

# Move to downtown office may spark city momentum, BC3 president says

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An artist's rendering depicts the Butler County Community College sign that will be placed on the Alliance for Nonprofit Resources building on 127 S. Main St., Butler, in August. BC3 next month will establish its first presence in the city of Butler by relocating its coordinator of community leadership initiatives to the downtown business district.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College in early August will establish its first presence in the city of Butler by relocating its coordinator of community leadership initiatives from BC3's main campus in Butler Township to a South Main Street building, BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer said.

The four-mile move is a small step in what Neupauer calls the fulfillment of an objective in BC3's 2017-2022 strategic plan, and evidence of the college's gradual process of serving as educator and convener for community partners seeking to revitalize the downtown district.

In occupying a second-floor office at the Alliance for Nonprofit Resources, 127 S. Main St., BC3 realizes a strategic plan goal that calls, in part, for the college to enhance its community engagement with a town-and-gown strategy that increases the college's presence in the community.

“We are exactly where we need to be,” Neupauer said. “We take these small steps. We build the momentum. And this is a very important part of building that momentum. This is not about BC3 being the knight in shining armor. It is about the strength that our college brings to encourage and influence partnerships and collaboration.”

And revitalization, said Mike Robb, executive director of the Nonprofit Development Corp., which owns the buildings from which the nonprofit ANR and the Center for Community Resources provide services.

ANR provides organizations with support to fulfill their missions, Robb said, through services such as information technology, human resources and accounting. CCR assists individuals in finding help and information for mental health, intellectual disabilities, substance abuse and other human service needs.

“Having the college there,” Robb said, “just bolsters and makes the city shine just a little bit more for other businesses to say, ‘If the college is making a commitment down there, maybe I should make a commitment down there.’”

BC3’s presence on Main Street is important, Neupauer said, “so that symbolically and visually, we could show that BC3 is behind the greater downtown city movement. We also think it is significant because as Butler County’s community college, Butler is the county seat.”

## “We are all community oriented”

The relocation of its coordinator of community leadership initiatives follows accomplishments in its role as city revitalization educator and convener since Jan. 1 that include the debut of BC3’s series, “Reset Your Brain: A Revolutionary Approach to Opioid Addiction & Recovery.” The programs have been held in downtown locations and in collaboration with the Butler Art Center, the Butler County Humane Society, the Butler Area Public Library, the Butler YMCA, the Community Health Clinic of Butler County and Yoga on Main.

It also follows strategic plan objectives underway, such as the promotion of service to nonprofit organizations among BC3 employees, increasing the number of noncredit Lifelong Learning courses held in the city, and new Workforce Development programming to support downtown businesses and the community.

In creating a downtown office, BC3 partnered with ANR and CCR, nonprofit organizations with similar missions and which, Neupauer said, “had skin in the game.”

BC3 will occupy the office without charge for up to six months, according to Robb, after which CCR and ANR may seek BC3 reciprocation by providing free training to their staffs while allowing the college to remain in the building free.

ANR will also provide first-floor administrative support to Tracy Hack, BC3's coordinator of community leadership initiatives; and also time for its new community partnership manager, Sandra Curry, to collaborate with Hack in addressing downtown social and economic issues.

"We are all community oriented and work on behalf of the community as well as on behalf of nonprofit organizations and businesses," Robb said. "BC3's focus is not only education, but also a broader stroke in regard to providing people an opportunity to advance in their careers and help businesses. There is an economic engine there. Affording this opportunity with this space helps further that."

**"This is about the common good for the people"**

BC3 was also drawn to the ANR building because of its availability of additional space if needed, said James Hrabosky, BC3's vice president for administration and finance.

"There is the flexibility for BC3 to expand or to contract very easily with our arrangement with ANR," Hrabosky said. "We are going to use an office and some meeting rooms and some training rooms."

BC3 would also have access, if needed, to the CCR building, 212-214 S. Main St., said Chris Lunn, the NDC's chief financial officer, adding that the partnership with BC3 will promote awareness about the work of ANR and CCR.

"From our perspective, this is about the common good for the people," Lunn said. "BC3's mission is to expand and better the community through education, where ours is to expand and better the community through helping people find services, and support the governmental and nonprofit entities within those communities."

