

BC3 to launch initiative to combat opioid addiction

College to educate, foster healthful connections within community, therapist says

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(Butler, PA) A Cranberry Township licensed therapist and author says Butler County Community College's "Reset Your Brain" initiative, and his natural endorphin-resurrecting approach, could represent a turning point for users and their families suffering amid an opioid crisis that has claimed 182 lives in Butler County since 2014.

"The sky is the limit, and I would like to be able to say that the end of the war of the opioid epidemic started in Butler County," says Steve Treu, of Quantum Revolution Counseling and author of 2016 books "Hope is Dope: Achieving Chemical Balance" and "New Eyes: A Unifying Vision of Science & Spirituality."

Treu will be among the speakers at the kickoff event of BC3's "Reset Your Brain: A Revolutionary Approach to Opioid Addiction & Recovery," scheduled for 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Feb. 6 at Succop Theater on the college's main campus.

BC3's "Reset Your Brain" initiative reflects an objective incorporated into the college's new five-year strategic plan, a theme that focuses, in part, on quality of life.

"I love the fact that our new strategic plan allows us to go out and support our local community, really get in the trenches and work to make Butler County a better place to live," said Tracy Hack, BC3's coordinator of Community Leadership Initiatives and one of 15 community members of what has become BC3's opiate initiative advisory team.

"It was like a light came on"

BC3, college President Dr. Nick Neupauer said, is the community's college.

"Our strategic plan embraces this fact," he said. "Our role as a premiere educational institution allows us to educate our communities in various ways. Most may think this takes place in a



Steve Treu, author of "Hope is Dope" and a licensed therapist with Quantum Revolution Counseling, Cranberry Township, will work with Butler County Community College's "Reset Your Brain" initiative, which begins Feb. 6.

classroom or laboratory. But an event like ‘Reset Your Brain’ allows us to educate in a different way. I am honored that our No. 1 college is serving in such a capacity.”

BC3 in October was named the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania in back-to-back rankings by Schools.com.

Gov. Tom Wolf on Wednesday declared the opioid epidemic a statewide disaster emergency, a first of its kind proclamation for a public health crisis in Pennsylvania. The Drug Enforcement Agency reported the number of fatal drug overdoses in the state in 2016 to be 4,642, a 37 percent increase over 2015, Wolf’s office said.

“The effective treatment of opioid use disorders can reduce the risk of overdose,” the declaration read.

As part of BC3’s “Reset Your Brain” initiative, four classes will be held in April or May to educate the public on how endorphin connection is the key to recovery – a curriculum based on Treu’s “Hope is Dope” book, which Hack, the mother of a heroin addict, said she has read twice in the past year.

“It was like a light came on,” Hack said. “I finally understood what was going on in her brain and why she couldn’t just stop.”

“The whole goal is to produce more endorphins”

Seventy-five percent of his thousands of clients over 15 years have opioid addictions, said Treu, whose methodology incorporates physical, mental or spiritual skills that trigger the brain’s reproduction of endorphins and create “a natural high.”

“The whole idea boils down to this: An opioid addict loses his natural endorphins,” Treu said. “And that is why they feel bad. That is the withdrawal. Once the endorphins disappear, the cravings become intense and that is why withdrawal is so bad. The whole goal is to produce more endorphins. Once the client gets that, then it is just a matter of how much time they put into producing those endorphins again.”

Scientifically studied activities that help to awaken the brain’s endorphin hibernation, Treu said, include exercise, yoga, meditation, relaxation, improved nutrition, music and art groups, pet ownership and spiritual development.

“If you produce endorphins on a daily basis, and you stay focused on it over time, you absolutely will succeed,” Treu said. “And then, what happens is, the brain rebalances, and then the person says to me, ‘I don’t have a craving any more. My desire to use it has gone away.’”



Tracy Hack is Butler County Community College’s coordinator of Community Leadership Initiatives and a member of BC3’s opiate initiative advisory team.

Shannon Gaiser's desire to use has gone away.

“My life is so different today”

Gaiser, of Butler, a former client of Treu's who would later become his co-worker, will be among the speakers Feb. 6. Gaiser injected heroin into her arm three times a day from age 20-24, while attending – and graduating from – the University of Pittsburgh with a bachelor's degree in anthropology and sociology.

“We can explain to the addicts what happened,” said Gaiser, a licensed professional counselor at Quantum Revolution who earned a master's degree in community counseling with a specialty in addiction from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. “All the good feelings have left you and this is what we need to do to develop more good feelings.

“Over time and treatment, from being involved in different activities that are healthier and produce endorphins, making those small changes day by day, you get a few years down the road and life is totally different.

“My life,” said Gaiser, a married mother of two children, ages 6 and 3, “is so different today. The thought of heroin doesn't even enter my mind.”

Gaiser said she has not used drugs since 2005 and that she is living proof that Treu's approach works.

“He is the only therapist I ever jived with,” she said.

BC3 will also work with Treu to collaborate opportunities for clients to practice endorphin-producing activities through BC3 faculty or classes and in downtown Butler businesses that include Yoga on Main, Brushes and Barstools, The Art Center, All About Reclaimed, YMCA, Family Bowlaway, Butler Public Library, Downtown Sounds, Relentless Pursuit, Cummings Candy & Coffee, Rainbow Animal Refuge, Focused Fitness and Rapp's Bicycle.

The role of BC3, Treu said, is “number one, education. That is my favorite part of it. That is what BC3 is all about. And the more that we can get people to understand there is a clear and concise solution to this, the quicker we can make progress. The second part is connecting people to one another in the community. That is the role BC3 plays. It is making those connections and keeping those connections so that it is an all-around community effort.”



Shannon Gaiser, a former heroin addict who became a licensed professional counselor at Quantum Revolution Counseling, Cranberry Township, will be among the speakers at BC3's “Reset Your Brain” initiative, which begins Feb. 6.