

Chamber boss, others praise BC3 president's speeches

Dec. 3, 2018



Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of Butler County Community College, is shown during his keynote address at the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting on Dec. 3, 2018, in Ellwood City.

(Butler, PA) The words of Dr. Nick Neupauer, as president of a Butler County Community College twice ranked as the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania, carry "clout," said an audience member of one of Neupauer's speeches that in 2018 included his praising a retiring fellow leader and being "terrific, personal, genuine" and "dynamic" in serving as master of ceremonies for "the world's all-time best emcee."

"He speaks with such enthusiasm," Raymond Santillo, executive director of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, said after Neupauer's Dec. 3 keynote address at the organization's annual meeting. "And he is the president of the No. 1 community college in the state two (surveys) in a row (by Schools.com). That brings with it a lot of clout."

“I couldn’t have possibly asked for anyone better,” said Larry Berg, who chose Neupauer to serve as master of ceremonies at an event in Berg’s honor. “He was terrific. He was personal. He was genuine. He was dynamic. He was just the perfect one to do that. And I was grateful that he did.”

Neupauer was also asked to serve for a second year in a row as the keynote speaker at the Crawford Area Transit Authority’s rural transit retreat in Crawford County, where on July 13 he addressed a crowd of 125 on “Cut the Cuffs: The significance of proactive, strategic management.”

“Management positions in 2018 are complex,” Neupauer told a crowd that included elected state officials. “Perhaps most important, yet overlooked, is the significance of a well-oiled internal staff and clearly defined hierarchy.”

His discussion focused on the development and strengthening “of an internal hierarchy that allows leaders and managers to employ proactive strategies than those that are off the cuff.”

Among his talks with BC3 students in 2018 were pizza with the president at BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township on Feb. 27 and a fireside chat with students at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle on March 1.

“It’s a great opportunity,” Neupauer said of meetings with students. “If you look at an organizational structure, a president is many levels removed from students. I love opportunities like these because they allow me to talk to, to know and to perhaps offer a word of advice to the core of our student-centered college – and that is our terrific students.”

Neupauer also invited students at BC3 @ Cranberry and BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing to ask “any and every question.”

“If it is something I don’t feel comfortable answering, I would let them know that,” he said. “But I can’t think of any I have not answered.”

Students asked Neupauer questions such as “How did you end up becoming the president?” “What difficulties did you have as a student?” and “How do you balance your family life and your professional life?”

“I really enjoy that part of these meetings. When I look at these students, that was me when I was 18, 19, 20,” said Neupauer, the first member of his immediate family to attend college. “We have a lot of first-generation college students and I try to provide them with information and advice that when I was their age I would have been interested in hearing.”

The Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce was also interested in hearing Neupauer, who was asked to deliver his second keynote address to the organization’s annual meeting in three years.

Neupauer's message "spot-on for the audience"

Neupauer challenged an Ellwood City Area chamber audience of 175 in North Sewickley Township, Beaver County, to continue on paths of collaboration and enthusiasm that in 2018 led to the debut of long-awaited higher education programming in his hometown.

"Positivity builds momentum," said Neupauer, an Ellwood City native and 1985 graduate of Lincoln High School. "It is like the snowball on top of the hill that, as it rolls down, keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger."

That attitude and energy, he said, are evident in the new businesses on the borough's main street, in the number of millennials operating those businesses who are "sharing their talents and literally changing the outlook, and the feel and the personality, of Ellwood City" – and in the next wave of young business leaders capitalizing on the newly created Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program.

The initiative for seniors at Lincoln and Riverside high schools, Neupauer said during his "Power of TEAM: Together Everyone Accomplishes More" keynote address, was launched in August, is taught by BC3 and Community College of Beaver County instructors in Ellwood City, and allows students to earn 16 tuition-free college credits and a BC3 Workplace Certificate in Entrepreneurship.

Riv-Ell also follows his call during a 2016 "Dare to Dream: Ellwood City in the 21st Century" keynote address at the chamber's annual meeting to focus on a future governed by a specific economic development plan that incorporates retaining a work force, attracting a new work force and new businesses, and providing an opportunity for individuals to create and nurture their own businesses.

"There was a charge given years ago for Ellwood City to quit talking about what can be, and to put its skin in the game, to fund this program," Neupauer said. "Sure enough, Ellwood City, the residents, foundations and businesses, raised \$65,000" to create the Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program.

"I had a number of people tell me you won't raise much money in Ellwood City," Neupauer said. "And because of that old competitor in me, when the program raised \$65,000, I made them aware that anything is possible through these tremendous citizens and residents."

