

# After 52 years on job, BC3's second-longest-serving employee retires

Nov. 23, 2020



Natalie Kitzko, 73, of Butler, the second-longest-serving employee in Butler County Community College history, wears a cutout created by her colleagues as she waves to well-wishers after her final day of work at BC3 on Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. Kitzko worked at BC3 for more than 52 years, most recently as a secretary in the college's Records and Registration office.

(Butler, PA) The second-longest-serving employee in Butler County Community College history walked out of the office for the last time on the afternoon of Friday, Nov. 13, but not one minute before the black arms on the white wall clock above her head signaled 4 o'clock – officially ending a 52-year, four-month and 27-day career.

“They’re still paying me to work,” Natalie Kitzko said, fingers lifting documents, then typing information about transfer credits into a computer at 3:52 p.m.

In the final seconds of a BC3 career that began five months before Richard Milhous Nixon was elected as the nation's 37<sup>th</sup> president, 13 months before Neil Armstrong's left boot disturbed ancient moon dust and 14 months before Grace Slick sang “White Rabbit” to 400,000 at

Woodstock, Natalie Kitzko hugged a chest full of files and left BC3's Records and Registration office.

She turned right in a hallway, toward "the mail room," she said. "This could take awhile."

Kitzko, 73, of Butler, is among BC3 employees eligible this fall to accept an early retirement option.

Her desk Nov. 13 was lined with flowers – in shades of purple, her favorite color – sent by well-wishers and placed near the electric typewriter only she has, the Rolodex with a black-shaded top and faux-paneled sides, and the unopened 100-pack of double-sided, high-density 1.44-megabyte diskettes that, since being cleared of her desk drawers, has drawn gales of laughter from colleagues.



Natalie Kitzko, 73, of Butler, the second-longest-serving employee in Butler County Community College history, is shown in the final hour of her final day of work at BC3 on Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. Kitzko worked at BC3 for more than 52 years, most recently as a secretary in the college's Records and Registration office.

## A direct link to BC3's beginnings

Born in Germany to prisoner-of-war native Ukrainians during World War II, Natalie Stariat would move to Lyndora, graduate from Butler Area Senior High School, attend the first-ever classes BC3 offered in September 1966 and was among its first graduates on June 9, 1968.

Nine days after receiving an associate of applied science degree in secretarial science, she wore a "green and brown checked suit jacket and matching skirt and a white blouse," she said, on her first day of work at BC3 after accepting an offer to become a secretary.

"Natalie," BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer said, "is a direct link back to day one of our college."

"The hardest part," Amy Pignatore, BC3's dean of admissions and the college registrar added about Kitzko, "is all that history walking out the door."

But not before entering those final transfer credits, that last-second trip to the mailroom.

Kitzko "represents that true-blue, western Pennsylvania work ethic," Neupauer said, "as well as that true-blue Pioneer-proud attitude that she's taken to the job for all that time."

## Retirees average 23 years at BC3

Kitzko is among the BC3 employees who have retired this fall or will retire by Dec. 31 as part of early retirement options BC3 made available to eligible employees.

Those workers have served BC3 for an average of 23 years and for a collective 303.

“They have dedicated their lives to making BC3 that No. 1 community college,” Neupauer said of BC3’s selection as the top community college in Pennsylvania five times since 2015. “Ultimately everything these individuals did benefited our No. 1 priority, our students. And I am forever grateful for that.”

The median number of years that workers had been with their current employer as of January was 4.1, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in September. Among specific fields, those in education had the highest median tenure at 5.0 years.

## Most BC3 employees live in Butler County

Retiring employees this fall and through Dec. 31 who have served BC3 more than three decades are Kitzko; Dr. Kathy Wood, professor of humanities and social science, more than 34 years; and Katie Scherder, secretary, Academic Center for Enrichment, nearly 34 years.

Retiring employees who have served BC3 more than two decades are Judy Wadding, professor of humanities and social science, nearly 28 years; Joyce Volland, office support, Business Learning Center, more than 23 years; and Katie Badura-Duke, hospitality coordinator, nearly 21 years.

