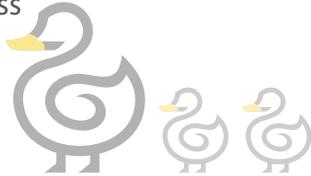


Find your **passion**

Jennifer Fike is studying business entrepreneurship at MCC to help her grow her business



By Shelly Springborn

Jennifer Fike didn't expect to find her passion as an agricultural entrepreneur, but the discovery leaves her "just ducky" most days.

The 27-year-old Sheridan-area resident, who had been dual-enrolled at Montcalm Community College when she attended Central Montcalm High School, found her way back to MCC in fall 2020.

"I started at MCC when I was in high school. Originally, I was going to go into teaching. I took some classes and realized that wasn't for me," Fike said. "I ended up taking a few classes, then I had some life events happen and I dropped out for a few years."

When COVID hit, the business she worked at was not open, leaving Fike wondering what she was going to do.

"I wanted to start a business, but I didn't really know where to start," she said. "So, I decided to go back to college."

At the time, she lived an hour from MCC, but the college's online classes were a perfect fit as she pursues an associate degree in business entrepreneurship.

"Everyone at MCC was really encouraging, which made my decision a lot easier," she said.

Although she eventually relocated to the Sheridan area, Fike said continuing her coursework online has given her the flexibility she needs to work while she builds her business.

In addition to working at a local restaurant, Fike owns and operates Vosika Farms, where she raises ducks, makes goat milk soap and natural skin care products and is getting started with vegetable production. She sells her products, which also includes eggs from her ducks, at local farm markets. Currently, she is working toward becoming licensed to sell her food products to a local restaurant that specializes in farm-to-table dining options.



Business and Accounting Instructor Bill Bishop, right, is one of Jennifer Fike's instructors at Montcalm Community College.

"I love being back in college. All the information I am learning has already helped me change my path on my business," Fike said.

Since establishing Vosika Farms in 2020, Fike has expanded her duck production.

"This whole thing started with four ducks that I bought at Tractor Supply Company because I was sad," Fike said. "This all started out as my hobby. It was sort of here's my ducks and here's my garden. I like having my own fresh eggs and vegetables."

When friends began asking her "when are you going to get cool ducks?" Fike realized she didn't know there were varieties other than the meat ducks she had purchased. She found a species of ducks that were more fitting for her – Call ducks are a bantam breed of domestic duck which look similar to other duck breeds, but are smaller in size. They

are very friendly and make excellent pets. In spring 2021, she hatched her first ducklings.

Now, Fike has about 40 ducks, and is researching how to become licensed to sell them nationwide through live shipments. She also has a dream of opening a duck “halfway house” where she would take in unwanted domestic ducks and provide a home for them. She also is pondering whether she could offer domestic duck owners a service where she would take their ducks over the winter to provide a safe and healthy environment for them, while their owners could take them back in the spring.

“One thing I have realized is that many people don’t have a place to keep their ducks over the winter, but they don’t want to get rid of them, either,” Fike said.

Accounting and Business Instructor Bill Bishop is one of Fike’s instructors at MCC.

“Owning your own business can be very rewarding, both personally and financially,” Bishop said. “We are blessed to live in such a great country with endless opportunities for entrepreneurs, and Jennifer is a perfect example of someone pursuing those dreams.”

Because small businesses come from varying industries in all shapes and sizes, Bishop said MCC’s business entrepreneurship program purposefully allows flexibility for students regardless of their interests.

“Whether the student has an interest in agricultural products and services, owning a metal working or welding shop, personal service, food service, retail, or many other industries, the tools we deliver in the

program will make them a better operator and business owner,” Bishop said.

“Entrepreneurs often have a great idea doing something they love, yet have difficulty putting the pieces in place for a successful plan of action,” he said. “These issues may involve marketing, financing, developing contacts, effectively tracking the business activities, and creating an actual business plan that is realistic and will work.”

MCC’s entrepreneurship program addresses all these elements of starting a business, with the overall goal being to give students the skills and confidence needed to successfully follow their dreams.

“One day down the road, my work will pay off, even if I don’t make a profit,” Fike said. “It’s about starting my business and learning from it.”

“Through my coursework so far, I have learned that making one-on-one connections and providing excellent customer service is a key to success,” Fike said. “Of all the things I have learned from my journey, don’t get into business just to make a profit. Find your passion. When you start making a profit, you know you are doing well.” ■

For more information

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Jennifer Fike raises Call ducks, which make excellent pets.

