

R.N. graduates make BC3 @ Brockway history

Many in first graduating Class of 2020 to remain in region after accepting job offers in high-priority occupation

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BC3 @ Brockway's inaugural class of graduates with associate in applied science degrees in Nursing, R.N., is shown Feb. 12, 2020, with SimMan 3G, a computerized adult patient, at BC3 @ Brockway in Jefferson County. Jean Hall, BC3 @ Brockway's nursing director and instructor, is shown third from left in back row.

(Brockway, PA) Beth Smouse, of Corsica, was inspired to pursue a career in registered nursing while observing the care her mother received while being treated for throat cancer in Chicago.

Michele Hatten, of Curwensville, was drawn to registered nursing as a grandmother building on her healthcare credentials.

And Angelina Hynds, of Brockway, was influenced as a teenager who “kind of grew up in the hospital” while suffering from a condition mimicking a brain tumor.

Smouse, Hatten, Hynds and nine others this spring are the first graduates of a two-year-old BC3 @ Brockway Nursing, R.N., program that addresses the sixth highest-priority occupation in six northern Pennsylvania counties.

More than 100 additional registered nurses are needed each year in Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter counties, according to the state Department of Labor & Industry’s Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.

BC3 @ Brockway’s first 12 graduates with associate in applied science degrees in Nursing, R.N., can enter a profession paying an average entry-level salary of \$51,280 for those with associate degrees, according to a 2020 report by nursingprocess.org.



BC3 @ Brockway’s inaugural class of graduates with associate in applied science degrees in Nursing, R.N., are, top row, from left, Cassandra Barr, of Emporium; Karrie Breindel, of St. Marys; Julianne Forsythe, of Brookville; and James Goodnight, of Strattanville. Middle row, from left, Michele Hatten, of Curwensville; Alaina Horn, of Falls Creek; Brooke Hummel, of Brookville; and Angelina Hynds, of Brockway. Bottom row, from left, Nick Mancuso, of Brockway; Beth Smouse, of Corsica; Sadie Viglione, of Kersey; and Rachel Watt, of Brockway.

BC3 @ Brockway program saved some 130-mile drive

While at BC3 @ Brockway, the students were awarded a total of 23 scholarships, including 18 funded by the Varischetti family. BC3 @ Brockway is the only of BC3’s five additional locations to offer the identical 70-credit program that is available on the college’s main campus in Butler Township and one often referenced by the college’s president as BC3’s “hallmark.”

BC3 @ Brockway was established Jefferson County in 2013 to serve underrepresented counties in Pennsylvania with higher education. In addition to Nursing, R.N., BC3 @ Brockway offers seven other career or transfer programs.

“I am proud of BC3 @ Brockway,” BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer said. “BC3 @ Brockway was part of a statewide vision to offer a community college education north of Interstate 80. I am proud of what BC3 @ Brockway gives to that great community.”

State Sen. Joe Scarnati, R-25, of Brockway, was a featured speaker during a March 2013 announcement about the creation of BC3 @ Brockway, the only community college north of Interstate 80 in the 268 miles between BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage, Mercer County, and Luzerne County Community College in Nanticoke.

“I am so proud that BC3 @ Brockway has fulfilled a larger vision of Sen. Scarnati and other community leaders,” Neupauer said.

The BC3 @ Brockway program also saved some students a roundtrip drive of as many as 130 miles up to four times a week to BC3’s main campus.

“I wanted a two-year program,” said Brooke Hummel, who transferred to BC3 @ Brockway’s Nursing, R.N., program after attending a Pennsylvania public four-year university. “BC3 was more affordable and closer to home.”

Added Alaina Horm: “I like that with an associate degree I can start working and getting clinical experience instead of two more years of schooling.”

Hummel, of Brookville, and Horm, of Falls Creek, said they have accepted positions with Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois.

Workforce leader: BC3 @ Brockway ‘helps fill the need’

The dozen 20- to 52-year-olds representing Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Elk and Jefferson counties were clinically trained at Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois and must now take the post-graduation National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses.