Others include Amy O’Leary, secretary, Records and Registration, whose desk is next to Kitzko’s, nearly 20 years; Larry Stock, director, BC3 Cultural Center, nearly 19 years; Michelle Jamieson, associate director, BC3 Education Foundation, nearly 17 years; Jim Spafford, custodian, 15 years; Tracy Hack, coordinator of community leadership initiatives, more than 14 years; Pam McCullough, staff accountant, 13 years; and Sally Lehnerd, custodian, 13 years.

All live in Butler County.



Natalie Kitzko, 73, of Butler, left, the second-longest-serving employee in Butler County Community College history, receives an air hug from Fran Larsson in the final hour of Kitzko’s final day of work at BC3 on Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. Kitzko worked at BC3 for more than 52 years, most recently as a secretary in the college’s Records and Registration office. Larsson is also a secretary in BC3’s Records and Registration office.

Seventy-five percent of BC3's 568 full- or part-time employees lived in Butler County in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, according to a 2018 economic impact analysis conducted by Emsi, an Idaho research company that has completed more than 1,800 impact studies for educational institutions since 2000.

BC3 had 569 full- and part-time employees in a 2019-20 fiscal year that ended June 30, said Tina Fleeger, BC3's executive director of human resources/Equal Opportunity compliance officer. Among them are employees BC3 honored in October for service anniversaries and staff members who retired before July 1.



Natalie Kitzko, 73, of Butler, right, the second-longest-serving employee in Butler County Community College history, laughs with Becky Smith after Kitzko's final day of work at BC3 on Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. Kitzko worked at BC3 for more than 52 years, most recently as a secretary in the college's Records and Registration office. Smith is BC3's associate director of Records and Registration.

## College lauds workers for service

Employees recognized for 10 years at BC3 were Whitney Cammisa, campus police dispatcher; John Cortopassi and Chrissy Kendrick, custodians; Bryan Costanzo, campus police officer; Polly Goettler, assistant, finance office; Eva Lowerre, coordinator, Kids on Campus; Dr. Josh Novak, dean, student development; Ruthi Orloski, secretary, BC3 Education Foundation; Ruth Purcell, executive director, BC3 Education Foundation; Melissa Philson, associate professor, humanities and social science; Dr. Deborah Stage, instructor, STEM; and Dr. Karen Stubenbort, associate professor, humanities and social science.

Staff members recognized for 20 years at BC3 were O'Leary; Sean Carroll, director, BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing; Elaine Chuba, secretary, Educational Technology and Nursing and Allied Health; Kim Fish, professor, business; Amy Gallagher, career development coordinator, academic adviser; Dr. Randy Kruger, instructor, Nursing and Allied Health; Becky Smith, associate director, Records and Registration; and Rob Snyder, director, student life.

Employees recognized for 25 years at BC3 were Wadding; Nicole Barnes, purchasing agent; Ashlee Esplen, professor, Nursing and Allied Health; Steve Joseph, dean, humanities and social science; and Karen Riethmiller, professor, STEM.

Staff members recognized for 30 years at BC3 were David Moser, associate professor, humanities and social science; and Dr. Melinda Ripper, professor, STEM.

Dick Hartung, assistant professor, humanities and social science, was recognized for 35 years at BC3, as were those who retired before June 30: Nancy Atwell, secretary, Adult Literacy program; Kevin Loomis, foreman, maintenance; Judy McGarrah, receptionist, information center; and John Suesser, director, BC3 @ LindenPointe.

All except seven live in Butler County.



## 52 years, four months and 27 days “went fast”

Kitzko on her last day at BC3 wore a white shirt, black slacks and a leather jacket.

“It went fast,” Kitzko said. “One day it was my first day and now it’s my last day and it doesn’t seem like I’ve been here that long.”

On Nov. 16, three days after Kitzko’s retirement, after she and officemate O’Leary received air hugs, waves of goodbye and applause from colleagues outside BC3’s Records and Registration office, BC3’s longest-serving employee, David Huseman, a professor of humanities and social science, began the second day of the third month of his 53rd year of employment at BC3.

Butler residents Natalie Kitzko, 73, left, the second-longest-serving employee in Butler County Community College history, and Amy O’Leary, 65, wear each other’s cutouts created by their colleagues on their final day of work at BC3 on Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. Kitzko and O’Leary were secretaries in the college’s Records and Registration office. Kitzko worked for BC3 for 52 years and O’Leary, for nearly 20.