

LBI Students Storm PBL National Conference and Competition



Chris Decker

CEO and Founder of LBI and LTI, 1941–2008

When my father won his Entrepreneur of the Year award in 1996 at the Hilton in Pittsburgh, his acceptance speech lasted about ten seconds. He walked to the podium and said the rules of a good speech were “to be brief, be memorable, be gracious, and be seated. Thank you.” Then he sat down.

I’ll try to be as brief on these pages as he was at that podium, though I’m not sure I’ll be able to. That’s mostly because I find it difficult to encapsulate his personality and the accomplishments of several years of hard work into a few short paragraphs.

I was thinking about this a few months ago while I watched the movie *The Bucket List*. In it, Jack Nicholson’s and Morgan

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Another year, another stellar showing by LBI students.

LBI’s PBL members did it. *Again.*

Five LBI students entered the 2009 Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda (FBLA-PBL) National competition and returned with four National Awards of Excellence. These awards, earned by the top finishers at FBLA-PBL’s annual, national competition, bring to fourteen the number LBI students have won in the last five years.

Following are LBI’s winners from the 2009 event, held in Anaheim, California, June 20-23.

2nd Place, *Computer Applications*:
Jennifer Lener

3rd Place, *Word Processing*: **Lauren Tate**

5th Place, *Computer Applications*:
Lauren Tate

10th Place, *Desktop Publishing*:
Cory Carey, Mark Ellsworth

The awards were part of a comprehensive, competitive events program sponsored by FBLA-PBL. Individuals, state teams, and local chapters were encouraged to compete in any of more than 50 different events representing a wide range of activities focused on business and leadership development. The winners of these highly competitive and prestigious awards were selected from among the organizations’ national and international membership of 250,000 students and advisers, and they represent some of the best and brightest of today’s youth.

Nancy Decker, President of the school, was pleased with the students’ performance. “We went to the conference expecting our students to win again and we weren’t disappointed. We’ve done this well each of the seven years we’ve gone to this competition and our PBL members were very well prepared. We’ve sent students



Cory Carey, Lauren Tate, Mark Ellsworth, Jennifer Lener, Nathan Lilley

to the national competition each year so far and this one was no exception.” LBI’s students earned the right to compete in the national event based on their exceptional performance at the state competition in Harrisburg, PA, April 3-5. Led by their advisers, Jo Anna Meese and Colleen Lancaster, both of whom are LBI graduates and instructors, the following students won on the state level.

1st Place, Desktop Publishing:

Cory Carey, Mark Ellsworth;
Computer Applications: Jennifer Lener;
Word Processing: Lauren Tate;
Network Design: Nathan Lilley,
Mark Ellsworth, Cory Carey

2nd Place, Networking Concepts:

Nathan Lilley;
Computer Applications: Lauren Tate

Meese has coached several of the state and national competitors over the years. She was elated at another strong showing on state and national levels.

“LBI is one of only a few two-year post secondary schools that compete on the state and national levels. There were more than 1700 competitors in attendance at the NLC. LBI students are well prepared and are always confident in their abilities to stand head to head with their competition.

Cory Carey, who took first place at states and tenth place at nationals, had one word about how it felt for him and his colleagues to win. “Awesome.”

We agree. ■

Christopher Decker. . .

Freeman's characters are both diagnosed with cancer. So, they decide to leave the hospital and do things they never got to do—racing hot rods, skydiving, and traveling to far-off destinations.

As I watched that movie, I realized my father hadn't needed a bucket list. In fact, he lived his bucket list. Nothing drove him more than those projects and ideas we've heard and read so much about during the last year, and, really, during the last several decades.

He approached all of these things—whether developing the schools, planting his gardens at home, researching his family history, or finding and collecting antiques or artwork—with purpose and drive. And he brought every facet of his personality to bear on them. He was as strong as he was smart, as compassionate as he was assertive, and as proud as he was quiet about the many, many things he accomplished.

I even asked him shortly before he died

why he didn't brag about some of the things he'd done. His only response was that it would be immodest to do so, and that's what I expected him to say.

Next to family, the most important things to my father were the schools. First LBI, started by him and his wife Nancy in 1985, and then LTI in Sharon and Meadville, PA, which they purchased in 2007.

The long-running story (and occasional joke) was that he decided to open the school because he had trouble finding a good secretary with the proper skills when he was a vice president at Gallatin Bank.

But it was more than that. While the schools showed his interest in training competent professionals, they also reflected his deep belief in people—in the ability to be strong in the face of difficulty, in the strength it takes to start a new path in life, and in the importance of second chances, even when circumstances might dictate otherwise. The theme was always consistent: Seemingly ordinary people

doing extraordinary things.

Even now—whether it's another trophy won by PBL students at a national competition, or the admiration he had for the work of his long-time contractor Charlie Haines who built significant portions of the school in Uniontown—it's not hard to sense the pride he'd have at seeing a job well done.

