

Butler Eagle

BC3 grads grateful

Thanks given to parents, teachers

Article published May 16, 2013
By Ed Biller

BUTLER TWP — The more than 500 students who received their degrees from Butler County Community College on Wednesday night probably were just happy to be done with final exams.

But each person who addressed graduates during BC3's 45th commencement shared a similar message: Be grateful not only for the degree you've earned, but for everyone in your life who helped you along the way. Then, express that fulfillment by continuing to better yourself and helping others.

Rob Olszewski, a 1996 BC3 graduate and the college's 2012 Distinguished Alumni Recipient, compared students to the saplings that grew on the campus into mighty oak trees, noting that they were shaped by caring, dedicated teachers.

Because of those BC3 teachers, he told graduates, “you and I can conquer the world. The knowledge you are taking away from here is priceless.”

Of the 522 Class of 2013 graduates, 208 walked in the ceremony, including 14 military veterans and eight graduates who earned multiple degrees.

Keynote speaker Debbie Muck, a 1985 BC3 graduate and life coach, shared the story of her own brother's suicide, and how out of that grief her family also witnessed the graciousness of family and friends.

“I was 13 years old and that event shaped my life. In the days following, the best and only words my parents and siblings could offer was, 'thank you,'" she said.

“Even out of adversity can come joy, gratitude and fulfillment.” Muck told the graduates that earning a degree is not a birthright, but an opportunity to strive for even more.

“That turned-down interview, that job offer you didn't get, they will be opportunities for you to learn. Things happen for you, not to you,” she said.



The spring 2013 graduating class makes their way to the Butler County Community College Fieldhouse to begin the graduation ceremony on Wednesday, May 15, 2013.

Tye Cypher/Special to the Eagle

“And always thank your parents,” Muck said, “they certainly get enough blame.”

BC3 President Nick Neupauer, too, reached into history to make his point.

Neupauer motioned to the BC3 seal, which features staples of county livelihoods: oil, steel and agriculture.

“You undoubtedly had relatives who worked in those industries, or who currently are working in those industries,” he told graduates.

“Ingrained in each of you is such a work ethic that has helped you succeed. Treat people with respect. Treat people the same, regardless of title, and put in an honest day's work.”

Honors graduate Elizabeth Kightlinger said she felt fortunate to have great teachers who not only instructed, but inspired. Kightlinger is BC3's bread-and-butter: a nontraditional student returning from the working world to enhance her skills.

“Throw away the stereotypical, structured plan and create your own,” she told fellow graduates.

“You will have many opportunities to embrace what the world has for you. You, too can be inspiring.”

A reception at Founders Hall followed the ceremony in the Field House.