

Brevard College says goodbye to two Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education professors this year, Clyde Carter and John Buford, who are retiring. These two articles, by BC alum Alex Perri, originally appeared in the *Transylvania Times* earlier this month. We reprint them here with permission of Perri and *Times* editor in chief John Lanier.

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Clyde Carter

By Alex Perri
Transylvania Times,
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Educators around the country are returning to their schools for the first time in weeks to carry out the chore of cleaning out their classrooms and offices, unsure of when they'll return after having taught virtually since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

Brevard College professor Clyde Carter said he recently cleared away decades of stuff from his office, but, unlike most, he knows this will be the final clean out.

Carter is retiring this year after 31 years teaching at the college, including as the founding professor of the college's Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education (WLEE) program.

"I'm retiring, so for the last week I've been slowly going in the office and cleaning it out, and sorting through and figuring out what to get rid of, what to keep," he said. "I've found a stack of postcards, back in the days before social media and students would send postcards, saying, 'Hey this is what I'm doing, and this is where I am!' And they're from all over the world and all over the United States."

Carter said he's been slowly going through that stack and thinking back on the many fond memories of his time teaching Wilderness Leadership students.

By the numbers, Carter said he's spent over 600 nights in the outdoors with students, paddled over 2,000 miles of rivers and hiked well over 2,000 miles as a Brevard College professor.

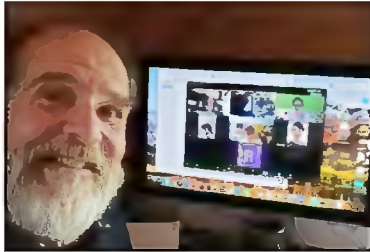
He first came to Brevard to give a Kayaking clinic while he was teaching at Montreat College, and said the son of the college's president at the time, Billy Greer, took the clinic. When Greer came to pick his son up, Carter said, "Hey, Brevard needs an outdoor program! So, there never was a position that was offered, but I kind of created the position, I guess."

Back then, Brevard was a two-year college, and Carter began building the curriculum for what would be what he considers a "trailblazing" program.

"When I was first hired, I was given a desk in the corner of the basketball coach's office, and that's where I was for a year," he said. "Eventually, I got the program going enough to where they gave me a closet for my office. I think it was the closet, where they used to store swimming pool supplies and stuff. And then, eventually, I got big enough to where they gave me one of the duplexes off of the tennis courts there. So, I had a couple of offices and a classroom, and, eventually, we got to Ross Hall, which was awesome."

Ross Hall is a former dormitory at Brevard College. It became its own WLEE-dedicated building, with a kitchen, classrooms and storage space. The building has since been condemned, but the WLEE program is now taking over the campus barn, which used to house the football locker room.

Carter was teaching at Brevard when the school transitioned from a two-year college to a four-year college in 1996 and said it was one of the



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John Buford

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The last time Brevard College professor John Buford retired, he had no plans of slowing down.

The same thing can be said for his second time around as he says goodbye to 11 years of teaching at the school. Buford spent 20 years in the Marine Corps before he began his career as a Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education (WLEE) professor at Brevard College, and now he's moving on to a third career as an author and leadership coach.

Buford grew up in a small farming town in central Illinois and referred to himself as a "flatlander," but said he now thinks of the mountains as his home. He loves Brevard and plans on staying here in retirement and even dying here, though not anytime soon, he adds.

"I've always been an outdoor kind of guy—whitewater paddling and hiking and climbing, (but) really the big thing was leadership development," Buford said. "I've always been interested in leadership development. (I) had a lot of experience training in the Marines, and then was drawn to teaching. I did a lot of teaching in the Marines and it really seemed like a good fit. Even though being a college professor is about teaching, I really consider it about leadership development. That's really what drew me to the WLEE program."

Along with Buford, fellow WLEE professor and WLEE program founder Clyde Carter is also retiring from a long career at the college.

Buford believes the program will thrive with the infusion of new professors.

"Clyde and I are leaving but that's the natural progression of things, and I think really it's well timed," he said. "We're both in a good place, and they're getting a new faculty, new facility, new students. A new freshman class coming in and the new faculty they're looking at are going to be outstanding. I know it has room for growth. It's one of the biggest programs, and I just think it's timeless. Developing leadership and developing teachers are really...it's part of the identity of the college."

Coming from carrying out missions all over the world in the military, to settling with his family in small-town Brevard was quite a transition for him, but Buford said his colleagues made his new job particularly enjoyable.

"I really feel blessed to have worked with many colleagues, but in particular I would just like to note my WLEE colleagues, Dr. Jennifer Kafsky, Robert Dye and, of course, Clyde Carter," he said. "I could not have asked for a better cohort of teammates for the last 10 years—credible teachers and mentors—and I learned so much from them. It was quite a culture shock to go from a Marine Corps infantry to a small liberal arts college. So, they certainly helped me make the transition."

Buford believes strongly in the philosophy of service-based leadership. He's not interested in whether a student is extroverted or introverted, or



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