

BC3 R.N. grads to salute tech sergeant who will miss pinning ceremony

Students gathering items for troops deployed overseas as tribute

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(New Castle, PA) As their final act as outgoing members of Butler County Community College's registered nursing club, 46 students are collecting sundries for U.S. troops abroad in honor of a New Castle woman unable to attend Thursday night's conclusive pinning ceremony, which represents their graduation from the rigorous two-year program.

Jodi Grazier, 33, will not receive the 1½-inch long, oval-shaped silver pin alongside her 46 classmates at 6 p.m. on BC3's main campus because the technical sergeant in the Air Force Reserve is in mandatory two-week training, in Albuquerque, N.M. She will soon be deployed out of country for the first time, and to a location she is not permitted to identify.

"The pinning ceremony," Grazier said, "is huge. That is the nursing graduation. That is what you look forward to in the end. And I am not going to be there."

"She deserves to be there," said Wendy Fischer, 45, of Freeport.

"That," added Caitlyn Kaufman, 23, of Chicora, "is a very special night for nurses. Missing that is very sad."

"It is just one of those things"

Like Fischer, Kaufman is among those who will cross the stage in Succop Theater and have the "Butler County Community College A.D.N. MCMLXXIII" pin affixed to her white nursing uniform.



Jodi Grazier, of New Castle, a Butler County Community College registered nursing student, is shown Monday, May 7, 2018, in Albuquerque, N.M. The technical sergeant in the Air Force Reserve will miss BC3's 2018 pinning ceremony for graduates of its registered nursing program on Thursday night because she is in mandatory two-week military training.

“I told her that if she has a moment when I can FaceTime her, I would walk her up and she could get pinned at the same time as me,” Kaufman said.

Grazier will be working at 4 p.m. local time Thursday, as a dental technician, preparing fellow military personnel for imminent deployments.

“I am a little upset about it, but being in the military, I have missed lots of functions,” said Grazier, who enlisted in the Air Force Reserve in 2004 and received a licensed practical nurse degree from Trumbull Career & Technical Center, Warren, Ohio, in 2011.

She is assigned to the Youngstown Air Reserve Station and works in the domiciliary care unit at the Butler VA Healthcare.

“When you are away, you are away,” Grazier said. “It is just one of those things.”

“You don’t realize how big somebody’s heart is”

As a tribute to Grazier, BC3’s registered nursing club – which in July launched an effort to distribute literature identifying regional treatment options available to those suffering from opioid addiction – is working with Yellow Ribbon Girls, Ellwood City, to collect items such as batteries, powdered drink mix, protein bars, microwave meals, battery-powered fans and two-ply tissue paper for U.S. troops.

“Just those little extras,” said Fischer, a mother of seven who completed a BC3 registered nursing program that in 2017 reported a 96 percent success rate of graduates taking the National Council Licensure Examination, which exceeds the state average of 84 percent.

“We wanted to try to give back something to her.”

Yellow Ribbon Girls, according to Patti Phillippi, the organization’s president, offers support to deployed U.S. troops worldwide and, in its 15 years, has distributed 38,000 packages.

When she learned about the two-week old effort by her fellow registered nursing students to aid her fellow military personnel, “It just hit me,” Grazier said. “There are 46 of them. That is just



A Butler County Community College registered nursing pin is shown in this 2016 photo.



Sherry Neely, a Butler County Community College nursing and allied health professor, affixes a pin to the uniform of Marlania Saylor, of Mercer, during BC3’s 2017 pinning ceremony for graduates of its registered nursing program.

amazing. There are so many people serving abroad who don't have family or anyone to write them letters. Just to receive something, it means a lot.

"I feel very touched. I didn't think people would do something like that. You don't realize how big somebody's heart is, or how much they care."

"We need to be able to pin her"

BC3 cares about its active and former servicemen and women, Grazier said of what Victory Media has selected as a Military Friendly institution for five consecutive years and one that in 2018 will graduate a four-year high of 28 student-veterans.

Karen Botinovch, a BC3 nursing and allied health professor, "worked with me because she knew I was going to miss things this month," Grazier said. "We actually Skyped my final evaluation because I was in New Mexico."

Grazier will return to New Castle in time for BC3's historic 50th commencement exercises May 16, after which Julia Carney, a nursing instructor at BC3 for five years, plans to hold her first non-pinning ceremony pinning ceremony at a reception to be attended by eight members of Grazier's former registered nursing clinical group at BC3.

Kaufman will be among them.

"That is going to be spectacular," she said. "Not only for her, but for all of us. Pinning is a huge deal. So for her to have a little ceremony of her own, that will be nice."

Carney said she will likely cry as much as may Grazier.

"She is one of those likable people, Carney said. "She is so compassionate. She is so understanding and so soulful. She really tries to take care of people. Even if you are not a patient, she tries to take care of you. She was trying to take care of her group. We used to tease them that they all had a little crush on Jodi. A nurse crush. They would say, 'What does Jodi want to do?' She was becoming like their matriarch, even though she is not even that old. It's just the way she envelops people.

"She is somebody I have been rooting for because I know what she can do in the nursing world. She will be fantastic, a dynamic nurse. We need to be able to pin her and pass the torch on to her. It's like crossing a bridge. 'Here you go.' I will cry."