It's certainly an understatement to say that a man of his character and influence will be sorely missed by family, friends, students, and colleagues for a very long time. But it's also true that a man of his character and influence will stay with us for a very long time to come. And that, perhaps, is his most important accomplishment—a life well lived.

May we all be as blessed. With family and friends. With respect and admiration. With vision and drive. With compassion and dignity. With strength and will. And most of all, with love.

— Jonathan Decker

Congratulations to LBI's 2008 Instructors of the Year

Susan Gessner and Kelly Jo Bedner take the honors



Teaching Specialties:

- Medical programs, including patient care, medical assisting, medical terminology, and anatomy & physiology

Education

- Bachelor's degree in Nursing, Duquesne University
- Master's degree in Elementary Education, California University of Pennsylvania

Susan Gessner



Teaching Specialties:

- Pharmacology, phlebotomy, medical assisting, medical ethics, student success, and pathophysiology

Education

- Diploma, Registered Nurse, Uniontown Hospital School of Nursing
- Bachelor's degree in Nursing, University of Phoenix
- Currently working on a master's degree in Nursing, University of Phoenix

Kelly Jo Bedner



Get good results...

...on a new career as a Medical Laboratory Technician

LBI is starting a new Medical Laboratory Technician program on September 28, 2009. Valerie Bacharach, Director of the Uniontown-based school, noted the promising outlook for newly trained lab technicians and a general shortage of those professionals as primary reasons for starting the program.

“We examined the long-range job outlook for medical lab techs, and we discovered that employment opportunities exist now and will continue to do so, both locally and regionally, for several years.” And the outlook for medical laboratory technicians is strong. According to a May 13 article in the Wall Street Journal, the American Society for Clinical Pathology says job vacancy rates in some states currently top 50%. Furthermore, the federal

government estimates that 138,000 new lab professionals will be needed by 2012 to replace retiring technicians, but only 50,000 will be trained by that time because a third of the training programs at colleges around the country have been closed down.

The program includes a variety of lecture, lab and clinical courses—all designed to give students a thorough practical and academic education in the field of laboratory science. Students in the program will start with courses in medical terminology, biology, chemistry, and algebra (among others) to develop a strong knowledge base in the sciences. Next, they will learn how to perform routine diagnostics, including tests in hematology, bacteriology, urinalysis, immunology, and chemistry. From there, the program turns to practical

application —preparing specimens and using analyzers to generate data on blood, tissues, and fluids by using a variety of methodologies and technologies. Additionally, students will do a clinical rotation in a hospital or other medical facility during their fifth semester.

The school developed the program in conjunction with medical facilities in western Pennsylvania and north-central West Virginia including Uniontown, Excelsa Health, Monongalia General Hospital, Southwest Regional Medical Center, and UPMC Mercy Hospital.

The first class will start September 28, 2009 and graduate May 2011. This initial September class is already partially filled. The program has been approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Private Licensed Schools and by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools. The school is also working on accreditation through the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences. This will allow graduates of the program to sit for their certification through the American Society of Clinical Pathologists.

For more information on this and other specialized associate degree programs at LBI, call the school at 724-439-4900, send an email to admission@laurel.edu, or visit the school’s campus at 11 East Penn Street in downtown Uniontown. ■

In his own words



**LBI graduate
Rich Domonkos**

**tells readers about his
professional life**

Without education, you never know what you’re missing. Everything I accomplished was made possible not only through formal education but also the education life provides.

In 1987, I met with Chris and Nancy Decker, founders of LBI, and they explained their mission: To provide quality education and tools for success. *Success*—that was just what I wanted.

I graduated from LBI in September 1989 with a specialized associate degree in accounting. I was hired the same

year at SuperValu as a payroll clerk, and I finished as a customer service/account specialist in 1997. During that time, I also earned a business management degree from Point Park University.

Soon, I decided to pursue a career in music, and I enrolled at Drum Tech, part of the Trinity College of Music in London, England. After graduation, I landed a position with a country artist and played drums professionally.

After playing drums until 1999, I got a job at Trombino’s Music, but I knew in a week it was not what I wanted. However, this experience opened the door to AT&T, where I worked in sales until 2001. While there, I earned the respect of many local and regional managers, and that put me in the right place for my next experience, Cricket Communications.

I began my career with Cricket in 2001

as a store manager, and in 2003 I was promoted to indirect account manager. This position gave me working knowledge of business that I had been missing, and that’s when I knew what I wanted...my own business.

In 2007, my fiancé and I began looking for a business that would fulfill a need in our community. In 2009, through hard work and dedication, we opened Anytime Fitness, a 24-hour, coed fitness facility franchise.

Like I said in the beginning, without education, you really never know what you’re missing. Without my desire for an education, I never would have set my life in motion and kept it in motion. I am grateful to Chris and Nancy Decker for having the vision and fortitude to realize their dream while setting a benchmark by which other schools are judged. ■

LBI Scholarship winners definitely make the grade

Jason Springer is enrolled as a dual major in Business Administration and Accounting. He is a 2008 graduate of Laurel Highlands where he was a member of the National Honor Society. He is the son of Holbert and Rena Springer and lives in Uniontown, PA. **James Yumin**, a Respiratory Therapy student, is a graduate of Derry Area High School. A resident of Latrobe, he worked in the hospitality industry for 27 years and eventually attained the position of group sales manager before returning to school.

