

'What's **stopping** me now?'

Julie DeJohn finds support at MCC as a new student

By Shelly Springborn

Julie DeJohn returned to Montcalm Community College over the summer to finish what she started nearly 30 years ago, and a new program gave her the confidence she needed to be successful.

As a new student, DeJohn was paired with a conductor through the MCC Express Conductor Program. Conductors aim at helping students feel comfortable throughout their college journey so they get the most out of their college experience.

"I'm glad I took my first classes over the summer. It really did prepare me for fall because it was so fast paced," DeJohn said. "I had to be committed to getting my homework done and learning how to balance life, work and school."

DeJohn attended Kent Skills Center out of high school where she earned a certificate in the medical secretary program. Working full-time, she went on to study business at Davenport University, but as she and her husband started their family, she was unable to finish her degree and those credits no longer were valid.

In addition to having not been a student for many years, DeJohn was also learning how to use new technology while taking online classes.

"I have to give credit to the staff at MCC. I could not be more proud of the college and how they did things," she said. "I never felt alone, even though I was at home."

"I wasn't sure how I would do having not been in school for so long. My instructors were fabulous. They share their personal stories and make you feel like you're really connected," she said.

"The conductors were there for me, too. Even if I didn't need their support, I knew they were there," she said. "It gave me a lot of confidence knowing I had that support."

The 55-year-old from Stanton said she hadn't really planned to return to college, but started to think about it when her children started making college visits.

"When we started making college visits I thought, I wish I could have experienced this," she said. "Once they were involved in college, I saw how much they were learning and thought about how much I missed learning."

DeJohn said with three children in college, she just couldn't go into debt to pursue her own college education. However, when she heard about the Michigan Reconnect program, she thought she would take a chance and apply. The program is for Michigan residents aged 25 or older who have obtained a high school diploma or equivalent but have not earned a college credential. It helps pay the costs of tuition or training for eligible adults who want to pursue an associate degree or skills certificate.

"I applied for Michigan Reconnect and was accepted," she said.

DeJohn has worked as an accounting assistant at a local family-owned business for 22 years, and is now taking classes at MCC to earn an associate degree in accounting.

"My kids are in college and getting ready to graduate soon," she said. "When I received the scholarship, I thought what's stopping me now?"

"It all fell into place," she said. "I learned that your dreams can come true if you try." ■



MCC student Julie DeJohn of Stanton, at left, appreciates the support she has received through the MCC Express Conductor Program. The program is headed by Director of Student Success & Advising Lisa Gardner.