

BC3 program aims to help new workplace leaders in Lawrence, Mercer counties

Sept. 23, 2020



Jason Eckhardt, right, second-shift working group leader at Cygnus Manufacturing Co., Saxonburg, discusses dimensional requirements of a part with machinist Austin Scherba on Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2020. Eckhardt this spring attended Butler County Community College's leadership and supervision certificate program after being promoted to his first managerial position at Cygnus.

(New Castle, PA) A Lawrence County native who earned a master's degree in organizational leadership will help emerging workplace leaders in Lawrence and Mercer counties to develop supervisory skills through a Butler County Community College certificate program that begins in October and will be held for the first time in at least five years at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.

John Merola, who achieved a master's degree from Geneva College and a bachelor's degree from Youngstown State University after his 1979 graduation from New Castle Senior High School, will instruct an eight-week BC3 leadership and supervision program whose setting responds to requests from businesses in Lawrence and Mercer counties, a BC3 administrator said.

BC3's noncredit program, recognized by the Society for Human Resource Management, is offered annually in the spring and fall on BC3's main campus in Butler County, said Kathy Strobel, coordinator of BC3's business training.

"We have developed a lot of relationships with companies in Lawrence and Mercer counties that have expressed interest in many of these classes," Strobel said. "But it is difficult for them sometimes to send employees to our main campus."

Individual courses will be held from 8 a.m. to noon each Tuesday from Oct. 20 through Dec. 8 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, 2849 W. State St., New Castle. Courses cost \$80. Individuals can take single courses or all eight to earn a BC3 certificate of completion.

Courses are titled human behavior and interpersonal skills; skills of supervision; managing time and stress; problem-solving, decision-making and creativity; motivating employees; the supervisor as a leader; managing conflict and change; and ethics / appraising and rewarding performance.

"Leadership is all about people"

Merola will help employees, including those who have been or may be promoted from within, to gain the background and the education "that will help them move to that next step," Strobel said.

"Everyone struggles to some extent to find their own leadership style," said Merola, a New Castle native, outreach coordinator with the Pittsburgh Food Bank and resident of Beaver Falls.

"These are skills that can be learned. These are skills that can be cultivated. ... No matter what your industry, there's a similarity in that we are all basically in the people business. Leadership is all about people. There are certainly a lot of applications to these principles (in the program) for any industry."

Jason Eckhardt, 47, of Butler, has worked 14 years for Cygnus Manufacturing Co., Saxonburg, which he says makes medical, aerospace and transportation products.



New Castle native John Merola will instruct an eight-week Butler County Community College leadership and supervision certificate program that begins in October and will be held for the first time in at least five years at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle. Merola is shown Monday, Sept. 21, 2020, near his home in Beaver Falls.

Program has “helped me immeasurably”

Fourteen months ago Eckhardt was promoted to his first managerial position at Cygnus as a second-shift working group leader who oversees 19 of the company’s approximately 100 employees. This spring Eckhardt earned a BC3 certificate of completion through the college’s leadership and supervision program.

“It’s helped me immeasurably,” Eckhardt said. “The program taught me plainly how to manage people. Every part of it has benefited me in some way, large or small.”



Jason Eckhardt is shown Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2020, outside of Cygnus Manufacturing Co., Saxonburg. Eckhardt this spring attended Butler County Community College’s leadership and supervision certificate program after being promoted to his first managerial position at Cygnus.

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.

Registration is required. Register at bc3.edu/business-training or contact Strobel at 724-287-8711 Ext. 8267 or at kathleen.strobel@bc3.edu.