

BC3 trustee who founded Third World mission lauded by alma mater

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Dr. William DiCuccio, a Butler County Community College trustee from Gibsonia, is shown in February 2020 with students who attend the school his mission built in 2008 in Villa Hermosa, Dominican Republic. The school educates 400 children each year in kindergarten through sixth grade. DiCuccio has been named one of six 2020 Alumni of Distinction by Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, where he earned a bachelor's degree.

(Butler, PA) Dr. William DiCuccio lodged where the wealthy lodge in the Dominican Republic, at Casa de Campo Resort and Villas – with its 13 tennis courts, its equestrian trails and polo grounds, its three golf courses with seascape vistas of the Caribbean – and saw only what the wealthy saw, experienced only what the wealthy experienced.

It was only when DiCuccio visited a destitute village 10 miles inland on Hispaniola, and attended a Sunday service – within a small wood-block church, its low-slung tin roof just above the heads of 20 worshipers, some naked, all standing on a dirt floor – that DiCuccio saw what the poor saw, experienced what the poor experienced.

So inspired he gave it all away – “all of it,” he said of the proceeds from the sale of his 44,000-patient medical practice in Butler – and created a better life for the residents of Villa Hermosa, that destitute village.

DiCuccio, a Butler County Community College trustee and retired family physician, has been selected by Saint Vincent College, his alma mater, as one of its six 2020 Alumni of Distinction.

“Service to others in the purest form”

The private college in Latrobe chooses alumni of distinction based on achievements in any one of eight categories, which include professional achievement, church or religious involvement, community or civic involvement, and ethical or humanitarian efforts.

DiCuccio, 72, of Gibsonia, earned a bachelor of science degree in biology in 1970 from Saint Vincent College.

Thirty-five years later, DiCuccio and his wife, Marge, now chief nursing officer at Allegheny General Hospital, founded My Eternal Refuge, a name suggested by those villagers.

The mission in Villa Hermosa built a school that educates 400 children each year in kindergarten through sixth grade, a plant that purifies 4,500 gallons of water each hour, a medical clinic that has restored eyesight to more than 3,000 – and a new church.

“Dr. DiCuccio’s career and life’s work to this point reflect service to others in the purest form,” said Ben Becze, Saint Vincent College senior director of development and alumni relations. “His professional acumen in the practice of medicine is of the highest caliber.



Students are shown in February 2020 outside the three-story school built in 2008 by Dr. William DiCuccio’s mission in Villa Hermosa, Dominican Republic. The school educates 400 children each year in kindergarten through sixth grade. DiCuccio, a Butler County Community College trustee from Gibsonia, has been named one of six 2020 Alumni of Distinction by Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, where he earned a bachelor’s degree.

“Extending beyond his primary care practice, he has given unselfishly of himself through service to the greater Butler community and beyond Western Pennsylvania, to the children of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.”

“They couldn’t afford clothing”

My Eternal Refuge is located more than 1,600 miles and one time zone forward, in a town on the southeastern edge of the Caribbean island that the Dominican Republic shares with Haiti – the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, according to the CIA’s World Factbook.

“We never saw poverty like this,” DiCuccio said of that 2005 trip to Villa Hermosa, where visiting Haitians attended the service and lived in a nearby garbage dump. “They couldn’t afford clothing.

“Some of these were kids who never had clothing, never had an education, an immunization, a medical examination.”

Villa Hermosa has a reported 98,000 residents, with those under age 10 representing its largest age demographic and those 60 and older, its smallest. The average monthly income for a 3.2-person household in the Dominican Republic is \$777, according to reports.



A bank of computers is shown in February 2020 inside the three-story school built in 2008 by Dr. William DiCuccio’s mission in Villa Hermosa, Dominican Republic. The school educates 400 children each year in kindergarten through sixth grade. DiCuccio, a Butler County Community College trustee from Gibsonia, has been named one of six 2020 Alumni of Distinction by Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, where he earned a bachelor’s degree.