Riv-Ell seniors over the course of an academic year will take classes in financial literacy, psychology, entrepreneurship, marketing, public speaking and business plan development at Smokin Dave's BBQ, and during field trips will network with, and gain insight from, successful Ellwood City area business leaders.

"These students will work together on a community service project that will benefit our wonderful hometown," Neupauer said, "and they will be taught by entrepreneurs who have made it on their own."

Among those entrepreneurs is Caroline Golmic, Riv-Ell facilitator, a business owner in Ellwood City and past president of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce who said Neupauer's speech only confirmed the conviction that newfound collaboration and enthusiasm are reaping benefits.

"Any time I have heard Dr. Neupauer speak, he is influential and inspirational," Golmic said. "His speech is a reminder that we are on the right path and that there are bigger and better things around the corner in Ellwood City."

Golmic is equally inspired by the curiosity of her students and the promise of the Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program.

"These students are sharp," she said. "It gives me hope for the future of Ellwood City and for the future in general. The Riv-Ell program is forward-thinking. It is progress. It is our community colleges and our school districts coming together. To be able to raise the funds from our local community shows that we are invested in the future of our town."

The community partnerships behind the Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship program "check so many boxes," said Neupauer, who commended Dave and Ann Hunter for providing classroom space for the students within their Smokin Dave's BBQ restaurant.

"It speaks to the power of collaboration," Neupauer said. "It speaks to incredible philanthropy. It speaks to workforce and economic development."

Neupauer urged the crowd to continue to "Squeeze out the naysayers, but in a positive way" and "Do not stop planning and implementing and moving Ellwood City forward."

Jillian Court and Lorelei Gallaher-Hink said Neupauer's message bolstered their plan to do just that.

"I heard from Dr. Neupauer to keep doing what we have been doing," said Court, who with Hink will become co-directors of the chamber following the year-end retirement of Santillo. "Young people are very important in the community and there has been a lot of teamwork in Ellwood City over the past couple of years."

Hink said she learned from Neupauer that Ellwood City is "definitely a tight community. It is slowly building into something amazing. And that we need to keep supporting each other, and community, the new business owners, the young business owners and the owners who have been around for years."

Neupauer's message was "spot-on for the audience," Hink said, "and for what we in our minds want to continue to see happening in Ellwood City."

Neupauer was also spot-on as emcee for Larry Berg.

BC3 president “the perfect one” to serve as emcee

As a child in the 1970s, Nick Neupauer listened to Larry Berg’s talk shows on KDKA-AM from a radio in his family’s kitchen.

Nearly four decades later, an audience exceeding 150 – which included Berg – listened to Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3, praise Berg, “the world’s all-time best emcee” and whose dedicated service to the Butler County community was recognized with a Jean B. Purvis Community Cornerstone Award.

Berg himself has served as master of ceremonies of at least 150 events and in 2001 delivered the keynote address at BC3’s commencement.

Neupauer said he was taken aback when asked by Berg, whom he has known for 15 years, to serve as emcee during the June 15 reception at the Butler Country Club.

Berg “is the Terry Bradshaw of emcees,” Neupauer said, referencing the Pittsburgh Steelers’ four-time Super Bowl champion quarterback. “My being emcee for him is like a backup quarterback coming in to take over for Bradshaw.”

Berg laughed.

“I think he overstated it,” Berg said, “but I appreciate it. I couldn’t have possibly asked for anyone better. He was terrific. He was personal. He was genuine. He was dynamic. He was just the perfect one to do that. And I was grateful that he did.”

Neupauer extended his gratitude to Berg on behalf of Berg’s dedication to the community.

“He volunteers his time,” Neupauer said. “And of all the people that he could have asked to introduce him, I was humbled that he asked me.”

Berg was chosen as the recipient of the award named after the founder of The Community Health Clinic of Butler County, which in 2018 marked its 10th anniversary and according to its annual report, provides “primary health care, health management, behavioral health assessment and dental care to uninsured adults in Butler County and surrounding communities.”

Like Purvis, secretary of the nonprofit volunteer corporation’s board of directors, Berg “loves Butler County,” Neupauer said.

That love is evidenced by Berg having served as a founding member of the Visiting Nurses Association of Western Pennsylvania and of the Maridon Museum; and as a board member of the Butler Public Library, the Butler County Tourism Bureau, Butler Memorial Hospital, Alzheimer’s Association of Pittsburgh, Salvation Army, Moraine Trails Council of the Boy Scouts of America, Jaycees, Easter Seal Society, United Way of Butler County, Butler County Symphony Association and the Butler County Music and Arts Festival.

Berg also served as president of the Congregation B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Butler.

“He has had a profound effect on Butler County,” Neupauer said, “and changed the community for the better.”

