

Jefferson County woman triumphs, earns degree at BC3 @ Brockway

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Allie Park, 24, of Brookville, right, is shown Feb. 12, 2020, at BC3 @ Brockway. Park will receive an associate degree in early childhood education (Pre K-4) this month from BC3 @ Brockway and is among 563 graduates in BC3's Class of 2020.

(Brockway, PA) "It's going to be a hard road for you," 24-year-old Allie Park said she would tell the 8-year-old Allie Park, in whose future awaited grades of F's and D's.

"People are going to make fun of you. Your parents are not always going to understand you. It's going to be frustrating for everybody. But through all that struggle, there is really a light at the end of that tunnel."

The light at the end of that tunnel for the Brookville resident – misunderstood and bullied as a child, she said, after being diagnosed in third grade as having Asperger syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and anxiety – will come this month at BC3 @ Brockway.

Park will receive an associate degree in early childhood education (Pre K-4) and is one of 563 graduates in BC3's Class of 2020.

"I can't believe how far I've come," Park said. "It's been hard, and I really can't believe I am graduating."

BC3's Class of 2020 will eclipse 560 graduates for a fourth consecutive year, and features a 61-year-old disabled veteran, an entrepreneurial 17-year-old, and Park, who credits her father, Rick Park, and mother, Robin Park, with helping her as a child in one of her most difficult subjects, math – and BC3 @ Brockway staff for inspiration and support.

"I have a bit of a musical talent," Park said. Her mother "realized by connecting rhymes and music with my learning, I was able to catch up and get my math facts like that," Park said, snapping her fingers quickly. "It even helped me memorize my student ID."

To help her only child learn multiplication tables, Robin Park would "sing six times seven is 42. Kind of in a beat," Park said. "And then we'd think of a rhyme for it: 'Six times seven is 42. Please don't try to cry boo-hoo.'"

"I couldn't be more grateful" for BC3

BC3 @ Brockway represented the "best opportunity" for Park to continue her education, she said, after having met with Dr. Jill Martin Rend, BC3 @ Brockway director. "I got a tour of the school, and she said the staff would be very patient with me, and that I could learn at my own pace," Park said.

During her studies at BC3 @ Brockway "I went from being skittish or afraid to ask for help to being so open," Park said. "I mean, these people are great for emotional support, educational support. They will help you with anything. And I couldn't be more grateful for this school.

"I was able to learn at my own pace. Most kids or most students my age would have graduated maybe a couple of years back. I'm grateful that I was able to take my time and get things done."

Along the way, her grades improved, from F's and D's at BC3 @ Brockway to C's, B's and A's, she said.

"I've had to take tutoring from time to time," Park said, "and I am so grateful that I have so many opportunities opening for me now."

Those opportunities include working with children whose own schooling future may also include grades of F's and D's en route to that light at the end of the tunnel.

“I want to be there for the kids,” Park said. “They don’t always have a voice. I just want to be there to say, ‘Hey, it’s OK. I’ve been there.’”

Among 31 student-veterans, BC3’s most senior graduate in 2020

Kathleen Cashaw, 61, of Butler, a disabled veteran, is the college’s most-senior graduate in the Class of 2020, with an associate degree in BC3’s medical assistant career program. She is also one of 31 student-veterans in BC3’s Class of 2020.

Saylee Grinnen, 17, of Wampum, is the youngest.

Grinnen is among nine students in the 2-year-old Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program for Lincoln and Riverside high schools. The program, a collaborative effort among BC3, the Community College of Beaver County and the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, blends classroom learning with real-world experience. Students who complete the program earn 16 tuition-free, transferable credits and a BC3 workplace certificate in entrepreneurship.

Students from Valencia and Kittanning earned two associate degrees and one certificate. Victoria Berzonski achieved degrees in criminology and in emergency services-police services option, and a certificate in emergency services-corrections option. Sara Peters earned degrees in business management and technical trades-cosmetology management option, and a workplace certificate in entrepreneurship.

BC3 will also graduate its second class of presidential scholars; 126 members of its Rho Phi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society; and 16 members of Delta Theta, its chapter of Kappa Beta Delta, an international honor society for business students.

Thirteen employees of Oberg Industries, a precision manufacturer in Freeport, will receive apprenticeship technology workplace certificates as a result of a program instructed onsite by BC3. Courses in the college’s 26-credit apprenticeship technology workplace certificate program, launched in fall 2016, are taught entirely at Oberg Industries.

BC3 @ Brockway offers associate degrees in business administration, early childhood education (Pre K-4), general studies, psychology and social work transfer programs, and in business management, office administration-executive and Nursing, R.N., career programs.