Andrea Lough graduated in 2009 from Mason Dixon Home School where she maintained a 4.0 GPA. Andrea also attended LBI as a Dual Enrollment student where she also maintained a 4.0. A resident of Mt. Braddock, she is the daughter of Thomas and Melissa Lough. **Taylee Haines**, who is enrolled in the Accounting program, graduated from Mapletown High School in 2009. In high school, she was on the honor roll most of her academic career.

Additionally, she was honored as Student of the Month for December 2008 by the Carmichaels Lions Club. A resident of Dilliner, she is the daughter of Troy and Jea Haines. **Brittany Bailey** is enrolled in the Cosmetology and Esthetics programs. She graduated from Albert Gallatin High School in 2009 where she was a member of the art club, interact club, and St. Paul's



(Left to right) : Jason Springer, Taylee Haines, Brittany Bailey, Sara Winter, Andrea Lough, Jim Yumin

youth group. Brittany was also awarded first place for creating the best example of empowering youth and ensuring democracy in the Davis and Davis Law Day bookmark contest. A resident of Uniontown, she is the daughter of Ronald and Rebecca Bailey. **Sara Winter**, an

Office Administration student, graduated from Uniontown High School in 2007. At Uniontown, she was on the honor roll and named to Who's Who Among Students. She is also a work-study student at LBI. A resident of Farmington, she is the daughter of Paul and Betty Winter. ■

PAPSA's Instructor of the Year

Another big award for one of LBI's top instructors

Being named LBI's Instructor of the Year wasn't the only award won by Susan Gessner this year—she was also named PAPSA's 2009 Instructor of the Year at the organization's annual conference in Cranberry, PA on July 23.

PAPSA, the Pennsylvania Association of Private School Administrators, represents more than 320 private career colleges and schools in the state, and their annual Instructor of the Year award is earned by only two career school teachers every year.

Gessner, who was also nominated for the Fayette County Outstanding Teacher Award, was typically humble. "I was surprised by both and felt honored to

have been thought of for the nomination, especially because of the caliber of instructors we have here at LBI. I thought that maybe I would have a chance at the local level, but never really seriously considered that I would be awarded the honor at the state level."

There's some humor too. Gessner notes that her students have a different interpretation of Instructor of the Year—namely that class should let out early and tests should be much easier. Her reply is quick. "No. We must use up every minute of class time, and the teacher of the year would want you to use your brains and really think about the answers!" ■



LBI's January 2009 Graduates



(Left to right)

First row: Danna Miller, Stacey Durst, Kerri Mohar, Angela Hays, Amanda Powell, Amanda Cichocki, Kayla Mikluscak, Megan Reed, Dana Pulice, Paula Works, Sondra Miller
Second row: Billie Jo Grund, Deonna Self, Tina Mickey, Lisa Dorsey, Jessica Angelina, Misty Berry, Renee Durst, Michael Hodgson, LaVetta Lister, Jolene Shawley, Keisha Meadows, Janine Fowler
Third row: Erin Gales, Karla Martin, Amber Durst, Melissa Mitchell, Cassandra Decker, Donna Puhalla, Alisa Reiland, Jeanie Alviar, Heather McKlveen, Kevin Williams, Cindy Williams, Alex Ready, Linda Molek, Jenette Pahula
Fourth row: Sarah Hoferka, Andrea Hardy, Doug Wright, Stefanie Glover, Leann Beatty, Ashley Fedorko, Tanya Harwood, Erica Pierce, Heather Sines, Lonnie McDowell, Ray Repovz, Charles Lanham, Frank Means, Brent LaPorte

LBI's May 2009 Graduates



First row: Angela Wildley, Mary Over, Stephanie Settles, Christina Trybus, Jennafer Hixson, Candy Barron, Haley Swan, Dina Walton, Janee Flower
Second row: Jackie Bankhead, Sherry Rock, Lindsay Hagner, Chandra Sloboda, Stephanie Andernok, Amy Hone, De Ja Dennis, Janice Cotton, Lara Matuch, Mallory Whitaker, Erika Lamp, Nevada Barron
Third row: Leslie Kourpas, Amy Chess, Cynthia Plahs, Nicole Plahs, Rebecca Zeimkowsky, Jessica Williams, Kelly Hoggard, Melanie Hyjurick, Erin Loeffler, Ronye Kaufman, Barbara Frick, Diana McClain, Raquel Dues, Heather Winkelvoss, Loretta Hough
Fourth row: Rebecca Fisher, Ashley Turbi, Cory Over, John Miklos, Nathan Lilley, John Burrell, Michele Collins, Andrea Mihalik