Berg is also a past president of the Butler County Chamber of Commerce and of the Rotary Club of Butler.

His career in broadcasting spans from the Armed Forces Radio Service in El Paso in 1953, and led to stops in Baltimore, St. Louis, New Orleans, Dallas, San Antonio and Des Moines, before landing at KDKA in Pittsburgh, purchasing WBUT-AM and WLER-FM in Butler; and serving as a talk show host on WBUT and WISR from 1965 to 2001.

“Larry was part of the glory days of AM radio,” said Neupauer, who recalls listening as a youth to Berg, to Art Pallan, Jack Bogut and ‘Uncle Ed’ Shaughnessy on KDKA. “I love AM radio. I still listen to a transistor radio when I walk.”

Berg also hosted for 10 years the Armstrong Cable System’s “Faces & Places,” a half-hour show that profiled programs and leaders at BC3 at least five times, he said.

While Berg has interviewed international figures such as Paul McCartney and Elvis Presley and received letters of commendation from Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, his ability to connect with his talk-show listeners stands out, Neupauer said.

“He even saved a life,” Neupauer said of a KDKA caller who announced on air that he was contemplating suicide.

“Larry, in his calming and relaxing smooth-as-silk voice, kept the caller on the line,” Neupauer said, “until emergency services professionals traced the call and eventually rescued the person.”

Neupauer is a former board member of The Community Health Clinic of Butler County. The current board includes Ruth Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education Foundation Inc., and Morgan Rizzardi, BC3’s associate director of admissions. The BC3 Education Foundation is among the clinic’s partners.

The Community Health Clinic of Butler County reported that in 2017 it had 133 appointments for new patients, provided 570 prescriptions worth \$45,000 free to its patients and more than \$1.2 million in volunteer time from dentists in the community.

In addition to being asked by Berg to serve as his emcee, Neupauer represented the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges in celebrating the career of a colleague who was about to retire.

Neupauer lauds teamwork of retiring RACC president

What would Anna do? BC3's president, and its vice president for administration and finance, would often wonder when facing a crucial decision.

"Countless times, Jim Hrabosky and I would utter those words," Neupauer said June 8 before a crowd of 300 during the retirement celebration of Dr. Anna D. Weitz, whose 11-year presidency at Reading Area Community College followed five in the same capacity at Pennsylvania Highlands Community College in Johnstown.

"I've had the privilege of observing what Anna would do for many years," said Neupauer, who called Weitz, a "clear thinker" and "the ultimate team player" whose support for a singular voice among the commission's 14 institutions supplanted her own personal interests for Reading or Penn Highlands.

"Hers," Neupauer said at the Double Tree by Hilton Reading gala, "has been a voice of reason." Weitz's 48-year career in education included securing a permanent campus for Penn Highlands, which in being founded in 1993 is the newest member among the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges.

She has been an "amazing ambassador and facilitator" in commission meetings with the state Department of Education, Neupauer said, and a mentor for her staff, commission President Elizabeth Bolden and all of Pennsylvania's community college presidents.

Weitz's attributes are important not only for a community college president, Neupauer said, but specifically for one who serves in Pennsylvania.

"We are 14 independent colleges that make up a sector," said Neupauer, currently the longest-serving active president among Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges, its 14 State System of Higher Education institutions and its four state-related schools – Lincoln, Penn State and Temple universities, and the University of Pittsburgh.

"We are not system-based. So that one-for-all and all-for-one is very important. We come together on lobbying points. We come together with capital applications. We come together on grant applications. And it is really grass roots rather than top-down, like it is in a system."

Weitz earned a bachelor's degree from Boston University, a master's degree from the State University of New York at Albany and a doctorate from The Pennsylvania State University. She previously worked at Raritan Valley Community College in Somerville, N.J.; at the former Williamsport Area Community College and at Lycoming College in Williamsport.

She was also chosen to receive the Michael Bennett Lifetime Achievement Award from the honor society of Phi Theta Kappa during the same convention of the international academic honor society in which Neupauer was recognized with the Shirley B. Gordon Award of Distinction.

The Bennett award honors retiring college presidents who have consistently supported Phi Theta Kappa and the Gordon award, one that lauds those who have demonstrated outstanding effort toward promoting the goals of PTK, according to the organization.

Neupauer said he will miss Weitz' careful analysis of issues during meetings, and her advocacy for collaboration among the commission's institutions.

“There are 14 of us (in the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges) who are around the table, and we always have our home college hat on while we are sitting around that table,” Neupauer said. “But in understanding that there is strength in a unified message, there are times when you might need to put some of the issues that would impact your college in a secondary sense because they would take away from the overall message from the 14 at the federal and state levels.”