Graduates of the Nursing, R.N., program offered on BC3’s main campus who took the NCLEX-RN in 2019 had a 92 percent success rate, according to Dr. Patty Annear, dean of BC3’s Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health. BC3’s success rate over the past three years averages 93 percent, Annear said.

The need for registered nurses will grow by 12 percent through 2028, according to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, whose projections include those holding bachelor’s degrees.

There were more than 100 active job openings in the past 30 days for registered nurses in a North Central Workforce Development Area that includes Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter counties, said Pamela A. Streich, director of strategic planning and project management for Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania.

“There is definitely a great need for registered nurses in the area,” Streich said, adding that BC3 @ Brockway has helped “to fill the need and keep people in our region. It helps employers to not have to recruit from outside the region and keeps the qualified people right here at home.”

Among BC3 @ Brockway’s Class of 2020 graduates in registered nursing, at least eight will remain in the area, with six having accepted job offers and two remaining in their current workplace.

“That’s a good thing,” Annear said. “Many times when schools graduate students, the students tend to move on to other places. These students are for the most part staying and practicing in the area.”

Two graduates said they will pursue additional certifications or a bachelor’s degree, and another is the mother of a 1-month-old son.

BC3 @ Brockway’s 2,000-square-foot registered nursing suite within the Parkside Complex at 1200 Wood St. includes a skills lab with six hospital beds and headwalls to simulate those found in hospital rooms.

It also includes five nursing skills manikins, and a state-of-the-art simulation lab that houses SimMan 3G, a computerized adult patient, and SimBaby, a computerized toddler whose purchase was funded by a grant from the AJ and Sigismunda Palumbo Charitable Trust.

Students who attend BC3 @ Brockway may be eligible for the Varischetti Family Scholarship for five semesters.

BC3 @ Brockway’s first graduating class of students with degrees in Nursing, R.N., includes Cassandra Barr, of Emporium; Karrie Breindel, of St. Marys; Julianne Forsythe, of Brookville; James Goodnight, of Strattanville; Nick Mancuso, of Brockway; Sadie Viglione, of Kersey; Rachel Watt, of Brockway; and Hatten, Horm, Hummel, Hynds and Smouse.

BC3’s Nursing, R.N., program in 2015 was reaccredited through 2022 by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Atlanta.

Twelve students may graduate from the program in 2021.

Meet BC3 @ Brockway’s historic first class of R.N. graduates

Cassandra Barr, 30, of Emporium, is a 2008 graduate of Cameron County Junior-Senior High School. She said she has accepted a position as a registered nurse in the behavioral health unit at Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois.

Barr received two Varischetti Family Scholarships and will graduate from BC3 @ Brockway debt-free.

Barr has worked as a patient care assistant or as a nurse's aide for four years and is expecting her first child, son Geno, at the end of June.

Karrie Breindel, 29, of St. Marys, is a 2009 graduate of St. Marys Area High School and earned a licensed practical nurse diploma from Clearfield County Career and Technical Center.

Breindel received a Varischetti Family Scholarship and will graduate debt-free from BC3 @ Brockway.

She plans to work as a registered nurse in labor and delivery "because I have always enjoyed babies," she said.

Breindel gave birth to her second child in late April, an 8.1-pound son whom she named Jonathan.

Julianne Forsythe, 21, of Brookville, a homeschooled high school student who graduated in 2017, serves as a nationally registered emergency medical technician with Jefferson County EMS. She plans to pursue certification as a prehospital registered nurse.

Forsythe's father, David, a flight paramedic, this spring completed his first year in BC3 @ Brockway's Nursing, R.N., program and her sister, Tessa, will begin the program this fall.

Forsythe received a Janice Phillips Larrick Nursing Scholarship and a Varischetti Family Scholarship and will graduate debt-free from BC3 @ Brockway.

She has played six or seven songs "every week" on piano during Sunday morning services at Center Hill Community Church in Knox Dale since she was 14.

