

BC3 to honor Shapiro, Steffler as distinguished alumni

Graduates called “true Pioneers” and “pillars of BC3”

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(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College will recognize as distinguished alumni a Butler Township woman who as a 36-year-old mother of three in 1966 was so nervous on her first day of class that she wore two different shoes, and the Valencia man with whom she would work 30 years later to help create the BC3 Alumni Association.

At its Oak Hills Dinner on Oct. 14, BC3 will honor Lucille Shapiro and Ray D. Steffler, who as a 37-year-old freshman and father of two would later become his family’s first college graduate and BC3’s longest-serving trustee and chairman.

The BC3 Alumni Association will acknowledge Shapiro and Steffler for having “given their time, their talents and their treasures to support BC3,” said Michelle Jamieson, associate director of the BC3 Education Foundation Inc.



Lucille Shapiro, left, of Butler Township, is a 1973 graduate of Butler County Community College. Ray D. Steffler, right, of Valencia, graduated from BC3 in 1986. The BC3 Alumni Association will honor Shapiro and Steffler as distinguished alumni at the Oct. 14 Oak Hills Dinner on the college’s main campus in Butler Township.

As parents, each would take only one course per semester. Shapiro earned an associate degree in social sciences from BC3 in 1973 and Steffler, in business management in 1986.

Steffler and Shapiro are the top BC3 alumni donors, Jamieson said, and were instrumental in the 1997 formation of the BC3 Alumni Association, which works closely with the BC3 Education Foundation and whose goal, among others, is to improve the college’s relationship with its former students.

“Both Ray and Lucille have been strong and effective advocates for developing the BC3 alumni program that received initial seed money from the foundation,” said Ruth Purcell, executive director of the foundation that acquires and manages private funds for the benefit of BC3 and distributes more than \$200,000 in scholarships annually.

Shapiro has served continuously on the BC3 Alumni Council since its inception in 1997. Steffler has been a BC3 trustee since 1985 and its board chairman since 1999. Both have served without interruption on the BC3 Education Foundation board, Steffler since July 2006 and Shapiro, since January 2010.

College history directly linked to recipients, president says

“Ray and Lucille are examples of true Pioneers,” said Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3. “I joke that they both bleed BC3 blue and white. They are advocates, friends, mentors and incredible supporters. Our history at the college is directly linked to both Ray and Lucille. They are so deserving of this tremendous recognition.”

Added Glenn T. Miller, a 1981 BC3 graduate and BC3 trustee since 1998: “Two pillars of BC3.”

Pillars since they first stepped foot on campus -- with or without matching shoes.

Having left daughter Leslie in the care of her own mother while Beth and Robert attended BonAire School in Butler, Shapiro said she discovered in Dr. LaMonte Crape’s English class that she was wearing one brown and one blue loafer.

“I looked down at my feet. Oh my goodness!” she said. “I was so nervous. I was one of the very few older students. I was totally nervous.”

Upon her graduation, Shapiro worked 10 years as an office manager in the Butler optometry office of her husband, Dr. Louis Shapiro.

“I am proud of what we have done”

Steffler was employed for 45 years by the North Pittsburgh Telephone Co. and has served 18 years as an aide to state Sens. Mary Jo White and Scott E. Hutchinson. He became a BC3 trustee shortly before the 1986 commencement in which he and his daughter, Michelle, earned their degrees.

“That was a unique experience,” Steffler said, adding that he was more proud of his daughter’s accomplishment than of his own in becoming the first member of his family to graduate from college.

“I had done something,” he said, “that nobody else in our family had done.”

Steffler and Shapiro are among at least 23,000 former students in 50 states and in Ecuador who have earned at least 45 credits at BC3 since its first class assembled in 1966, Jamieson said.

“Both Mr. Steffler and Mrs. Shapiro are the finest we as alumni could ask for to represent our fine college,” Miller said. “When you look at their commitment to what has made us all better people, we are a better college.”

Steffler is a leader and “he leads by example,” said Joseph E. Kubit, a 1984 BC3 graduate, Butler attorney and BC3 trustee since December 2015. “During his tenure as chairman of the board of

trustees, Ray has met many challenges and has seen BC3 soar to No. 1 in rankings among community colleges.”

BC3, named the top community college in Pennsylvania by Schools.com, “is running on all cylinders today,” said Bruce Mazzoni, a BC3 trustee since 2009. “And Ray has helped move it along to what it is.”

“What a true gentleman and diehard BC3 man,” Miller said of Steffler. “Mr. Steffler puts in so much behind the scenes for BC3 that most do not know of ... I think he eats, sleeps and breathes BC3.”

Steffler said that he has been “accused” that he bleeds blue.

“And I have been accused of being a walking billboard because I wear a lot of clothes that have BC3 on them,” said Steffler, who coined the phrase “Pioneer Proud.”

“But I am proud of it. I am proud of what we have done. I truly have seen a lot of lives altered in a positive direction as a result of BC3.”

BC3 is Shapiro’s “passion,” trustee says

The Alumni Council has been fortunate to count Shapiro among its members, said Kathleen Sommers, a 1985 BC3 graduate and the college’s director of information technology.

“Her advice and leadership benefits both the Education Foundation and the Alumni Association, and her dedication to BC3 is an example for all to follow,” said Sommers, who this spring was recognized with Shapiro, Steffler and Miller in having Alumni Legacy Scholarships named in their honor.

Like Steffler, Shapiro “was and is relentless in promoting BC3,” Miller said. “I think it is her passion.”

It is that passion, Shapiro said, that she sees in those who work at BC3.

“They are there for a purpose,” she said. “And they are very good at what it is they do. From the top to the bottom. They are warm, and they are outstanding. And I see that every time I am there.”

Steffler, Shapiro support BC3 students

The Steffler Family Annual Scholarship, created in 2000, is awarded to a Butler County resident who is a full-time freshman and enrolled in BC3’s accounting, business administration or business management programs.

The Sara and Jack Green Endowed Scholarship, established in 2010, and the Lucille, Dr. Louis Shapiro and Family Endowed Scholarship, created in 2014, are awarded to Butler County residents who are 24 years of age or older and full-time BC3 sophomores.

Shapiro said she may be nervous again at the Oak Hills Dinner, which also serves to introduce scholarship recipients to their benefactors and may draw a crowd in excess of 300.

“I can pick out some shoes that don’t match,” she said. “I might do that on purpose.”