

BC3 scholarship donors change lives

October 20, 2016

(Butler, PA) Step inside Tanner McCaw's accounting firm near Indianapolis, and you might find the Butler County Community College graduate huddled over his computer, viewing satellite images of the oak-tree-lined alma mater that he loves so dearly.

He crossed the miles and relived the memories in the same way while working in Las Vegas, clicking on that bookmarked Google map and cruising along Route 8 until he arrived, virtually, on campus.



“All the time,” he says.

While Butler is where he was born, BC3, he says, “is the place that made me.”

Not quite 30 months after graduating with an associate degree in business administration, the staff accountant has, in turn, made something for BC3. This spring, the 24-year-old became the youngest scholarship creator in the college's 50-year-history, and the first to do so after receiving such a financial award himself.

Sentiments echoing McCaw's - and those of Robert R. Heaton and Tim Shaffer, of Susan Seibel, of Bruce Mazzoni and others who worked to create the school's 118 scholarships - were as many as the 350 guests who Saturday evening at BC3's Founders Hall shared stories, handshakes, an Oak Hills Dinner and their love of BC3.

The event celebrates the legacies of those whose roots at BC3 run as deeply as those supporting the stately oak trees, and introduces scholarship donors such as Tanner McCaw to their beneficiaries.

It also comes in the afterglow of the college's most successful fundraising campaign ever.

More than 900 donors pledged a total of \$6.82 million - a 24 percent increase over the \$5.5 million goal - during the three-year Pioneer Proud Campaign that ended June 30.

Fifty donors established new scholarships, bringing to 118 such awards now available - nearly double the number of only three years ago.

“I’ve worked at liberal arts institutions, state universities, and I’ve sat in the audience for many of these,” Dr. Nicholas Neupauer, BC3 President, says as visitors finish an aptly-themed Thanksgiving-like meal. “And I will tell you, there’s not a connection to a college like there is here at BC3.”

Kaley Scott, 19, a Mercer County BC3 student pursuing a career in business administration, feels that connection. Scott, the first recipient of the McCaw Family Scholarship, compliments of Tanner, says more scholarships benefit more collegians. “It gives more kids the opportunity to go to college who may not have the money. There are more students and more variety of students being chosen.”

Reactions spur "goosebumps"

Roughly 500 students this spring applied for those scholarships, says Ruth Purcell, Executive Director of the BC3 Education Foundation, Inc. which distributes \$200,000 through the 118 gifts.

“And we pride ourselves in that we award them all,” Purcell says.

Just read the letters of appreciation that scholarship recipients write to the BC3 Education Foundation.

“Some of them,” Purcell says, “give you goosebumps.”

A sampling: “BC3 has lightened the load on me. I am so thankful that people in my community still care about their young people, and I can’t wait to see how far I can go.” And, “My future is filled with hope, and it is due to the gift I have been granted.” And, “I will be sure to work hard to honor your generous donation to my education.”

Thank you letters 6 inches deep

Robert R. Heaton, an 87-year-old real estate developer from Butler Township, saves the letters, with others expressing gratitude for his various charitable contributions, in a banker’s box in his office. Those letters, lying flat atop one another, stand 6 inches deep.

“The kids have been wonderful about this,” he says. “It’s a great pleasure for me. In the past two weeks I received a packet of letters from the various students, 12 of them who have been studying under my scholarship funds.”

Heaton and Shaffer are the administrators of the Glenn R. and Rhea J. McCandless Logan Family Trust, which endowed \$250,000 to the BC3 Education Foundation, Inc. to create scholarships for students pursuing an associate degree in a career program or technical trade program.

“I feel I owe it to our community because I have been able to make an awful good living and have been able to enjoy life considerably in this community,” Heaton says. “So I feel as though I owe it to the community for the success I’ve had.”

As does young Tanner McCaw, who used his Matthew Kapp Memorial Scholarship at BC3 to finance his dream of becoming a staff accountant.

Remember where you came from

McCaw credits BC3 in reaching his goal. Now he wants to help business administration or accounting students do the same.

“I want to be a person who gives back,” McCaw says, “and to never forget where I came from. I have been blessed with these job opportunities after school and I have the money to start a scholarship to help someone who is literally in the shoes I was in only three or four years ago.”

That, Heaton says of the next generation of BC3 scholarship donors, “is wonderful. He’s only 24. That says to me he caught the right train, that he received a scholarship and in turn wants to help someone else. I really admire him.”

Daughter fed mom as mom fed mind

Susan Seibel admired her mother.

Jean Speicher had it tough, raising four children after a divorce in the early 1970s.

There was Susan, her brother and two sisters.

“She was so very intelligent,” Seibel says. “But the situation she was in and when she was growing up, college was not something she could easily accomplish.”



Jean Speicher was a secretary for a manufacturing firm in Pittsburgh. While her young children were still in school and while she worked full-time, Speicher - then in her mid-40s - earned an associate degree in marketing from the Community College of Allegheny County.

“She knew she needed to get a degree to be able to provide for herself and her kids,” Seibel says. “She was going to work and then to evening classes. I remember making something for her to take to eat for lunch.”

Speicher would later work for a large bank and obtain a real estate license.

“She accomplished her goal,” says Seibel, an adjunct BC3 instructor who lives in Seven Fields.

