

Chemistry instructor **returns** to her roots

MCC alumna Sara Rittersdorf believes all students can be successful with the right support

By Lexie Barnwell

Although she was recently hired at Montcalm Community College, Chemistry Instructor Sara Rittersdorf has been working toward a career here since she was a dual enrollment student in 2005.

During her high school years, she worked in the chemistry labs and tutored students at MCC all while completing her high school and dual enrollment courses.

She said her time as an MCC student set her up for success in her future endeavors. Instructors like retired Chemistry Instructor Scott Smith, and Biology Instructors Michelle Gibson and Heather Wesp were valuable to her growth before transferring to Michigan Technological University (Michigan Tech) and beyond.

"MCC is where my roots all started," she said.

Rittersdorf has a minor in math, a bachelor's in chemistry, and a secondary teaching certificate from Michigan Tech. She then went on to earn a Master of Arts in Science Education from Western Michigan University.

Her many years of education and experience in high school and middle school settings have prepared Rittersdorf for a career as a college instructor. Some of her favorite memories of teaching are being able to cater to her students' different learning styles. She explained that at times, she has taught the same students a subject three different ways so that each student is able to learn the subject matter to the best of their ability. She believes that all students can be successful given the right support.

It is evident in Rittersdorf's teaching style and personal life that continuous learning is extremely important to her. Although she had planned on only getting one master's degree, she said that "life throws you curve balls and you deal with it. It is okay to keep learning – so whether it be applied statistics, early childhood development, a board game or a skilled trade, keep learning!"

In December, she will be completing a second master's degree in Applied Statistics from Michigan Tech.

In the future, Rittersdorf hopes to establish an elementary outreach organization in collaboration with the community to fuel young students' interest in STEM learning. She explained that there are some incredible opportunities to bring STEM learning environments to the primary and secondary aged children in our community.

"Never be stagnant in your growth, because you will be amazed at what you can do when you persevere," she said. ■

Megan Hunt of Sheridan, at left, works on a lab project with assistance from Chemistry Instructor Sara Rittersdorf.

