

# Farmers gives \$17K to BC3 to aid pupils, high school collegians

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Dr. Nick Neupauer, left, president of Butler County Community College, receives a \$17,000 check from Craig Stauffer, center, manager of Farmers National Bank's branch in Butler, on Jan. 17, 2018, in BC3's Heaton Family Learning Commons. At right is Ruth Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation. Farmers National Bank's gift will benefit BC3's Stock Market Game and its College Within the High School program.

(Butler, PA) Farmers National Bank of Emlenton's \$17,000 gift to Butler County Community College's Education Foundation will assist BC3 in offering a financial literacy program for 700 area pupils as young as fourth-graders and help sophomores through seniors take advantage of BC3's College Within the High School program, Ruth Purcell said.

Farmers National Bank's donation – made through Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit program – will benefit the 700 pupils participating in BC3's Stock Market Game at 18 regional schools, and those capitalizing on a BC3 College Within the High School program that offers college-level courses in American national government, ethics, philosophy, psychology, sociology and statistics in Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Clearfield, Jefferson, Lawrence and Mercer counties.

“College Within the High School prepares high school students for college-level work,” said Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation, adding that Farmers National Bank’s EITC gift was its sixth to BC3 since 2012. “Students can get so many hours of college work that transfer to BC3 and to other schools. You might get a semester of college worked out when you are in high school at a much lower cost.”

BC3’s College Within the High School program last fall served more than 400 students in 22 high schools in seven counties, said Erin Cioffi, BC3’s assistant director of high school programming.

Those students not only learn about the topics they are studying, but they also “learn what it is like to be a college student,” Cioffi said. “They have to learn time-management skills, notetaking skills and new study skills. It also introduces them to what a college course is like instead of waiting until their freshman year in college.”

## BC3 president: Farmers steps up “year-in and year-out”

Farmers National Bank “sees the value that BC3 brings to our region,” said Craig Stauffer, the branch manager at the financial institution’s site in Butler and who presented a \$17,000 check to Purcell and to BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer on Jan. 17.

“As a local bank, we remain very focused on giving back to our communities and BC3 does so much for the communities that we are in,” Stauffer said. “They are a strong community partner. Our monetary donation allows BC3 to fulfill their mission and gives students an education that can never be taken from them.”

Farmers National Bank and BC3 are proud of their relationship, Neupauer said.

“They do a great job as a community bank,” Neupauer said of the financial institution that has branches in Allegheny, Butler, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Jefferson, Mercer and Venango counties in Pennsylvania, and in Hancock, W.Va.

“There seems to be a lot of similarities between our mission, our outreach and our service with the various communities in which we provide educational opportunities and Farmers’ approach, and those similarities have expanded over the years.

“That is something that Bill Marsh, the chief executive officer, and I have talked about a great deal over the years. I am thrilled with all of our partnerships, and honored. This one is extra special because Farmers National Bank just continues year-in and year-out to step up as it relates to this college.”

## Branch manager: BC3 program “gives students a head start”

Stauffer, a 2010 graduate of Butler Area Senior High, attended BC3 before transferring to Slippery Rock University, where he earned a bachelor of science in business administration in finance.

BC3's College Within the High School program, Stauffer said, "gives students a head start. Saving money is very important as college can be incredibly expensive. There are classes you can take in high school, your initial English or math courses and other subjects, and take them at a lesser cost. If we can help lessen that cost, it assists those students in the long run. Student loan debt is very burdensome and being able to defray those costs enables students to focus on living their next chapter of life following graduation."

Seventy-five percent of BC3 students graduate debt free.

"Had I not spent an academic year here at BC3," Stauffer said, "I would probably have \$15,000 more in debt."

Students on 220 teams of up to five members begin BC3's Stock Market Game with a hypothetical \$100,000, make buy-and-trade decisions and track how those decisions would have played out in the markets had they been real. The game – offered in 12-week fall and spring sessions, and as a 24-week session – also introduces many students to the importance of saving, and develops math, English and history skills, according to David Huseman, director of BC3's Center for Economic Education and a professor of humanities and social sciences.

"There have been studies performed that show that the game also helps them to better plan for their own financial futures," Huseman said.

Students who participate in the Stock Market Game also score higher on math and financial literacy tests than those who do not participate, Huseman said, citing results of a study performed for the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, which according to its website "provides financial education programs and tools that strengthen economic opportunity across communities and increase individuals' awareness of and access to the benefits of the global marketplace."

Stauffer said he doesn't recall learning about saving and investments when he was young.

"But it is so important to teach that at a young age," he said. "It will help them to develop habits that they will have across the years. If we can start young and teach kids how to have a savings account, or to have an emergency fund, and if they can keep that and use it throughout their lives, they will be so much better off."

Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit program provides tax credits to eligible businesses that contribute financially to a scholarship, to educational improvement or to a pre-kindergarten scholarship organization.