

BC3 volunteers, employees have long history with Distinguished Service Awards

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(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College thrives as a result of volunteers' time and expertise, while BC3 employees help community organizations to succeed by offering the same, said BC3 executives who encourage Butler County residents to nominate for upcoming Distinguished Service Awards those who help to make a difference.

Just like those who make a difference by volunteering at BC3, said Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3's president.

"Volunteerism," he said, "is incredibly important as it relates to the college. The time, energy, guidance, wisdom and, in some cases, the finances from these individuals on our boards and in advisory capacities really does work its way into our strategic plan, into our curriculum and into the dollars we have raised.

"Organizations need to understand the value and the impact of community service for their employees. Not only is it about doing the right thing, but it does build a terrific spirit and culture of that particular organization."

Distinguished Service Awards celebrate their 70th anniversary in 2019. Winners will be recognized in a junior division, for those ages 25 to 45, and in a senior division, for those age 46 and older, at a banquet at 5:30 p.m. May 1 at the Butler Country Club, 310 Country Club Road, Butler.

Community members can nominate Butler County residents who must be living, and who have volunteered over a number of years for organizations not directly related to their place of employment, said Millie Pinkerton, past president of the Rotary Club of Butler who calls the Distinguished Service Awards "the most prestigious" for volunteers in Butler County.

Nomination letters can be sent in care of the Distinguished Service Awards, Rotary Club of Butler, P.O. Box 1081, Butler, PA, 16003-1081, and must arrive by March 22.

BC3 benefits from volunteers on its board of trustees, its Education Foundation board, its Alumni Council, community advisory boards, and on advisory boards for academic credit and Workforce Development programs.

"You are improving something, and making a difference"

The BC3 Education Foundation “really wouldn’t function without volunteers,” said Ruth Purcell, the foundation’s executive director. “We use volunteers not only for policy issues on our board, but they assist with fundraising and open doors to bring people into the college.”

Jocelyn Howard Sinopoli, Nancy Hunter Mycka, Jennifer Pullar and Bruce Mazzoni are the most recent Distinguished Service Award recipients who also serve as volunteers with BC3 – Sinopoli and Mycka as members of the BC3 Education Foundation board and Pullar and Mazzoni, as BC3 trustees.

Mycka won the award in the junior division in 2004 and Pullar, in 2013. Sinopoli was recognized in the senior division in 2010 and Mazzoni, in 2013.

Volunteering, said Sinopoli, chief executive officer of C.W. Howard Insurance, Butler, provides a connection “and it supports your values and your virtues for the community to help it remain strong.”

“You are improving something,” said Mycka, executive vice president of Hunter Truck, Penn Township, “and making a difference.”

Said Pullar, owner and managing attorney of Paragon Legal Inc., Butler: “I was raised to give back to my community. That was part of the values given to me by my parents.”

His parents were also “very big into volunteering,” said Mazzoni, a Cranberry Township supervisor. “It is something we grew up with. It is my pleasure to give back to the community. I have always enjoyed that. It’s how I was raised.”

Volunteering emphasized in strategic plan, BC3 president says

At least 15 Distinguished Service Award recipients have worked for BC3 and offered their time and expertise elsewhere, or are Butler County residents who have volunteered their talents to BC3 since awards were first presented in 1949.

Among them, Sinopoli and Mycka, members of the BC3 Education Foundation board since 2007 and 2013, respectively. Mycka and Mazzoni, a BC3 trustee since 2009, also served on the steering committee for a Pioneer Proud Campaign that raised \$6.8 million over three years. Pullar has been a BC3 trustee since 2011.

Community engagement is also among goals in a BC3 2017-2022 strategic plan pathway that intends to build relationships and increase quality of life.

Since Jan. 1, 2018, 53 BC3 employees have volunteered 328 hours at Light of Life Community Outreach, a West North Street ministry that offers lunch to as many as 100 guests Tuesdays through Thursdays.

The initiative allows BC3 employees to volunteer up to four hours a month at Light of Life during work hours.

Nearly 20 BC3 employees painted, stained and cleaned during the United Way of Butler County's Day of Caring in early October, assisting at the Mars Home for Youth Family Services in Mars, Preston Park in Butler Township, Slippery Rock Area Parks and Recreation and with Glade Run Lutheran Services.

Seventy percent of BC3 staff members who responded to a collegewide survey in January 2018 indicated they volunteer in their communities, some for as many as 30 years. The study showed those respondents serve as volunteers an average of four hours a week, with nearly half stating they volunteer on a board of directors.

"The importance is emphasized in our strategic plan," said Neupauer, adding that BC3 plans to nominate an employee for a Distinguished Service Award. "Higher education in the 21st century is about the impact that a college or university has in its own backyard, and that is one of the many reasons why we have been emphasizing the community service part of our strategic plan."

"A way of saying thank you"

Sinopoli emphasized the importance of community members nominating volunteers, which "shows an appreciation for what those volunteers do. I think a lot of people don't think about it or take the time perhaps to nominate, but they should."

"It is important to recognize those who are putting themselves out there," Mycka said, "especially when they are giving their own time and following their inner drive."

Nominations, Pullar said, "create awareness and encourage others to follow that example."

"It helps drive and continues an effort to volunteer," Mazzoni said of nominations. "It helps pay it forward and recognizes the benefit of volunteering and what it does from the community aspect."

While those who volunteer do not do so for the recognition, Purcell said, the Distinguished Service Awards are "a way of saying thank you. It also promotes the opportunities to other people to volunteer."

Volunteers, Pinkerton added, "do it because they love to help the community. And they want to make the community a better place."

Among those who have made the community a better place are at least 11 other Distinguished Service Award recipients who worked for BC3 and volunteered elsewhere, or volunteered at BC3.

They include, in the junior division, Dr. James D. Lawson (1955), BC3's first president from 1965-69; John L. Wise Jr. (1957), an original BC3 trustee from 1965-69; James A. Green (1963), a BC3 trustee from 1980-87; and Sue Bennitt (1977), a BC3 academic counselor from 1979-1999 and BC3 Education Foundation board member from 1996 to 2013 who became its chair in 2005.

They include, in the senior division, Mitchell G. Uram (1967), an original BC3 trustee from 1965-69; Jean B. Purvis (1975), a BC3 Education Foundation board member from 1996-2014 and emeritus member; Gail L. Rose (1977), chairman of BC3's original board of trustees from 1965-69; Mary (Hulton) Phillips (1985), a BC3 Education Foundation board member from 1987-2009; Margo B. Pitts (1988), a full-time BC3 instructor from 1970-1985 who coordinated the Summer Cultural Series; Nancy Murrin (1989), a BC3 trustee from 1981-93; and Amy Beiler (1992), a BC3 Education Foundation board member from 1987-2018 who served as chair in the mid-1990s and who is also an emeritus member.

"I am not surprised that so many past Distinguished Service Award recipients have a connection to BC3 because BC3," Pullar said, "is an exemplary Butler County institution that cultivates service to the Butler County community."