

# kim. ritz

## MCC alumna's career path was inspired by personal circumstances

**K**im Ritz's family inspired her to become a nurse, specializing in cardiac care.

With 31 years of experience, Ritz is the practice manager at Spectrum Health United Hospital Heart and Vascular Center in Greenville.

As a little girl, Ritz said she would watch her grandfather check his pacemaker with a probe on his finger and call in the information over the telephone.

"That always inspired me," she said. "I remember thinking that I had to live in the hospital and take care of people, that's what I wanted to do."

Ritz attended Grand Valley State University for one year before enrolling at Montcalm Community College (MCC) in 1986. She completed her training and became a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) in 1987 and a Registered Nurse (RN) in 1988.

She said after her first year in the university setting, she appreciated the one-on-one instruction she experienced at MCC.

"I had relationships with my instructors," Ritz said. "I have actually run into a few of them throughout my career. I remember them, and they remember me. When I had questions, I could sit down and talk with them."

"I still see some of my nursing student friends, too. It's just awesome to be able to have people who you create these bonds with that last a lifetime," she added.

Early in her career, Ritz worked as an acute care nurse and in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at

Ionia Hospital before moving on to what is now Spectrum Health.

"I met my husband, Jerry, while I was caring for his little brother, Jimmy, who was a cardiac cripple," Ritz said. She has a daughter who is Type 1 diabetic, so she understood the special needs that are required to manage the health care of patients with a serious illness. She and Jerry became Jimmy's legal guardians and cared for him for 13 years until he passed away in 2012. She said that experience was another inspiration for her.

"I think I went into cardiology because of him" Ritz said. "Through the years, I saw him struggle and fight for his health."

Ritz worked in Grand Rapids for about 20 years until Jimmy became so ill that she needed to find a position closer to her home in Greenville in order to continue providing the level of care he needed.

"I ended up working weekends only in the ER at United Hospital in Greenville," she said. "One day, I received a phone call from one of the practice managers who worked for the cardiologists that I had worked with in Grand Rapids. She knew I lived in Greenville, and asked if I would be interested in heading up the Heart and Vascular Center here in Greenville. I began working part-time in the office as a nurse at the same time I was working in the ER. In May 2012, we moved inside the hospital and created a brand new Heart and Vascular Center."

The center provides stress tests, non-invasive procedures, an outpatient clinic and inpatient consults.

"We are really a mini heart center here in Greenville," she said.

Ritz was instrumental in creating a TEE cardioversion program in Greenville, which entails scopes that go down patients throats to look at the back of their heart and uses paddles to convert them to a regular rhythm. The hospital Foundation granted funds to start a program in Greenville two years ago.

"Jimmy had to go to Grand Rapids for these tests all of the time," she said. "I made a promise to him before he died that I was going to work to make these things available closer to home."

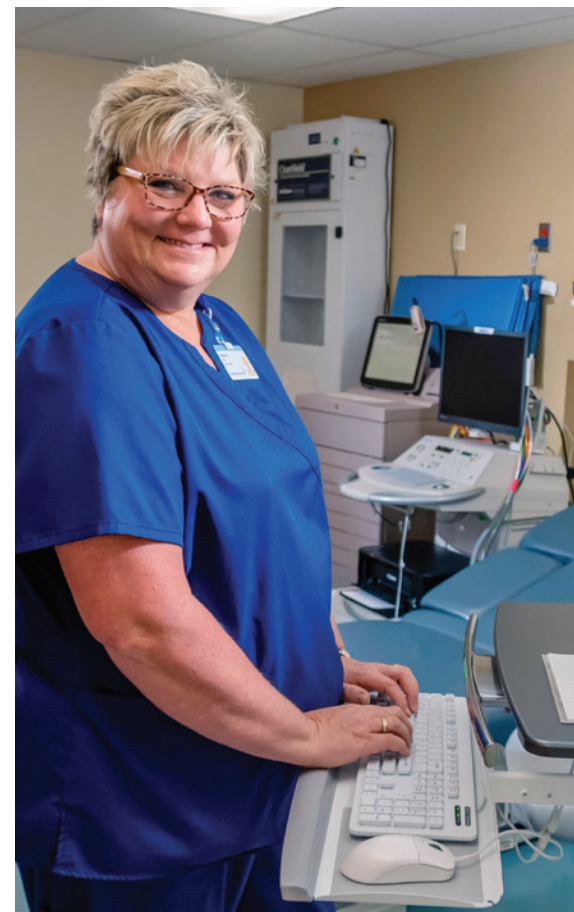
Ritz was honored in 2016 as Employee of the Year for Spectrum Health Cardiovascular Medicine - Greenville, for excellence in professionalism, integrity, customer service, teamwork, cooperation, judgment, dependability, initiative and work performance.

She appreciates the recognition and said the accomplishment she is most proud of "is just being a nurse."

When she isn't working, Ritz enjoys spending time with her family and grandchildren at their cottage on the lake creating flower gardens, and volunteering for special needs children and adults at local events. Her family also attends the Special Olympics each summer as coaches and medical staff and supports their daughter, Sarah, who has Type 1 diabetes, by raising funds and walking each year for a cure.

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— MCC Alumna



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