

Butler Eagle

Sue Bennitt left her mark on the county

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Sue Bennitt of Mars gave to the Butler County community for more than four decades.

She was a faculty member at Butler County Community College and later became president of its foundation board.

She co-chaired the Butler Health System Foundation's "Building for the Future" campaign that raised millions for the Patient Tower at Butler Memorial Hospital.

And she served on the Butler Area Library Board, holding the post of president from 2004-05.

Bennitt, 66, formerly of Old Plank Road, Butler Township, died Sunday. A native of Brunswick, Maine, she came to Butler in 1971, and she left her mark on many civic groups and causes.

She and her husband, Fred, led a \$7 million fundraising campaign to help pay for the hospital's surgical tower, which opened in 2010.

Ken DeFurio, president & CEO of the health system, said, "Sue made an invaluable contribution to Butler Health System. Sue and her husband, Fred, led the largest capital campaign in our history, and their efforts were instrumental in opening the patient tower.

"Sue touched many lives, and our community is a much better place because of her."

In 1996, Bennitt was elected to the Butler County Community College Education Foundation Board and became its chairman in 2005.

Under her leadership, the foundation increasing overall private contributions to the college and expanded student scholarship.

She was instrumental in the success of the 1999 BC3 Capital Campaign that raised more than \$4 million to build the BC3 Science and Technology Center and Succop Theater.

She also helped with the construction of the BC3 LindenPointe Campus in Hermitage, Mercer County, that was financed by the foundation.

Nick Neupauer, college president, said, "It's a great loss not just for BC3, but for the entire community. She and Fred have always been very supportive and good friends to me and my wife, Tammy."

Neupauer said Bennett's passion and dedication to the mission of BC3 could never be recognized enough, having not only worked as an employee there, but also a foundation member and president and a donor to the college.

In 2011, she guided the transfer of the Succop Conservancy property to the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Ruth Purcell, director of the foundation, said, "Her gentle guidance, kindness and warm smile will be missed by all of us at the college, including the students of the future who will continue to benefit from her incredible work on their behalf."

Bennett was a BC3 faculty member in the counseling and guidance department from 1979 until her retirement in 1999.

Lori Hinderliter, executive director for the Butler library, said Bennett most recently served from 1999 to 2005 on the library's board of directors, holding the post of president from 2004-05. During her tenure, she presided over a major expansion project at the library.

"She's been a great library advocate and has done great things for the library," Hinderliter said.

She recalled Bennett visiting the library in December to help with the Garden Club in decorating the library's Christmas tree.

"She always had a smile on her face," she said.

Bennett also has been on the boards of the League of Women Voters, the VNA of Western Pennsylvania, VNA Hospice, and Golden Tornado Scholastic Foundation.

She was a founder of the Butler County Day Care Center, now known as the Butler County Children's Center and served as president of its board.

In 1977, she was named the junior awardee of the Distinguished Service Award, which is the premier community award given annually in Butler County.

It is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Butler and the Butler Eagle.

In April 2012 she was honored with the Women of Legacy Award from the health system foundation. That award goes to a woman who has notably contributed to the health and well-being of the Butler County community.

The Thompson-Miller Funeral Home of Butler is the handling funeral arrangements. Her obituary is on Page 7.

Eagle staff writer Bob Schultz contributed to this report.