After Speicher’s death at age 79 in July 2013, Seibel - who received an associate degree from BC3 in 1998, followed by bachelor's and master's degrees from Point Park - created the Jean Speicher Memorial Scholarship, crafted for a BC3 student who is a single parent with custody of minor children.

“She definitely worked very, very hard, in her jobs and at school,” Seibel says. “She was a powerhouse.”

As is Melanie McGary.

After her marriage dissolved, the Butler County single mother, raising four daughters - two teens and 9-year-old twins - decided BC3 could help her realize a dream of becoming a registered nurse and, like Jean Speicher, provide a better life - and example - for them.

Tired eyes weep tears of joy

The 2016 Jean Speicher Memorial Scholarship keeps McGary, 40, from losing sleep over finances - important to a woman who gets at most five hours of rest each night - “and sometimes only four” - after arriving at her job as a medical billing specialist in Ellwood City at 4:45 a.m., driving to BC3's main campus in Butler to attend classes in mid-morning, returning to Ellwood City to finish her shift and ending her day as late as 11:00 p.m.

The recipient of the Speicher award uses her weekends to go “bowling, to soccer practice, whatever the kids having going on,” to eliminate some of the “mom guilt” for her exhausting schedule, and, before closing her eyes to try to recoup that missing sleep, to “envision that moment when I walk across that stage and get my degree. That will be the happiest moment of my life.”

This powerhouse is at a loss for words in trying to express her gratitude.

“How do you say thank you? I wrote a letter... It just doesn’t... I mean... It’s hard to portray in that letter...”

Melanie McGary, a fighter for her daughters’ futures, is battling tears, her voice quivering.



“The difference that this makes in somebody’s life... I mean, this really changes my life... I want my girls to see that anything is possible. It’s never too late. If you want something bad enough, you can accomplish it.”

Gift may spark surge in firefighters

Volunteer firefighters can accomplish their goals with the Cranberry Township Community Chest’s Butler County Volunteer Firefighter Tuition Scholarship, says Mazzoni, a BC3 Trustee and member of the Pioneer Proud Steering Committee and the all-volunteer municipal organization.

Cranberry Township Community Chest, recognizing that Butler County’s 33 volunteer fire companies are operating with about half the members needed, endowed \$257,000 for 12 scholarships.

The gift may attract new volunteers while honoring the service and benefiting the BC3 education of those like 19-year-old Wyatt Karenbauer, who has been so cold fighting fires in sub-zero temperatures that “my eyelids were freezing shut.”

Karenbauer, of Saxonburg, has followed in his single mother’s footsteps and been a volunteer with his community’s fire department since the age of 14.

“Money is kind of tight,” says his mother, Nichol Szybka. “I’m very proud of him that he was able to get the scholarship, because he is going to be paying for his own schooling.”

Karenbauer, a freshman who envisions a career as a fire investigator, says he if is to expect someone to get up in middle of the night to battle a blaze at his own home, “I feel that I should do that for someone else.”

"BC3 will always be part of me"

Now the Cranberry Township Community Chest, and Tanner McCaw, and Robert R. Heaton, Tim Shaffer, Susan Seibel, and nearly 115 others, are doing the same for someone else.

When he isn’t connecting to the Internet to reconnect with BC3, Tanner McCaw is walking among those oak trees. He’s visited campus 20 times since he graduated in December 2013, most recently, Saturday, when he drove 350 miles from near Indianapolis to attend the Oak Hills Dinner and to meet Kaley Scott.



“I will always credit BC3,” McCaw says. “To me, BC3 is family and friends. It will always be a part of me.”

Photo Caption 1:

Tanner McCaw, right, of Indianapolis, acknowledges a crowd of 350 at the Oak Hills Dinner on Saturday, October 15, 2016, at Founders Hall on the campus of BC3. McCaw, 24, a 2013 BC3 graduate and staff accountant, became the youngest scholarship donor in the history of the 48-year-old school. To his right is Kaley Scott, 19, a Mercer County BC3 student and the first recipient of the McCaw Family Scholarship.

Photo Caption 2:

Melanie McGary, of Center Township, Butler County, is shown Friday, October 14, 2016, at Medevac Ambulance Services in Ellwood City, where she is a full-time medical billing specialist. The BC3 nursing student is also a single mother and recipient of the Jean Speicher Memorial Award, presented to a BC3 student who is a single parent. Inset, a photo of her daughters that she keeps near her desk. Twins Mackenzie, left, and Makenna flank older sister Madison in the front row as eldest sister, Morgan, is shown in the background.

Photo Caption 3:

Susan Seibel, of Seven Fields, smiles during the Oak Hills Dinner on Saturday, October 15, 2016, at Founders Hall on the campus of BC3. Seibel, an adjunct instructor at BC3, created the Jean Speicher Memorial Scholarship to benefit single parents and in honor of her mother, Speicher, a single mother who died at age 79 in July 2013. Inset: Jean Speicher.

Photo Caption 4:

Wyatt Karenbauer, 19, left, is a BC3 freshman and one of five 2016 recipients of the Cranberry Township Community Chest's Butler County Volunteer Firefighter Tuition Scholarship at BC3. Wyatt is shown on Saturday, October 15, 2016, prior to the Oak Hills Dinner at BC3, which introduces scholarship recipients to their donors. To his left is his mother, Nichol Szybka. Wyatt and his mother, of Saxonburg, serve as volunteer firefighters in Saxonburg.