

BC3's "Hope is Dope" program receives \$180K

Oct. 7, 2019



Christopher Bailey, 37, of McCandless, Allegheny County, speaks Monday, Sept. 30, 2019, at the Butler Art Center in Butler during "Stories of Hope," part of Butler County Community College's "Hope is Dope" program. The native of San Diego said he used opioids and abused alcohol for 12 years and that he has been sober since July 2017. BC3's program has received \$180,000 as part of a state Department of Human Services grant awarded to the Center for Community Resources, Butler.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College's 18-month-old "Hope is Dope" opioid addiction program will apply \$180,000 in funding as part of a state grant awarded to the Center for Community Resources in Butler toward developing a four-phased curriculum for those identified as having suffered from opioid use disorder within the past year, a BC3 administrator said.

The \$611,000 Support Services Navigation and Housing Services for Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder grant, from Department of Human Services, was awarded to the Center for Community Resources and effective Oct. 1.

It also represents the latest funding for a BC3 "Hope is Dope" program whose first series of free monthlong classes debuted in April 2018 in Butler County, where more than 500 people have

attended sessions to hear about natural endorphin-resurrecting ideas to confront opioid addiction, said Tracy Hack, BC3's coordinator of community leadership initiatives.

BC3 received an \$11,000 grant earlier in 2019 from the Buhl Regional Health Foundation, Sharpsville, Mercer County, for "HEAL: Hope is Dope" classes in Sharon; and \$108,000 in funding as part of a 2018 state Department of Human Services grant to the Center for Community Resources for "Hope is Dope" classes in Butler County, Hack said.

The funding "helps us be able to help those suffering from opioid use disorder to participate in activities that will really help them to get well," Hack said.

BC3's use of state Department of Human Services funds are limited to opioid addiction educational instruction in Butler County, where the college has held 10 "Hope is Dope" sessions and three subsequent "New Eyes" classes at sites that include the Butler County Prison, and a monthly "Hope Night" that began in January.

"Healing the brain"

Funding will be used to provide education about opioids and activities that may increase endorphins, Hack said.

"Hope is Dope" instructor Steve Treu, a Cranberry Township licensed therapist and author, promotes confronting opioid addiction with natural endorphin-resurrecting ideas such as exercise, yoga, meditation, relaxation, improved nutrition, music and art groups, pet ownership and spiritual development.

BC3 will offer its four-week "Hope is Dope" class in Phase I, and in Phase II, a free membership to the Butler YMCA for participants, and rock climbing and canoeing outings.

"These are what we would describe as experiential classes," Hack said. "Getting out into nature and interacting with nature is a huge benefit to healing the brain."

Phase II also includes art classes at the Butler Art Center, Hack said, adding that recent "Hope is Dope" participants plan to paint a mural in October on a brick building along the 100 block of West North Street in Butler.



Recent participants of Butler County Community College's "Hope is Dope" program plan to paint a mural in October on a brick building along the 100 block of West North Street in Butler. BC3's program has received \$180,000 as part of a state Department of Human Services grant awarded to the Center for Community Resources, Butler.

Phases III and IV include rational emotive behavior therapy activities, led by Treu, and classes in which participants will learn about the benefits of community gardening and sustainable agriculture, Hack said, “so they can make that connection with nature and food and the importance of good nutrition and how to grow your own food.”

“Hope is Dope,” part of BC3’s “Reset Your Brain: A Revolutionary Approach to Opioid Addiction & Recovery” program, represents the accomplishment of an objective in the college’s 2017-2022 strategic plan.

“I could not be more proud,” said Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3 president. “This speaks to the college’s significance of serving as the community’s college. We are helping our communities as an educator and convener in addressing a major societal issue.”

BC3 “showing people that they care”

“BC3 is getting out into the society and showing people that they care as well,” said Tammy Elder, a drug and alcohol therapist with Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Resources-Care Center, Butler, who said she sends clients to “Hope is Dope” and on Sept. 30 attended “Stories of Hope” – one theme of BC3’s monthly “Hope Night” sessions. “That says a lot for a college. How many other colleges do you see doing that?”

Tina, a 51-year-old Butler resident who visited her first “Hope Night” on Sept. 30, agreed.

BC3’s program “brings awareness, which we need in this community,” said Tina, who added she has been using heroin “on and off” for 30 years. “Awareness for this huge opiate problem that we have.”

“It’s an illness. It’s not a status problem.”

Treu is the author of “Hope is Dope: Achieving Chemical Balance” and “New Eyes: A Unifying Vision of Science & Spirituality.”

The Center for Community Resources assists individuals in finding help and information for mental health, intellectual disabilities, substance abuse and other human service needs.