

# BC3 administrator gifted in securing gifts for BC3 to retire

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Ruth Purcell displays Page 11 of her life story book Dec. 11, 2020, in her office on Butler County Community College's main campus in Butler Township. Page 11 of Purcell's life story book, created by her daughter, Laura Menchyk, of Long Island, N.Y., illustrates the family's move from West Lafayette, Ind., to Butler in late 1992. Purcell has served 10 years as executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation and will retire this month.

(Butler, PA) The story of Ruth Purcell at Butler County Community College begins with her first steps on the college's main campus, as a visitor holding hands with her daughter, as a newly transplanted Midwesterner watching a ceremony 17 years and three jobs before she would think about becoming a BC3 employee.

It's a story that begins with Purcell standing with Laura and viewing the Butler Area Senior High School promenade, a procession of teenagers bedecked in tuxedos or gowns and ascending a path shaded by the canopies of BC3's stately oak trees.

Mother and daughter noticed the twinkling lights that spiraled and climbed the majestic oaks near Founders Hall that May evening.

“Is this a magic place?” 7-year-old Laura asked her mother.

Their move to Butler County begins on Page 11 of a life story book Purcell’s daughter, Laura Menchyk, of Long Island, N.Y., created in honor of her mother, who served 10 years as executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation and who will retire this month.

## Five \$1 million gifts

The BC3 Education Foundation under Purcell received five \$1 million gifts and one \$500,000 contribution, private donations that helped to fund the creation on BC3’s main campus of the state-of-the-art Heaton Family Learning Commons and the nature-infused Amy Wise Children’s Creative Learning Center.

Private gifts will also help to fund the high-tech Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building, which will headquarter the college’s first school – the Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health – and a licensed practical nursing program that will debut next fall in partnership with Concordia Lutheran Ministries.

“My role was to raise money,” Purcell said. “Keep your eye on the prize. That is what I had to do.”

Assets in the BC3 Education Foundation grew by 145 percent, to \$22 million, under Purcell, who moved to Butler County from West Lafayette, Ind., in late 1992 with husband, Mark Mann, Laura, and son Colin.

After serving as director of community relations for Lifesteps Inc., as a financial adviser for Legg Mason Wood Walker, and as director of development at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, Purcell in 2010 became executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation.

## “Genuine love and care”

The BC3 Education Foundation is a charitable organization that acquires and manages private funds to support BC3’s mission, goals, initiatives and programs. It also administers more than \$200,000 in named scholarships annually.

Purcell, a native of Cincinnati, also served as an ex-officio director on the 20-member BC3 Education Foundation board, organized a three-year Pioneer Proud fundraising campaign that eclipsed its \$5.5 million goal by \$1.3 million and included the first \$1 million gift to BC3 in the college’s history.

The BC3 Education Foundation golf outing in 2020 raised a single-year record of \$100,000, following a then-record of \$95,000 in 2019.

“I can reference the figures, the million-dollar gifts, endowment, giving rates and so on,” BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer said. “All of the numbers are staggering and directly connect back to Ruth in her role. But what I can’t quantify is the genuine love and care Ruth had for our friends of the college.”

Purcell demonstrated that friendship with visits, gifts, phone calls and greeting cards to donors – “so much more than her formal title at BC3 required,” Neupauer said. “It wasn’t a transactional relationship. It was a transformational one.”

“Her personality was a big part of it,” said Glenn Miller, a 1981 BC3 graduate and BC3 trustee since 1998. “Another big part of it was she would get out and be seen and be friendly and just do all of those social things that were so important.

“People connected her with BC3. When you were with her, you enjoyed being in her company and you enjoyed financially supporting BC3 through Ruth Purcell.”

## “Her impact meant major gifts”

Purcell, said Leslie Osche, chair of the Butler County commissioners, took fundraising to a whole new level at BC3.

“Her impact meant major gifts that the college had never seen in the past,” Osche said. “She understands the importance of building relationships with people over time, and the social aspect of those relationships, and her ability to communicate a mission and a goal.

“She had no fear of asking for help. And that’s a huge thing to have to overcome in an environment when you are asking for major gifts, to be able to sit down and ask someone for \$1 million. It takes time to cultivate those relationships and it takes time to frame a message and a mission.”

“You’re really not asking people for money,” Purcell said. “It almost evolves. You tell the story. You don’t say, ‘We need \$5 million to do this.’ You talk about what the college has accomplished. You talk about your students. You talk about your leaders. You talk about your vision. And people talk about their lives. You see the fit. And honestly, if you are good at it, it kind of evolves.”

Purcell was good at it, Miller said.

“When you look at Ruth and what the foundation does to support BC3 and its students – which is the whole point of what BC3 does, it’s for the students – Ruth did fabulous things,” Miller said.

“Is this a magic place?”

Purcell, of Butler, is among BC3 employees who have retired this fall or will retire by Dec. 31 as part of early retirement options made available to eligible employees.

She is turning a page, and starting a new chapter within the life story book that daughter Laura created 27 years after she asked her mother “Is this a magic place?”

“Yes, honey, I think it is,” Purcell recalls responding to Laura on that May evening.

“And I couldn’t have been more right.”