957 sets record!

By William V. Foley
For The Chamber

ELLWOOD CITY — The buzz in Ewing Park on an unseasonably mild Oct. 7 wasn’t limited to the record 957 guests sampling 280-plus types of brews at the eighth Oktoberfest, nor the cluster of sweat bees that also swarmed to 17 vendors on this 82-degree Saturday afternoon. The buzz making the rounds was acknowledgment of a second consecutive high-volume event, on the heels of an Ellwood City Fall Fest that drew a record 6,000 only out-of-towners thirst for taste of life in Ellwood City

Visitors flock to a shelter housing beverages supplied by Pete’s Uptown Beer and Beverage at the ninth Oktoberfest in Ellwood City on Oct. 7.

Visitors to the ninth Oktoberfest in Ellwood City are shown Oct. 7 in Ewing Park.

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seven days earlier.

“Events like this bring people together,” said Marisa Houk, 28, of Ellwood City. “I know that this is just one of a number of things that go on. The more things they plan, the more people will come back to visit them.”

And sometimes, stay for good. As was the case with Josh Marshall, 29, who with his wife, two daughters and son moved to Ellwood City from Cranberry Township in April.

“I absolutely love it,” he said of Ellwood City, where he lived when he was younger. “I like the small businesses. I like the community feel of Ellwood City. I like to live in a community that is a little more tight-knit than what it was in Cranberry. That’s for sure.”

Good move, Caitlyn Razzani said.

“It’s a good place to come and raise your kids when you are starting a family,” said Razzani, 25, of Ellwood City. “It is a tight community. Everyone knows each other. It’s a small place where you know where kids are.”

“Opportunities, activities” abound in Ellwood City

Joe Stiles will drink to that. Between sips of his Gourd Lord Pumpkin Ale from Outta Focus Brewing, New Castle, the 43-year-old from Ellwood City said events such as Oktoberfest and Fall Fest are a great way to showcase his hometown.

“It is a really good way to bring people into Ellwood City,” he said. “Ellwood has opportunities and activities. And this is bringing a younger crowd into the mix.”

Stiles had earlier sampled a Hoptoberfest Fresh Hop Rye, also from Outta Focus Brewing and “It was amazing.”

Is he a beer connoisseur?

“I am a beer drinker,” he said, “and this is a very good beer.”

Is there a difference between a beer connoisseur and a beer drinker?

Adam Reno, of New Castle, hurls a keg at the ninth Ellwood City Oktoberfest in Ewing Park on Oct. 7.

“Not much.”

Standing nearby were Jessica Spencer and her husband, Todd, of Hampton, debating the ranking of the three Outta Focus samples – Gourd Lord Pumpkin Ale, Peach and Harmony Peach IPA and Hoptoberfest Fresh Hop Rye – they had tasted.

The peach “is awesome,” Jessica said. “I have had a couple peach IPAs from different breweries, and this stacks up to those. So it’s great.”

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Butler — Butler County Community College’s back-to-back rankings as the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania in consecutive Schools.com surveys are a testament to BC3’s consistency in excellence and its importance to higher education in eight counties, BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer said.

“This also speaks to the commitment from the entire BC3 team to provide affordable, accessible and above all, quality education to the students we serve,” said Neupauer, an Ellwood City native and a 1985 graduate of Lincoln High School.

BC3’s continued recognition by Schools.com “really validates the fact that we are making such a tremendous impact on our main campus and in each of our off-campus locations,” Neupauer said. “With our regional approach to higher education, not only are we excelling on our main campus in Butler Township, but also at our off-campus locations and in the counties we serve.”

Nearly 34 percent of BC3’s credit students this fall are studying at its five off-campus locations, which include BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle and BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township.

BC3 is a great asset to the region, said Sean Carroll, director of BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle, “whether it is for the student who takes classes then goes right into the work force, the student who transfers...”
CHAMBER MEMBER GETS AN ‘A’ IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BC3 No. 1 again in PA!

“Small Town, Big Living”

CHAMBER MEMBER GETS AN ‘A’ IN HIGHER EDUCATION

I am saving money, not going to another school and spending like $30,000. I’m spending like $3,000. I think more students are thinking that way.

“BC3 No. 1 again in PA!”

BC3 offers 102 Internet classes, a 100 percent-online associate of applied science degree in business management, and four certificates, said Ann McCandless, BC3’s dean of educational technology.

Lincoln grad expects to graduate debt-free

Current annual tuition and fees for Butler County students pursuing 30 credits is $4,800, according to Julianne Louttit, director of financial aid. Forty-four percent of BC3 students received a Pell grant in the 2016-17 academic year, according to Becky Smith, BC3’s assistant director of financial aid, and 75 percent of BC3 students graduate debt-free.

That may include Janelle Fox, a sophomore early childhood education and special education major at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.

“A lot of my friends now are $30,000 in debt,” said Fox, a Lincoln High graduate who said she expects to graduate from BC3 debt-free. "I could not imagine trying to start my career with all of that debt in front of me.”

Fox also said she "loves" that BC3 students don’t have to pay for what she calls “major fluff fees.”

“Like parking,” she said. “Parking is free. At other schools it is not like that. At other schools you pay $25 to $100 just for a parking spot.”

Tuition at BC3 is the lowest among 24 colleges and universities in Western Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Business Times reported in January. Additionally, the BC3 Education Foundation will award more than $200,000 in scholarships this year.

