

# 'A leap of faith'

*Justine Bollinger fulfills her passion for helping others through nursing*

By Lexie Barnwell

**J**ustine Bollinger's love for children led her down a winding path to help them.

Like many teenagers, the Stanton-area resident didn't really know what she wanted to do when she graduated from Central Montcalm High School in 2004. But, she knew college was going to be part of her journey, so she began taking classes at Montcalm Community College.

In 2007, she decided to take "a leap of faith" and began MCC's accelerated nursing program to become a Registered Nurse (RN). She made the decision just in time as that was the last year the accelerated program was offered.

"When I was in the accelerated nursing program at MCC, I had no real-world experience. I did well, but others that worked as CNA's or in medical settings before or while going through the program had that extra knowledge and hands-on experience that really helped them," Bollinger said.

She explained that real-world experience is important in the medical field because there is only so much to be learned from books and lectures, adding that the lessons learned in the clinical setting helped her as she continued her education.

"After finishing up at MCC, I worked for several years in different hospital settings, but wasn't quite where I wanted to be yet," Bollinger said. "So, I went back to school."

Bollinger received her bachelor's degree from Ohio University online and then went on to complete her master's degree at Maryville University in their online Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program.



Throughout her career she has worked in the hospital setting in the Medical Surgical Unit, the Intensive Care Unit, Post-partum Care, Labor and Delivery, as a Hospital Supervisor and now as an FNP in a private practice.

"It's important for people going in to nursing to realize the endless career possibilities this degree offers," Bollinger said. "I've already worked in several different positions and have enjoyed each for different reasons. If you get bored of one avenue, go back to school like I did or just move on to the next."

Bollinger is an FNP at Dr. Willis Gaffney's office in Stanton. While she loves working with patients of any age, her time in labor and delivery and her current position fulfill her love of working with children.

"Watching a mother bring her child into the world or simply helping a child feel better is one of the most rewarding experiences," she said. "That's why I love the nursing field." ■