

# St. Luke's Miners' Longest Serving Employee on Record

The Nurse Is Celebrating Three 50-year Milestones.

By Sam Kennedy

On January 6, 2025, Betty Benulis, RN, will celebrate a half-century of employment at St. Luke's Miners Campus, a milestone that no other employee of the Coaldale hospital is known to have reached.

She admits, she wouldn't have predicted spending 50 years at any job but isn't surprised she's achieved it at St. Luke's, which has managed the hospital since 2000, or half of her tenure there.

"Time goes fast, and I like my work," said Benulis, 71 and a long-time resident of New Philadelphia, Schuylkill County.

She found her niche caring for the sick and recovering patients as a proud member of the nation's most trusted profession and never second-guessed her decision. And it doesn't faze her that she has been employed at the Miners hospital longer than some of her coworkers have been on Earth.



"When I graduated from Nativity BVM High School, in Pottsville, in 1971, my father told me I could go to college to become a teacher or to nursing school to become a nurse," she recalls. She soon left the coal town, where she was born and raised, to attend Allentown's Sacred Heart Hospital's School of Nursing.

"It had a really good reputation," she said. "When I came out, in 1974, I was well-prepared."

After graduating, she returned to Schuylkill County, following a brief stint at the Hamburg Center, which had treated persons with physical and mental disabilities since 1960 but closed in 2018.

Benulis really reached her stride at Miners, serving on general medical-surgical units, then the ICU, which she managed. Working part time for a period, she and her husband, whom she married in 1974, raised their three sons.

Later, after moving into cardiology, she proudly helped introduce several innovations in heart diagnostic technology, one of them assisting the cardiologist and radiology technologist in performing the first nuclear stress tests at the hospital in the early 1990s. "It was nice seeing how patients benefitted from these advancements," she said.

She finds the evolution of information technology most fascinating, especially for patient records charting using the Epic platform. "There's all that information right at your fingertips," she says. "It's instantaneous and nice!"

In 1996, Benulis started working in the hospital's cardiac rehab unit. She has been employed since 2012 in the cardiopulmonary rehab unit, where patients go to recover from a heart attack, cardiac bypass or valve surgery or find hope living with heart failure, lung conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, pulmonary fibrosis and peripheral vascular disease.

"I feel good that I can help people," she says, observing that, "lots of the patients of my age come there." She works part-time, appreciating the flexibility of having more time to spend with her husband, wit□

Coincidentally, another half-century celebration occurred in October – the Sacred Heart Hospital School of Nursing Homecoming – where Benulis joined some of the surviving alums from her nursing school class on Oct. 19 for a reunion dinner at the Lehigh Valley Hotel, in Bethlehem, marking 50 years since graduation in 1974.

"Three of our graduating class are still working," she noted, adding that 41 of the original 48 graduates are still alive.

With five decades of experiences, wisdom and memories as a nurse to reflect on, Benulis says she would do it all again at St. Luke's Miners Campus. And she would encourage graduate nurses to blaze their own paths in the profession that she has served and that has served her so well, in return.

"As a nurse, you can get experiences in many different areas, treating patients with different diseases," she said. "You can work five years or 50 years, and it will be challenging but also very rewarding."

## St. Luke's Miners Campus Timeline

1910 – Founded as Panther Creek Valley Hospital  
1919 – Hospital transferred to state control  
1973 – New hospital building dedicated  
2000 – Miners Memorial Medical Center joins St. Luke's and becomes St. Luke's Miners Campus