“Students feel that they are getting a good first experience at college at BC3 and the low cost of tuition makes it possible..."
for them to explore their options without feeling they are wasting time and money,” said Lauren Buchanan, director of BC3 @ Cranberry. “In our area we are competing with a number of prestigious and expensive schools. They feel the tuition rate is very reasonable and many are able to attend and leave without putting themselves in debt.”

Riverside grad applauds BC3’s affordability

Justin Baust, 19, a 2017 Riverside High Graduate, is attending BC3’s main campus in Butler Township this fall, then may continue his general studies at BC3 @ Cranberry in the spring.

“I’ll finish there,” he said in August. “It’s closer to home.” Baust said he followed his sister, Jordan, in attending BC3.

“And I am saving money, not going to another school and spending like $30,000,” Baust said. “I’m spending like $3,000. I think more students are thinking that way. My friends had scholarships or half-scholarships to go elsewhere and they all went to community colleges to save money because they don’t think it’s worth it anymore.”

Schools.com also cited “comfortable classes” at BC3, where the student-to-faculty ratio fluctuates between 18:1 and 17:1, Anke said.

“I think our students do appreciate the smaller class sizes,” Carroll said, “especially those who have gone on to other schools with larger class sizes.”

Small class sizes appealing

Her largest class at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing has 15 students, Fox said.

“I really like the smaller class sizes,” the Lincoln High graduate said. “They allow you to make a closer connection with your teacher and with your peers. If you went to a larger school, you wouldn’t have that connection. And the friends I have talked to from larger schools say that they don’t have that connection.”

That connection, she said, benefits her and her classmates.

“I think it is a lot better academically because you have that closer rapport,” Fox said. “And you can have a closer bond with the students in your field. I have a group of education majors and we all get together and help each other with our homework or any questions we have. It is also easier to talk to your teachers about your questions.”
And the rye?  
“The rye is pretty good.”  
Her favorite?  
“The peach.”  
“The peach is the best,” her husband proclaimed. “And then the rye and the pumpkin.”  
Said Jessica: “I like the peach too. But I would say peach, pumpkin, rye.”  
One thing they agreed upon Todd said, was that “This park and the Oktoberfest are great,” he said. “If this is what Ellwood City is like, we should move here.”

“A young, vibrant beat in Ellwood City”

Rob Brough, a teacher in the Ellwood City Area School district who was assisting Pete’s Uptown with its 255 different samples, said he believes more young adults are remaining in or relocating to Ellwood City because of “the community, the atmosphere.”  
“These things that build the community are definitely bringing people back,” he said. “The Golmics are absolutely positively infusing a young, vibrant beat to Ellwood City, and it is resonating among the kids.”  
That would be Scott and Caroline Golmic, she the president of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce’s board of directors, he volunteering on numerous civic events.  
“This is a great event for all generations, but it is fun to see the 20somethings have a place to come in our beautiful park,” Caroline Golmic said. “It warms my heart to see the younger people here. And it is exciting because it shows you that young people are here. We have the next generation coming up in this town. And we need to continue opening businesses for them.”  
Raymond Santillo, executive director of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, said he was amazed by the turnout, which exceeded the 2016 crowd by 117.  
“We are seeing a lot of young people,” he said. “And we are thrilled to see them. The weather is tremendous.”

Events show “what we have to offer”

Deny Boariu, chairman of Oktoberfest and a board member of the Ellwood City Wolves Club and Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, said he too noticed a younger crowd participating in the events being offered in the borough.  
An events such as Oktoberfest, he said, “shows what we have to offer, how the organizations can come together and put on something like this.”  
Proceed from Oktoberfest benefit scholarship funds created by the Ellwood City Wolves, Lions and Rotary clubs, Boariu said. Additionally, 25 percent of all advance sales were to be donated to the Ellwood City Civic Beautification Project.  
“Our plan is to raise money to replace the wooden Welcome to Ellwood City sign on Route 288 at Route 65 in Franklin Township with some sort of a permanent masonry structure,” Boariu said. “This will house the signs of the local civic organizations.”

Audrey Miller, right, eyes a prize at the Ellwood City Wolves Club spinning game as Jaime Jones, of Ellwood City, looks on at the ninth Ellwood City Oktoberfest in Ewing Park on Oct. 16.

Among the major vendors at Oktoberfest were Pete’s Uptown Beer & Beverage, Sweet Caroline’s and Pappy Rick’s Kettle Korn.

“You know everybody. ... That is what I miss”

Drinking a toast to Ellwood City near a crowded Pete’s Uptown shelter were Maressa Delisio, 22, of Ellwood City; and Marissa Dicarolis, 23, of New Kensington.  
“This,” Delisio said, “is so much fun. We got to try a bunch of new things. There is a lot of different variety here, and I don’t even like beer. But everything tastes really good. So I am excited to try new things.”  
As is Ellwood City, she said.  
“We are growing,” she said. “I sense it.”  
Stephanie DeJohn misses it.  
The 27-year-old from North Carolina said she and her husband want to return to their native Ellwood City after three years in the South.  
“My family is here. I grew up here,” DeJohn said. “We have been down there for a while and we kind of want to come back. The small town. People. Family. You know everybody. Down there you don’t really know anybody. I come here and see everybody I know. That is what I miss.”