

Future fugitive finder among BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing's 2020 grads

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Mikala Henry, 20, of New Castle, will receive an associate degree in criminology from BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing this month and is among the 70 percent of BC3 graduates who are debt-free. She is shown Feb. 5, 2020, at a 100 days to graduation event on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

(New Castle, PA) Butler County Community College'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, justice- and beauty-minded aspirants with two associate degrees and one certificate, and a city woman who dreams of becoming a U.S. marshal, but not about her first capture.

BC3's Class of 2020 includes 563 graduates, 518 of whom will receive associate degrees in career or transfer programs, and 71 of whom will receive certificates or workplace certificates that take one year or less to complete.

Mikala Henry, 20, is a BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing student who says she has always been interested in the law – and in law-breakers.

“I grew up watching all the crime shows,” said Henry, who this month will receive from BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing an associate degree in criminology, among the top five programs pursued by students in BC3’s Class of 2020. “I’ve always had an interest in it.”

There is one U.S. marshal for each of the nation’s 94 federal district courts, and more than 3,500 deputy marshals and criminal investigators nationwide in 2020, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. An average of 361 fugitives are arrested in each of 250 operational days annually, according to the U.S. Marshals Service.

“A hard-core job,” Henry said. “It is very dangerous, but then again, it is also exciting to me, with the adrenaline and the rush.”

“My parents are very proud of me”

While she has thought about her future – she plans to attend the University of Pittsburgh to pursue a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice and find a position in law enforcement to gain the necessary hours to qualify for the U.S. Marshals Service Basic Training Academy in Glynco, Ga. – she hasn’t thought about that first capture of a fugitive.

“But I imagine it will be different and pretty exciting,” Henry said.

As is, she says, becoming the first member of her immediate family to graduate from college – which includes three siblings and her parents – and being among of the 70 percent of BC3 graduates who are debt-free.

“I feel very accomplished,” she said. “My parents are very proud of me.”

Following her 2017 graduation from Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School in Midland, Henry said she researched colleges near New Castle, “not too far from home, and BC3 came up.

“It is very affordable,” Henry said. “My plan was to be debt-free, and going to BC3 I have been debt-free this whole time. I also know that it is the No. 1 (community) college in PA. That’s why I picked it, because I would know I had the right education and the right material taught to me.”

BC3 has been ranked the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania five times since 2015, including for 2020 by BestColleges.Com.

Criminology, a 62-credit program, is among BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing’s nine transfer programs. Sixty-six percent of BC3 students this spring are enrolled in two-year transfer programs, and can apply credits to public, private and online four-year colleges and universities.

Studying criminology at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing only reinforced her dream to become a U.S. marshal, Henry said.

“It made me more excited,” she said. “I liked learning everything that goes on in my field. What they do. How do they do it.”

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.

The top five associate degree programs pursued by students in BC3’s Class of 2020 are business administration; general studies; Nursing, R.N.; psychology and criminology. Business administration, general studies, psychology and criminology among BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing’s 17 transfer or career programs.

Students can also take pre-nursing courses at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing and finish their degree at BC3’s main campus.

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing’s menu also includes two certificate programs.