BC3 nursing students help nonprofit that helps others cover medical costs

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Lauren Archibald, left, Kaitlyn Fleeger and Olivia Girdwood, students in Butler County Community College's main campus Nursing, R.N., program, are shown Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020, arranging gifts within a basket that BC3's nursing students will donate to the Butler Health System Foundation's Caring Angel basket raffle. Archibald is from Kittanning; Fleeger, from Chicora; and Girdwood, from Portersville.

(Butler, PA) For the fifth consecutive fall, students in Butler County Community College's main campus Nursing, R.N., program have donated a basket that will be raffled to help a nonprofit organization raise money to help Butler County families in need.

BC3 nursing students are among 11 donors external to Butler Health System to contribute to the Butler Health System Foundation's Caring Angel basket raffle, said Kris Bowser, the foundation's development and events manager. Bidders can view baskets Dec. 2 to Dec. 9 through a link at butlerhealthsystem.org. Drawings are scheduled for Dec. 10.

The Caring Angel program benefits children, youth and families in Butler County, Bowser said.

Funds support Butler Health System's family services, which offers family counseling, group and individual therapy, parent-child interaction therapy and also help the hospital to cover charitable care for children under age 18 whose parents or guardians do not have health insurance or resources to pay for the child's visit to the emergency department.

"BC3 in general is always very generous with the BHS Foundation," Bowser said. "We appreciate this donation from the Nursing, R.N., program. This demonstrates the continued partnership that we have between the two organizations."

Lauren Archibald, left, Kaitlyn Fleeger and Olivia Girdwood, students in Butler County Community College's main campus Nursing, R.N., program, are shown Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020, wrapping a basket that BC3's nursing students will donate to the Butler Health System Foundation's Caring Angel basket raffle. Archibald is from Kittanning; Fleeger, from Chicora; and Girdwood, from Portersville.

Students from Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Indiana, Lawrence and Mercer counties this fall are enrolled in the Nursing, R.N., program held on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

The program began its collection of gifts for the basket in October, said Heather Darrington, an instructor in BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health and adviser of a BC3 nursing club whose officers met before classes at 8 a.m. Nov. 19 to complete the six-week project.

Lauren Archibald, of Kittanning; Olivia Girdwood, of Portersville; and Kaitlyn Fleeger, of Chicora; arranged within a woven brown basket candies and other snacks; scratch lottery tickets; gift cards for Domino's, Netflix and Sheetz; travel mugs; movies in a DVD format; blankets and seasonings.

"It's a good way for them to give back to the community," Darrington said. "Often families are afraid to seek care because they don't have insurance or they can't afford it. They're waiting and then they become sicker and their care becomes more expensive, adding even more stress. These types of programs can help families pay for their medical expenses and ease that burden so maybe they will get care prior to their situation becoming dire."

Archibald is president of BC3's nursing club, Fleeger is vice president and Girdwood is secretary.

"I think it's extremely important for us to get involved in the community," said Archibald, who plans to work in critical care following graduation. "It's important to be involved with your community, especially with how unusual this year has been. It's also important to support charities near and far."

Added Fleeger, who envisions a career as a pediatric nurse: "It's a really good way to show the community that we care, that we want to help everybody and the community."

"The Caring Angel fundraiser raises money for children who may not have healthcare coverage," said Girdwood, who intends to become a nurse educator. "They're coming to the emergency room. I know health insurance keeps a lot of people away. Having this available to them can help increase the health of Butler County as well as those individuals themselves."

Butler Health System internal departments and physician offices have donated more than 30 baskets that will be among the 45 displayed by photograph, Bowser said. Community members who would like to view baskets and purchase tickets should visit butlerhealthsystem.org. There will be a printable order form on the website that can be mailed to the BHS Foundation office with check payment.

The basket raffle, among the foundation's Caring Angel programs, raised a record $80,000 in 2019, Bowser said. The basket raffle was added as a fundraiser in 1998 to the Caring Angel program that began in 1992. The 2020 basket raffle is the first to be held virtually due to COVID-19, Bowser said. The foundation will also conduct a 50/50 raffle, Bowser said.