

BC3 volunteers offer sharp minds, helping hands, open hearts

Dec. 13, 2018



Morgan Rizzardi, left, Butler County Community College’s associate director of admissions, and Scott Richardson, director of campus police and security, serve hot dogs and cole slaw to clients of the Light of Life Community Outreach on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2018. Rizzardi and Richardson are among the 47 BC3 employees who have volunteered at least 284 hours in 2018 at the downtown Butler lunch kitchen.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College employees in 2018 shared with nonprofit organizations their expertise as leaders on boards of directors, their diligence as painters, stainers and cleaners, and their tenderness as servants in a downtown Butler lunch kitchen that provides to those in need a hot meal – and a warm greeting.

“All of the volunteers from BC3 are compassionate,” said Curt Weichey, who with his wife, Pam, are founders and organizers of the 4½-year-old Light of Life Community Outreach, a West North Street ministry that offers lunch to as many as 100 guests Tuesdays through Thursdays.

Forty-seven BC3 employees through Dec. 11 volunteered 284 hours at Light of Life, washing dishes and windows, sweeping and mopping floors, serving coffee and tea, and entrees such as ham sandwiches, scalloped potatoes, hot sausages, pulled pork and spaghetti – while meeting with outreach guests who, Weichey said, “are struggling.”

“Everyone is struggling with something,” Weichey said. “It’s just that the folks coming through the doors at Light of Life are struggling 10 times more. And sometimes they just need a friend to talk to. It’s real life.”



A client of the Light of Life Community Outreach eats a pastry Thursday, Dec. 13, 2018, at the downtown Butler lunch kitchen where 47 BC3 employees have volunteered at least 284 hours in 2018.

“BC3 volunteers want to serve people”

Community engagement is among goals in a BC3 2017-2022 strategic plan pathway that intends to build relationships and increase quality of life. An initiative that allows BC3 employees to volunteer up to four hours a month at Light of Life during work hours achieves the objective, said Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3 president.

While BC3’s role is in collaborating with community partners to affect change, “Our strength is that we have a lot of women- and manpower at BC3, which helps the communities we serve,” said Neupauer, who himself has served lunches and greeted guests at Light of Life. “We get that collective muscle and it can help to elevate the downtown area.”

Added Tracy Hack, whose position as BC3’s coordinator of community leadership initiatives is a result of the strategic plan: “If you want to be the community’s college, come down into the community and get your hands dirty. Roll up your sleeves and see what is happening with the people who live in the community.”

BC3 employees such as Dina Fricke, Scott Richardson and Nancy Seibel have done just that.

“I like to take the time to learn their names so when they and I return, I can say good morning or hello to Larry or Fran or Jan or whomever it may be,” said Fricke, BC3’s certificate programs and professional education secretary.

“I believe we all like to be recognized and to be called our names. If they are receptive, I will have light conversation and exchange pleasantries. One guest participant mentioned she just received a new pair of shoes. The next time I volunteered, I asked her ‘How are those new shoes working out?’ With a big smile she replied ‘Great.’

“It’s important to listen. Her smile meant a lot.”

Just a smile “or asking someone how their day is going,” Weichey said, “can change a person’s whole attitude. BC3 volunteers want to serve people, want to lend a helping hand, and be a friend to people. So far I have seen nothing but that.”

“This is what we are doing as the community’s college”

Richardson, BC3’s director of campus police and security, has served lunches and acted as greeter at Light of Life and lauds the opportunity created by the college’s strategic plan to apply work hours toward aiding the community.

“I have found this to be so much more than time well spent,” Richardson said. “The experiences are humbling and purposeful. You get out of it what you give. If you become involved, it is so much more than serving food. Be a greeter, become engaged, listen to their story and share. Simply, be involved.”

Like Richardson, Seibel – BC3’s financial aid secretary – said the strategic plan initiative allows BC3 employees “to take a step back and look outside their daily routine, to see the people who are less fortunate. As Winston Churchill said, ‘We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.’”

BC3 employees, Weichey said, are “respectful. It has been a true blessing. And when the president came in and served, you could tell that he left a changed person.”

“I did feel good, not just for myself but for the college as a whole,” Neupauer said. “This is what we are doing as the community’s college and it shows the impact we can have literally in our own backyard.”

“It strengthens our community connections”

BC3 also had an impact with nearly 20 employees painting, staining and cleaning during the United Way of Butler County’s Day of Caring in early October, assisting at the Mars Home for Youth Family Services in Mars, Preston Park in Butler Township, Slippery Rock Area Parks and Recreation and with Glade Run Lutheran Services.

Kathleen Strobel, BC3’s coordinator of business training, and colleagues painted fixtures and stained a gazebo and a walking bridge within the 88-acre Preston Park on Oct. 3.



From left, James Hrabosky, Butler County Community College’s vice president for administration and finance; Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3 president; and Dennis Birkes, BC3’s web manager, are shown Oct. 3, 2018, while painting at the Slippery Rock Area Parks and Recreation as part of the United Way of Butler County’s Day of Caring.

“Butler is home not only to the college, but also to many of our employees,” Strobel said. “We are proud of our community and it is important we do our part to maintain and improve our neighborhood. BC3 is a community resource, both inside and outside of the classroom. Volunteering is just one more way we can support our community outside of the classroom.

“BC3 employees serve our community every day,” Strobel said, “and this is just another way of doing that.”

Volunteering in the community goes “hand-in-hand” with the 2017-2022 strategic plan, said Jada Wallace, a human resources specialist with BC3 who Oct. 3 helped to prepare a facility used by Glade Run Lutheran Services’ adventures division for painting.

“Not only does it strengthen community connections by offering services to help develop the community,” Wallace said, but “it also offers development for the employees who take these opportunities to get involved, work as a team and work hard for someone else’s benefit.”

BC3 “unique” with support of volunteers

Her colleagues at BC3 are “eager to give back to the community that makes BC3 possible,” Wallace said. “Butler County Community College is a great place to work and it is very satisfying knowing what the college can do for the community as a whole. We wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the community.”

Leah Albert, BC3’s online advising coordinator and an academic adviser, helped to operate games during an Oct. 4 fall festival at the Mars Home for Youth Family Services.

Volunteering, she said, enhances the college’s visibility and the “good work it does” for the community.

“BC3 is not just a provider of education,” Albert said, “but really a partner in the growth and sustainability of the community. It is unique for a college to be so supportive of volunteer work that employees are permitted to complete acts of service during work hours.

“Whether it is a service opportunity during the United Way Day of Caring, or another opportunity, it shows a priority is not just servicing students,” she said, “but the community as well.”

Neupauer, Dennis Birkes, James Hrabosky and Kimberlee Matthews also volunteered to help paint Slippery Rock Area Parks and Recreation facilities on Oct. 3. Birkes is BC3’s web manager; Hrabosky, BC3’s vice president for administration and finance; and Matthews, BC3’s interim assistant director of financial aid.

Seventy percent of BC3 staff members who responded to a collegewide survey in January also indicated they volunteer in their communities, some for as many as 30 years. The study showed

those respondents serve as volunteers an average of four hours a week, with nearly half stating they volunteer on a board of directors.