

Author headlines BC3's first Heaton Family Learning Commons open house

Aug. 30, 2019



Linda K. Schmitmeyer, of Middlesex Township, Butler County, author of “Rambler: A family pushes through the fog of mental illness,” will read from her 2018 nonfiction book at 6 p.m. Sept. 18 during the first open house for Butler County Community College’s Heaton Family Learning Commons.

(Butler, PA) Steve Schmitmeyer, according to his wife of 43 years, is an enthusiast of the Rambler American, an automobile manufactured by American Motors Corp. between 1958 and 1969.

“During the acute stage of his illness, he had about a dozen Ramblers,” Linda K. Schmitmeyer said. “Revved with mania one Saturday afternoon, he and the children pushed a nonworking Rambler – most didn’t run – into the pond at the far end of our property.”

Steve Schmitmeyer's illness was mental, and chronicled, along with his love of the compact car, in "Rambler: A family pushes through the fog of mental illness."

Authored by Linda, Steve's wife and the mother of the couple's three children, the 387-page nonfiction book published in 2018 by The Artists' Orchard, "is an honest, intimate portrayal of a young family's journey when the father has a mental illness," Linda said, and "is told through familiar family scenes."

Linda, former Butler Eagle features editor and columnist, and former BC3 instructor, and her husband will read from "Rambler" at 6 p.m. Sept. 18 during Butler County Community College's first open house for the Heaton Family Learning Commons, which will showcase its offerings from 5 to 8 that evening.

Linda, of Middlesex Township, graduated from the University of Dayton (Ohio) with a bachelor's degree in secondary education and from Wright State University, also in Dayton, with a graduate degree in English education. From 1995 to 2001 she was features editor of the Butler Eagle, where she also wrote a column for 13 years. She taught writing and literature courses at BC3 from 1989-1994.

"We are facing a mental health crisis"

Mental illness costs the United States \$193.2 billion annually in lost earnings, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Suicide is the 10th-leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We are facing a mental health crisis," Linda said, "and we must talk more openly about these difficult-to-understand illnesses."

One in five adults nationwide experiences a mental illness each year, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

"I hope 'Rambler' helps readers better understand how mental illness can affect the average family," she said.

Ten million U.S. adults have a serious mental illness, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which "substantially changes their life," Linda said.

"By that count, there are many families living with these illnesses. Because the symptoms affect people's thinking and behaviors — their personalities — they often go undiagnosed and untreated."

Neuroscientists, she said, are progressing in their understanding of mental illness, "but research is slow to affect how we think about it. Eliminating stigma happens on a personal level."

By sharing her family's story, Linda said, "I hope readers will better understand what really happens inside a home when a family is dealing with mental illness."

The Heaton Family Learning Commons open house is free and open to the community. Light refreshments will be served.

Community members can register for free library cards and free one-year parking passes, and take guided tours upon request following the book reading.

RSVPs for the Heaton Family Learning Commons open house are suggested, but not required. Community members can RSVP at bc3.edu/heaton.