

Forever BC3: Alumni Association create permanent scholarships for four volunteers

23,000 nationwide have attended “true gem” of Butler County

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The BC3 Alumni Association on Thursday, May 4, permanently named BC3 Alumni Legacy Scholarships in honor of four volunteers who have supported the organization that is marking its 20th anniversary. From left, Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3’s president; Alumni Association volunteers Ray D. Steffler, Kathleen Sommers, Lucille Shapiro and Glenn T. Miller; Ruth Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation Inc.; and Michelle Jamieson, associate director of the BC3 Education Foundation Inc. Steffler and Miller are also BC3 trustees; and Steffler and Shapiro are also BC3 Education Foundation Inc. board members.

(Butler, PA) The Butler County Community College Alumni Association announced Thursday, May 4 that it would permanently create scholarships named for four volunteers who have supported the organization that is marking its 20th anniversary.

Since 2004, BC3 Alumni Legacy Scholarships have been awarded to 20 children or grandchildren of former students who earned at least 30 academic credits at BC3. Four will now be named for BC3 alumni Ray D. Steffler, Glenn T. Miller, Lucille Shapiro and Kathleen Sommers.

“Forever, a scholarship is going to be given in your honor,” Michelle Jamieson, associate director of the BC3 Education Foundation Inc., told the honorees and a crowd gathered for the 20th anniversary reception inside BC3’s new Heaton Family Learning Commons.

Many of the 40 guests Thursday night are among the 23,000 people nationwide who have earned at least 45 credits at BC3 since its founding in 1965. While former BC3 students live in 50 states and in Ecuador, approximately 82 percent live in Butler County, according to Jamieson.

“I don’t shock that easily” says shocked honoree

Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3’s president, led alumni and guests on a campus tour that began and ended in the high-tech, \$5 million Heaton Family Learning Commons that opened last fall. Jamieson’s announcement at the reception that followed stunned the honorees.

Shapiro was “totally shocked. And,” she said, “I don’t shock that easily.”

Sommers was “humbled and very proud,” and Miller, “completely surprised and very honored.”

Added Steffler, of Valencia, a BC3 trustee since 1985 and its chair since 1999: “I never like being called out. There are a lot of others who put in time and energy to the success of the Alumni Association.”

Steffler, who in 1986 earned an associate of science degree in business administration from BC3, is an aide to state Sen. Scott E. Hutchinson, whose district includes Butler County.

“The current people there are certainly contributing to the success of where we are sitting in 2017,” Steffler said, mentioning Neupauer; Ruth Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation Inc.; and Jamieson.

“Ray, Glenn, Lucille and Kathy tirelessly supported the development and focus of the alumni group,” Purcell said. “Their constancy was crucial, as was the funding that they secured to hire a part-time alumni director – Michelle. The funds came from the Education Foundation, Inc. Alumni, especially at community colleges, can easily be put on the back burner or have sporadic focus. Because this group championed alumni connections, BC3 has been successful in keeping a functioning alumni group – although much credit does go to Michelle and projects such as lifetime membership and creating the legacy scholarship.

“Ray, Glenn, Lucille and Kathy have all been very active in all the alumni fundraising.”

BC3 Alumni Association “very successful”

Residents of Butler County and beyond might take for granted that BC3 has an Alumni Association, Neupauer said.

“Let alone a very successful one,” he said. “That’s unusual for community colleges. And here it is we have an opportunity to celebrate our 20th anniversary. (Jamieson) is very instrumental in talking about the celebration, pitching the idea of a night like this, and recognizing these individuals. Give credit to Michelle.”

Each of the honorees played significant roles in the creation of the Alumni Association, Neupauer said, “and for making it so successful.”

Shapiro worked on starting the Alumni Association from the outside and he, from the inside, Steffler said.

A mother of three, Shapiro was 35 when she became part of BC3’s first class in September 1966. She would take one class per semester and graduate in 1973 with an associate degree in the social sciences.

“I do what I do because I enjoy doing things for the college,” the Butler Township resident said. “That’s me. I’m not accustomed to receiving honors of any kind.”

Shapiro was an external force, Jamieson said, “talking to the Education Foundation people, telling them that if we want our alumni to support BC3, we have to establish a relationship with them first.”

Shapiro worked for 10 years as an office manager in the Butler optometry office of her husband, Louis, to whom she has been married for 65 years.

A trustee since 1998 and the board’s current vice chair, Miller “has always been a strong supporter of the alumni,” said Jamieson, herself a 1984 BC3 graduate.

BC3 one of Butler County’s “true gems”

Miller, who in 1981 earned an associate of arts degree at BC3, is a third-generation director with the Thompson-Miller Funeral Home in Butler.

BC3, he says, “is a wonderful college with a wonderful Alumni Association. It is one of Butler County’s true gems, the college and its Alumni Association. BC3 is a wonderful representation of what Butler County is, and that is about the hometown, caring and reaching out to others.”

Sommers, BC3’s director of information technology, is one of the volunteers who says, “Whatever you need, I will do,” Jamieson said. “Kathy has been doing that for 20 years.”

A mother of two and grandmother of six, Sommers said she was “speechless” upon hearing a scholarship would be named in her honor.

“I always hope students will appreciate the time they spent at BC3 and want to help other students,” Sommers said. “Contributing to or establishing a scholarship is a great way to do that.”

Sommers earned an associate degree in computer information systems at BC3 in 1985. She has worked at BC3 since 1975 and lives in Butler Township.

“A great place to reconnect”

A phrase associated with BC3, Miller said, is that it is “a great place to start.”

“But it is also a great place to reconnect and to help others get their start there,” he said. Neupauer agreed.

“What you hear is a consistent message,” he said. “How people really love BC3 and how BC3 changes a lot of lives. Not only for the students, but also for the individuals who have dedicated their lives to make this such a great place.”

Steffler and Shapiro are also BC3 Education Foundation Inc. board members.

Six students will receive \$500 each as BC3 Alumni Legacy Scholarship recipients for the 2017-2018 academic year. The BC3 Alumni Legacy Scholarship endowment has reached more than \$75,000, according to Jamieson.