

# Enrollment in BC3's healthcare programs rises 3.2% in year

Job market strong for grads who have varied backgrounds, inspirations for helping others

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Mary Noullet, standing, of Butler, is shown Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019, practicing taking the pulse of Holly Headley, of Butler, in a medical assistant clinical class at Butler County Community College, where both students are enrolled in the college's medical assistant associate degree program.

(Butler, PA) His role in the Army National Guard is in communications, as a signal systems support specialist relaying vital information to fellow reservists. But when Cpl. Nate Shook graduates with an associate degree in Nursing, R.N., from Butler County Community College,

the Butler resident anticipates a career communicating with patients in hospitals or on medical helicopters, “the people who need you the most.”

Mary Noullet’s father, Tim, has had Type II diabetes since 2004. “The healthcare professionals that he surrounds himself with are so welcoming,” said Noullet, a Butler resident in BC3’s medical assistant associate degree program who accompanies her father to most of his appointments. “They make sure he is getting the care he needs. I want to be that person for other people.”

As does Molly Funyak, who broke her right tibia as a gymnast performing a vault exercise in 2008 and underwent weeks of physical therapy. The Mars resident is augmenting her 2018 bachelor’s degree in exercise science from Grove City College within BC3’s physical therapist assistant associate degree program so she can work with injured athletes or others “whose lives are completely changed.”

Shook, Noullet and Funyak are among 292 students this fall in the eight associate degree or credit certificate programs within BC3’s Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health, according to Sharla Anke, BC3’s assistant dean of institutional research – and represent a 3.2 percent increase in enrollment in those programs since fall 2018.

Events in a student’s life prior to enrolling at BC3 can inspire the pursuit of a healthcare career, said Dr. Patty Annear, dean of BC3’s Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health, a division renamed after a \$1 million gift to BC3’s healthcare programs in February 2018 from former state Sen. Tim Shaffer, of Prospect.



Nate Shook, of Butler, is shown Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019, in a nursing care of patients with acute health problems class at Butler County Community College, where Shook is a student in the college’s Nursing, R.N., program.



Molly Funyak, right, of Mars, is shown Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019, practicing with Dr. Randy Kruger, director of Butler County Community College’s physical therapist assistant program, on how to assist a patient in a wheelchair. Funyak is enrolled in BC3’s physical therapist assistant associate degree program.

“It can be something that happened to them personally or something that happened to a significant friend, partner or family member,” Annear said. “Many times those are chronic illnesses, congestive heart failure, diabetes. Cancer, unfortunately, is a big one. And with that, they’ve maybe had to spend time in the hospital themselves, or visit family in the hospital, and made the decision that they may want to pursue the healthcare field.”



Sarah Landis, left, of Butler, is shown Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019, practicing taking the blood pressure of Stacy Cypher, of Cabot, in a medical assistant clinical class at Butler County Community College, where both students are enrolled in the college’s medical assistant associate degree program.

Those who want to pursue the healthcare field will find a strong job market awaiting in Butler County, said Mary Salony, secretary of the Butler County Health Care Consortium and assistant director of the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board, Butler.

“They’ve all gotten hired,” director says of graduates

“There is a great need for all types of healthcare workers in Butler County, especially registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and certified nursing assistants,” Salony said. “Almost every healthcare employer has openings.”

Added Alyssa Dietz, director of BC3’s medical assistant program: “I have office managers calling me, emailing me every week. And I don’t have any more new grads to give because they’ve all gotten hired out of their externships.”



Summer Slupe, of Mount Lebanon, is shown Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019, in a nursing care of patients with acute health problems class at Butler County Community College, where Slupe is a student in the college’s Nursing, R.N., program after earning a bachelor’s degree in pre-medical studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Healthcare and social assistance organizations as of September employed the highest number – 13,705 – and highest percentage – 15.9 – of workers among industries in Butler County,

according to the state Department of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.

The 670 healthcare and social assistance organizations were also the most of any type of industry in Butler County in September, the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis reported.

BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health offers associate of applied science degrees in medical assistant; Nursing, R.N.; physical therapist assistant; technical trades-massage therapy management option; and in technical trades-radiologic technology – career programs in which students can develop the skills needed to enter the workforce immediately after graduation.



Jack McGinnis, left, of West Sunbury, is shown Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019, completing an application to attend Butler County Community College during BC3's open house as his mother, Gay Bauer, of Butler, looks on. McGinnis hopes to enroll in BC3's Nursing, R.N., program, following in the footsteps of Bauer, who earned a nursing degree from BC3 in 2007.

BC3 also offers credit certificates in massage therapy, medical assistant, and in medical coding and billing specialist.

The median national salary in 2018 for radiologic technologists was \$61,240, with a 9 percent increase in jobs projected through 2028, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. For physical therapist assistants, a median salary of \$48,090, with a 26 percent increase projected in jobs; for massage therapists, \$41,420 and 22 percent; for medical records and health information technicians, \$40,350 and 11 percent; and for medical assistants, \$33,610 and 23 percent.

Entry-level registered nurses with an associate degree can earn \$51,280 a year, nursingprocess.org reports. The field will grow by 12 percent through 2028, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, whose projections include those holding bachelor's degrees.

## “Someone has to be there to help these people”

“With medical advances, people are living longer and longer,” said Dr. Randy Kruger, director of a BC3 physical therapist assistant program whose Class of 2020 could include Funyak and 12 other students who previously earned bachelor's degrees. “No one is getting any younger. As we lose functions here and there and suffer diseases and conditions, someone has to be there to help these people.”

Jack McGinnis wants to help, as does Madison Kildoo.

The Butler Area Senior High School students were among those who applied to BC3's Nursing, R.N., program during BC3's open house Oct. 16.

"It's kind of satisfying knowing you help people," said McGinnis, whose mother, Gay Bauer, of Butler, earned an associated degree from BC3 in Nursing, R.N., in 2007 and is about to begin a new position in Pittsburgh.

"I've had family members who have been sick before and I know how tough it is," McGinnis said. "So to just help in any way I can is what it's all about."

Kildoo, who plans to become a registered nurse and midwife – and possibly an obstetrician-gynecologist – said she likes giving back to people and helping them and loves children.

"It's just something about children," Kildoo said. "They're just always upbeat. It just amazes me."

According to BC3 administrators citing the most recent data available, 93 percent of BC3's 2017 medical assistant associate degree graduates passed the American Association of Medical Assistants' certified medical assistant examination; 92.86 percent of BC3's first-time National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses test-takers in the past year were successful; and an average of 95 percent of BC3's physical therapist assistant graduates have passed the National Physical Therapy Exam in the past 25 years.

BC3's Workforce Development division also offers noncredit certificates or certification training in programs such as American Heart Association Heartsaver first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillator; basic health care employment skills; certified personal trainer; emergency medical technician; emergency medical responder; personal care home administrator and phlebotomy.

BC3 is also developing a healthcare pathway for students in Butler County high schools. The college also plans a \$9 million state-of-the-art Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building at the south end of its main campus, funded in part by a \$1 million gift to the BC3 Education Foundation in September 2017 from Janice Phillips Larrick, of Butler Township.