Since the implementation of BC3's strategic plan in January, Hack has organized two sessions of BC3's four-class "Reset Your Brain" series, which drew a combined 70 participants in April and in June; and has spearheaded a collegewide effort that allows BC3 employees to serve lunch to those at the Light of Life Community Outreach on BC3 work time.

Twenty-five BC3 employees have served a combined 148 hours at the West North Street nonprofit organization since Jan. 1, according to Kate Ihlenfeld, BC3's assistant director of



Tracy Hack, left, Butler County Community College's coordinator of community leadership initiatives, is shown Thursday, July 12, 2018, with Sandra Curry, the Alliance for Nonprofit Resources' new community partnership manager, at the ANR building on 127 S. Main St., Butler. Hack and Curry will collaborate in addressing downtown social and economic issues.

human resources, as part of an opportunity that enables BC3 staff members to assist up to four hours a month. Up to 120 visitors received a free hot lunch daily, Hack said.

Seventy percent of BC3 staff members who responded to a collegewide survey in January also indicated they volunteer in their communities, some for as many as 30 years. The survey showed those respondents serve as volunteers an average of four hours a week, with nearly half stating they volunteer on a board of directors.

Hrabosky serves as co-vice president of the ANR board; Linda Dodd, who in 2017 retired as BC3's executive director of human resources/Equal Opportunity Compliance officer, as president of the CCR board; Tricia Pritchard, a BC3 instructor in humanities and social sciences, as a member of the CCR board; and Joseph Taylor, a BC3 trustee, as the NDC's board treasurer.

### “I would like to see us start an incubator”

Curry, hired as ANR's community partnership manager in December, said she hopes to work with Hack on, among other initiatives, developing entrepreneurs.

“I would like to see us start an incubator that would serve Butler County,” Curry said, “and that would possibly support social enterprise businesses or businesses of good. They could be a for-profit or nonprofit company, as long as they have a social mission or support a social mission.”

BC3 working with other groups downtown may help to stimulate the movement to economically revive Butler, said Hack, a lifelong city resident.

“We want to help make Butler what it can be,” Hack said, “to make it a happening community full of hope and optimism, with lots of little shops and entrepreneurs. Just being a part of that is exciting for me.”

### “This will give us greater visibility”

BC3 this fall will also offer 16 noncredit Lifelong Learning courses at sites in Butler, the most in his 10 years as program director, Paul Lucas said.

BC3's Workforce Development departments plan to create new courses and programs to augment existing instruction to support downtown businesses and the community, said Lisa Campbell, BC3's interim director of Workforce Development. That includes a new certificate for downtown businesses and hospitality industries, she said.

“The certificate,” Campbell said, “will provide basic skills necessary for entry-level positions in many of the workplaces,” Campbell said.

Courses in the certificate program will include leadership and communication, customer service, business math, employability skills and the ServSafe food safety certification.

BC3, Campbell said, will continue to work with an advisory board of members from the downtown business community to complete the outline of the certificate program, with PA CareerLink, and with the TriCounty Workforce Investment Board to aid in pathways to employment.

The college's Workforce Development departments are business training, professional education and certificates, industrial safety training and public safety training.

"There are many businesses such as nonprofits, hospitality, healthcare, fire, police and even technology around the downtown area that we can support through our programming," Campbell said. "We have not been limited in our offerings because we have not had a presence yet in the downtown. However, this will give us greater visibility to the many types of offerings we have in our Workforce Development departments and provide greater opportunities to deliver our training."

## Living, learning community possible "future step"

BC3 may also one day create a living and learning community for its students in another location downtown, Neupauer said.

"We have started the conversation," Neupauer said. "We envision a group of students who come together from various fields of study and backgrounds for a common purpose. This could be service to the community, entrepreneurship, internships or other possibilities."

BC3 is currently only formulating plans with community partners, Neupauer said.

"A living and learning community," Neupauer said, "is a future step – not a next step – that will leverage our strength in bringing together partners to benefit the city of Butler."

Brian Opitz, BC3's executive director of operations, said BC3's 8-foot-wide by 3.5-foot high sign – incorporating the college's logo and reading Butler County Community College – will be placed in August on the western façade of the ANR building, and to the south of its front entrance.

"The sign is going to be very visible and modern and compliment the ANR sign," Opitz said. "It is going to be a nice start to what we are going to do downtown."