James Goodnight, 44, of Strattanville, is a 1993 graduate of Franklin Area Junior-Senior High School and earned a practical nursing diploma in 2008 from Clarion County Career Center.

The married father of two has worked as a full-time licensed practical nurse in a psychiatric unit in Clarion since 2008.

When not studying, Goodnight said he likes to mow his lawn, watch movies with his children, and walk in Clear Creek State Park with his dog, Sassy, an Airedale terrier.

Michele Hatten, 52, of Curwensville, is a 1985 graduate of DuBois Area High School who earned a licensed practical nursing diploma in 1988 from Clearfield County Career and Technical Center.

The grandmother of two said she intends to pursue a bachelor's degree in registered nursing. She works as a licensed practical nurse for Guardian Home and Community Services, Brockway.

Hatten received two Varischetti Family Scholarships and a Mary Agnes Schneider Heineman Scholarship.

Becoming a registered nurse was "something I wanted to do years ago, but then you have to raise your children," Hatten said. "When my daughter went off to college, so did I."

Alaina Horm, 20, of Falls Creek, is a 2018 graduate of DuBois Area High School and said she has accepted a position as an operating room nurse at Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois.

Horm received two Varischetti Family Scholarships, and the Marlen Lang Nursing Scholarship, and will graduate from BC3 @ Brockway debt-free.

Horm has hiked on three different trips in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest.

"Mount Rainier, Olympic National," she said. "Beautiful, beautiful places that makes you in awe of the world that we live in."

Brooke Hummel, 20, of Brookville, is a 2017 graduate of Brookville Area High School who said she has accepted a position in the medical-surgery unit at Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois.

Hummel received three Varischetti Family Scholarships.

She likes to bake strawberry-filled cupcakes from scratch with her fiancé and his family.

Angelina Hynds, 22, of Brockway, a 2016 graduate of Brockway Area High School, said she has accepted a position on the medical-surgery floor of Penn Highlands in DuBois.

Her interest in registered nursing was influenced by the care she received after being diagnosed as having pseudotumor cerebri – which created "vision problems and headaches," she said -- when Hynds was 12.

"Whenever you are in the hospital, you don't see the doctors as much as you do the nurses and nurses' aides," Hynds said. "That's just what I wanted to be, directly involved in the patients' care."

Nick Mancuso, 32, of Brockway, a 2006 graduate of Brockway Area High School, also earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and plans to work in mental health nursing.

Beth Smouse, 29, of Corsica, a 2009 graduate of Brookville Junior-Senior High School, said she intends to pursue a position on the medical-surgery floor at Penn Highlands-Brookville.

Smouse received five Varischetti Family Scholarships and two Kathleen Flanigan Rice Scholarships.

She said she chose BC3 @ Brockway because she wanted to follow in someone's footsteps.

"I watched when they took care of my mom (Terri) out in Chicago when she had cancer," Smouse said. "It is just inspiring to see someone dedicate themselves to helping others."

Sadie Viglione, 24, of Kersey, Elk County, is a 2013 graduate of Elk County Catholic High School in St. Marys and earned an associate degree in occupational therapist assistant from The Pennsylvania State University's branch campus in DuBois in 2016.

Viglione received a Varischetti Family Scholarship and said she has accepted a position in the intensive care unit at Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois.

She said she chose BC3 @ Brockway's Nursing, R.N., program because of its location and affordability and because "I knew I wanted to help people. A lot of people need our help."

Rachel Watt, 23, of Brockway, earned a high school equivalency diploma in 2015 and certification as an emergency medical technician with Jefferson County EMS.

Watt received a Varischetti Family Scholarship and said she has accepted a position in the emergency department of Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois.

Her mother, Rebecca, is a licensed practical nurse, as is a maternal aunt, Tammy. Maternal aunts April and Stephanie are registered nurses.

Watt enjoys outdoor activities such as fishing, and spending time with her friends and family.