an oak tree in Portersville into which her younger brother crashed his all-terrain vehicle in a 2018 accident that inspired Girdwood to pursue nursing studies.

Healthcare and social assistance organizations were the top employers in Butler County as of January, with 14,286 employees representing 16.3 percent of the county's workforce, according to the state Department of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.

Among them, Delaney and Girdwood.

Butler Memorial Hospital employs Delaney as a full-time certified medical assistant, her profession since graduating from BC3 with an associate degree in medical assistant in 1997, and Girdwood as a nursing assistant, a part-time position she began in December.

BC3's Health Care Students of the Year "not only do well academically, but are also invested in other areas," said Dr. Patty Annear, dean of BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health.

"Very driven," added Julia Carney, assistant dean of nursing in BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health. "Not only are they productive in the nursing program, they have shown themselves to be standouts in their jobs, at the college and in life."

"It is a great nursing program"

Delaney is a 1995 graduate of Seneca Valley High School and the mother of Makayla, 19, and of a 17-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter. Her weekdays can be as long as 19 hours between working and attending classes.

"When my children were little, it would have been impossible" to return to pursue a degree in Nursing, R.N., she said. "But now they are all teenagers and that gives me the opportunity."

She joined Makayla as a student in BC3's 70-credit associate in applied science degree program in Nursing, R.N. "because it was close to my home," she said, "and I know it is a great nursing program."

Delaney, who graduated debt-free from BC3 in 1997, envisions a career as a nurse in a cardiac unit, or on a pre- or post-operative floor.

"I wanted to know what to do"

Girdwood's desire to study to become a nurse was inspired as a 17-year-old driving her 14-year-old brother to a hospital after he sustained minor injuries in an all-terrain vehicle crash near the family property a month before she graduated from Slippery Rock Area High School in 2018.

"I was worried about him and thinking about what I could do to help him on the way there," Girdwood said. "And I didn't know what to do, which is what got me into nursing. I wanted to know what to do."

Girdwood chose BC3 "because of the affordability, and I knew it had a great program."

She received at BC3 the President's Scholarship, which funds tuition for up to 18 credits for as many as four semesters to eligible students.

Girdwood also tutors fellow students in courses such as human anatomy and physiology, writing and nutrition; serves as a student ambassador; is vice president of BC3's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society; and is secretary of BC3's nursing club. She intends to graduate debt-free from BC3 this spring, and plans for a career as a nurse in medical-surgery or in telemetry.

Delaney and Girdwood will receive a lapel pin, and a glass-enclosed tabletop clock with a panel inscribed with their name.

New R.N.s with associate degree can earn \$51K

Recent graduates with an associate degree in registered nursing can earn approximately \$51,280 in 2021, according to nursingprocess.org. The average salary of graduates with an associate degree in registered nursing is \$70,820, according to nursingprocess.org, citing information from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The average job growth for registered nurses through 2029 is expected to be 7 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, whose forecast includes those with bachelor's degrees.

Recipients of the BC3 President's Scholarship must be Butler County residents, be a current-year graduate in the Top 10 percent of their class at a Butler County public high school and with at least a 3.5 grade-point average. Among other eligibility requirements are that recipients must also enroll full time at BC3 in the first semester following their high school graduation, participate in the BC3 Scholars Program and maintain at least a 3.5 GPA.

Christine Thomas, a faculty member in BC3's physical therapist assistant career program and a physical therapist at Encompass Healthcare Rehabilitation Hospital in Harmarville, was the keynote speaker during the Butler County Health Care Consortium's virtual Health Care Worker Recognition Event.

The consortium also honored employees:

Raylene Baum, Quality Pharmacy; Sue Tack, Don't Stop Dreamin'/QLS; Kaitlin Smith, Quality Life Services; Shannan Smail and Amberly Jackson, Concordia Visiting Nurses; Toni DeHart and Sue Miller, LIFE Butler County; and Dawn Elmadollar and Karli Wolfe, QLS Chicora.

Also, Carrie Christman, Amy Stepowski and Nicole Corsi, Lutheran SeniorLife VNA; Stephanie Balik and Jeff Lucco, Newhaven Court at Clearview; Lori Frederick, Lisa Fonner and Mary Ann Hughes, Transitions Healthcare; and Sue Switzer, Jean B. Purvis Community Health Center.