

## 7.4-pound veteran therapy animal focus of BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing noncredit course

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Photo by Jenny Karlsson. Victoria, a 7.4-pound, nearly 1-foot-tall Maltese will accompany her handler, Kathleen Vello, to BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on Sept. 8 for a noncredit course that introduces students to therapy animals.

(New Castle, PA) Victoria's presence encourages elementary school pupils to read aloud in front of others. Her companionship elicits smiles and nuzzling from nursing home residents. And her disposition, enhanced by a year's worth of certification training, is to ignore sudden noises, her ears being tugged and nearby animals.

The 7.4-pound, nearly 1-foot-tall Maltese will accompany her handler to Butler County Community College's additional location in New Castle this month for a noncredit course that introduces students to therapy animals.

“Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Therapy Animals” will be held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Sept. 8 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, 2849 W. State St., New Castle, and costs \$29.

The course is one of nearly 40 to be offered in Lawrence and Mercer counties this fall by BC3’s Lifelong Learning, whose classes can help students enrich their personal lives by expanding their knowledge and skills, said Paul Lucas, director of BC3’s Lifelong Learning.

Victoria, likely the product of a puppy mill in Michigan, adopted by Allegheny County attorney Kathleen Vello in 2008 and certified as a therapy animal in 2013, will assist Vello’s presentation about the differences in certification processes and roles of service animals, emotional support animals, and therapy animals such as Victoria.

“A lot of people think, ‘My goodness. My dog would be so good at that,’” said Vello, Victoria’s handler. “And they very well might be correct. But it is important for people to understand the different types of working animals. People will learn in the class that an innate positive disposition is a quality that the therapy animal absolutely has to have.”

## “She just makes them light up”

Victoria’s innate positive disposition is “pleasant, always gentle, energetic and obedient,” Vello said.

After becoming certified as a therapy animal by Animal Friends, Pittsburgh, Victoria has helped elementary school pupils to read aloud in front of others, Vello said, adding that “There are a lot of studies that show that animals lower people’s anxiety and allow them to perform better in general.”

Victoria also holds the attention of nursing home residents, and is sometimes held herself, Vello said.

“I’ve had caregivers tell me before that the resident doesn’t smile often,” Vello said. “But when they see Victoria, she just makes them light up.”



Photo by Jenny Karlsson. Kathleen Vello, of Allegheny County, is shown with Victoria, a 7.4-pound, nearly 1-foot-tall Maltese who Sept. 8 will accompany Vello to BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing for a noncredit course that introduces students to therapy animals.

Social distancing measures will be enforced to maintain a safe environment at all BC3 facilities. Additionally, face coverings, such as a face mask or face shield, must be worn in shared spaces inside BC3 facilities and must cover the nose and mouth. Face masks are preferred, but face shields are acceptable.

For more information or to view a complete list of BC3's fall 2020 Lifelong Learning courses, visit [bc3.edu/lifelong](http://bc3.edu/lifelong) or call 724-284-8504.