

Novel ideas centerpiece of Luncheon for Literacy at BC3

Guests can decorate tables, raise funds for BC3 adult literacy program

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Clockwise, from top left: Tables decorated to celebrate Dorothea Benton Frank's 2017 novel "Same Beach, Next Year"; Theodor Seuss Geisel's 1957 children's book "The Cat in the Hat"; Dr. John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber's 2006 book "Our Iceberg is Melting" and Richard Adams' 1972 novel "Watership Down" are shown Jan. 27, 2019, at the Rotary Club of Butler PM's Luncheon for Literacy, which raised \$12,000 to benefit Butler County Community College's adult literacy program. The 2020 Luncheon for Literacy will be held Jan. 26 in Founders Hall on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

(Butler, PA) Guests at the fourth Luncheon for Literacy can decorate their table to celebrate a beloved novel, bid on nearly 20 gift baskets, hear Laurel Colonello play 1970s hits on acoustic guitar and Julie Tulba read from "The Tears of Yesteryear" – and help a Butler County

Community College adult literacy program that itself has helped 454 students earn high school equivalency diplomas since 2008.

The Luncheon for Literacy, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Butler PM, will be held from noon to 3 p.m. Jan. 26 at Founders Hall on BC3's main campus in Butler Township. Tickets cost \$30 and include a menu of winter salad with apples and cranberries, penne with chicken, spinach and tomatoes, assorted side salads, fresh fruit and wedding soup prepared by Stephen's Kitchen and Catering/Porky's Smokehouse, Butler, at 1 p.m.



A portion of the crowd of 162 that attended the Rotary Club of Butler PM's 2019 Luncheon for Literacy, which raised \$12,000 to benefit Butler County Community College's adult literacy program, is shown Jan. 27, 2019, in Founders Hall on BC3's main campus in Butler Township. The 2020 Luncheon for Literacy will be held Jan. 26.

Colonello, of Middlesex Township, will perform music from artists such as Crosby, Stills and Nash; Joni Mitchell, Fleetwood Mac and Linda Ronstadt from noon to 1 p.m. as guests arrive and can place raffle tickets in baskets that in 2019 included gifts and certificates from downtown Butler businesses, a dinner and movie night package and chocolate assortments.

Following lunch, Tulba, of Cranberry Township, will read passages from her second book and first novel, "The Tears of Yesteryear," published in May in paperback. The coming-of-age tale set against the backdrop of a steel mill town at the turn of the last century tells the story of Ewa, a Polish teenage immigrant who has come to America in search of a better life.

A silent auction and 50-50 raffle will follow, as will a vote for a favorite table, said Annie Baglier, a member of the 10-member Luncheon for Literacy committee and whose husband, Dennis, served as president of the Rotary Club of Butler PM in 2019.

"Unbelievable success of this event"

All proceeds benefit BC3's adult literacy program, which provides free classes to students in English as a second language, essential skills, personal finance, computer literacy, career exploration and preparation, and toward "the ever-important path to a high school equivalency diploma for those who may not have completed high school for one reason or another," Leslie Osche said.

Osche is a Butler County commissioner, Luncheon for Literacy committee member and president-elect of a Rotary Club of Butler PM to which she has belonged for 19 years.

“That high school equivalency diploma is what leads to future training, employability and individual fulfillment,” Osche said. “The program also provides some financial literacy education, partnering with many countywide programs and agencies in helping individuals achieve financial independence and self-sufficiency.”

The Luncheon for Literacy, which attracted 162 guests in 2019 and was also held in 2012 and 2011, has raised \$20,000, according to Barb Gade, director of a BC3 adult literacy program that in 2019 graduated 60 students – the most in 11 years – with diplomas.

Funds raised from the Luncheon for Literacy will help to promote student success, and to cover the \$7 cost of each of four practice exams – in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies – and the \$30 cost of official high school equivalency tests that, if passed, result in a diploma issued by the state Department of Education.

“A lot of our students cannot afford to pay that \$30 per test,” Gade said.

The Luncheon for Literacy represents “a good way to support something that is meaningful to other people’s lives,” Gade said. “Lives are changed as people get their diplomas. People start seeing beyond where they are right now to possibilities of where they can go.”

“Who can’t get excited about investing in the future of our community and our county?” Osche said. “Who can’t get excited about celebrating how books and reading not only enrich our lives but build our community and our world? Our Rotarians are excited about the unbelievable success of this event and the attendees thoroughly enjoy the day knowing they’ve made a real impact on people’s lives.”

“We want this to be a fun afternoon”

Among the 27 Luncheon for Literacy tables adorned in 2019 were those with centerpieces of chocolates to represent Roald Dahl’s “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” and its character, Willy Wonka; with red-and-white hats to represent Theodor Seuss Geisel’s “Dr. Seuss” series; and with decorative bunnies to represent Richard Adams’ “Watership Down,” Baglier said.



Julie Tulba, of Cranberry Township, will read passages from her 2019 novel “The Tears of Yesteryear” at the Rotary Club of Butler PM’s Luncheon for Literacy, which benefits Butler County Community College’s adult literacy program and will be held Jan. 26 in Founders Hall on BC3’s main campus in Butler Township.

“People have different interests,” Gade said. “You can see that when you are looking at the tables.”

Added Baglier: “We want this to be a fun afternoon. And I am a strong believer that people want to give, but don’t always know how to give or where to give. And this is such a worthy, worthy cause.”

Students who earn a high school equivalency diploma can add nearly \$200 to their weekly earnings, according to the most recent information available from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The median average weekly salary in 2017 for those who have not achieved a high school diploma was \$520, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. For those with a high school diploma but no college credits, \$712.

Nearly 14,800 students – or 1.83 percent of 805,000 enrolled in grades 7-12 – dropped out of Pennsylvania public schools in the 2017-18 academic year, according to the state Department of Education. About 6 percent of Butler County residents age 25 and older did not hold at least a high school diploma, according to a 2013-2017 U.S. Census Bureau survey.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in November for those ages 25 and older without a high school diploma was 5.3 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics. For those with only a diploma, 3.7 percent.

“Anywhere you go, there are signs, ‘Help wanted,’” Baglier said. “Everybody is looking for someone they can hire. And without a high school equivalency diploma, these individuals are really not part of that workforce. They’re not able to move forward.”

BC3’s adult literacy program, established in 1986, “benefits the entire community,” Baglier said, “because now we have individuals who are able to be part of the workforce. The community college is a tremendous asset to Butler. The students who come into the program are expecting something better for themselves and they leave having attained that.”

For more information or to purchase a ticket, contact Baglier at 724-679-5443 or at abaglier@zoominternet.net; or Jocelyn Shetter at 724-822-7706 or at tgshetter@zoominternet.net.