The courtyard of a three-story school built in 2008 by Dr. William DiCuccio’s mission in Villa Hermosa, Dominican Republic, is shown in February 2020. The school educates 400 children each year in kindergarten through sixth grade. The single-story building within the courtyard houses a plant built by DiCuccio’s mission and purifies 4,500 gallons of water each hour. DiCuccio, a Butler County Community College trustee from Gibsonia, has been named one of six 2020 Alumni of Distinction by Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, where he earned a bachelor’s degree.

The DiCuccios first began to visit Casa de Campo Resort and Villas – where “the richest of the world’s rich live,” DiCuccio said – in February 1993, five months after the death of DiCuccio’s mother, Catherine.

They would meet a resort bell captain named Santiago Gil, who lost his job after a hurricane lashed the island in 1997, and whose clergy studies and later, purchase of drums, tambourines and guitars to accompany Sunday services in that small wood-block church, were funded by the DiCuccios.



“We’re going to build a school here”

In February 2005, during their trip to Casa de Campo Resort and Villas, the DiCuccios were asked by Gil to visit the church.

A tank of purified water is shown in February 2020 within a plant built by Dr. William DiCuccio’s mission in Villa Hermosa, Dominican Republic. DiCuccio, a Butler County Community College trustee from Gibsonia, has been named one of six 2020 Alumni of Distinction by Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, where he earned a bachelor’s degree.

“I said to (Gil) ‘We’re going to build a school here, so that if another hurricane ever comes through, I want the villagers to be able to come into the school, because there was no place for these people who lived in shacks to go.’”

Along with the school, My Eternal Refuge built that water purification plant, that medical clinic and that new church.

DiCuccio and his wife founded My Eternal Refuge in 2005, a year in which he and Marge were married, in which he sold his medical practice in Butler and in which Butler County commissioners appointed him as a BC3 trustee.

BC3 president: DiCuccio “loves the college”

He serves as vice president of BC3’s board and, college President Dr. Nick Neupauer said, epitomizes the character of BC3.

“Not only in giving monetarily, but in giving his time,” Neupauer said. “Bill has been a trustee over the years who has always been there personally for me as a president, and never misses a meeting. As a matter of fact, he joins more meetings than he is even required to because he loves the college.

“He loves the mission.
He loves Butler
County.”

In Butler County, DiCuccio also served as the medical director at the Butler County-owned Sunnyview Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, as the medical director for Butler County Prison, as vice president of medical affairs for Butler Health System and as past chair of the Jean B. Purvis Community Health Center. He is a member of the board of directors of World Servants.



A church built by Dr. William DiCuccio’s mission in Villa Hermosa, Dominican Republic, is shown in February 2020. The church replaced a small wood-block building with a low-slung tin roof and a dirt floor. DiCuccio, a Butler County Community College trustee from Gibsonia, has been named one of six 2020 Alumni of Distinction by Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, where he earned a bachelor’s degree.

DiCuccio graduated from Butler Area Senior High in 1966 and from Jefferson School of Medicine in Philadelphia in 1974.

The DiCuccios’ mission in Villa Hermosa, DiCuccio said, “has been a blessing that we could never imagine.”

241 graduates honored since 1982

Saint Vincent College has presented 241 distinction awards since 1982 to alumni who have made significant contributions to their school, community or country. Saint Vincent College’s Class of 2020 included 325 graduates. The college has slightly more than 14,000 alumni.

Saint Vincent College’s 2020 alumni of distinction includes five graduates from its Class of 1970 and one graduate from its Class of 1990. An award ceremony is scheduled during the college’s homecoming and fall family weekend in 2021.

It has recognized 241 graduates with the distinction since 1982.

BC3's 16-member board of trustees is a policymaking body that provides direction and guidance to the college's president and administration. The primary functions of the board include establishing basic policy, appointing the president and financial control of the institution.