

Enjoying the pool at MCC

is part of Kathy VanSickler's routine

By Renae Gould

What started as a way to exercise and bond with friends turned into a routine for Kathy VanSickler, 77, of Vestaburg.

Now she's a "regular" at Montcalm Community College's Recreation & Fitness Center, on the college's Sidney campus.

"I come for the pool," she said. "I enjoy swimming. I started back in the early 2000s, coming with co-workers from school."

VanSickler would come in the evenings after work, but since she retired in 2004 from Vestaburg Public Schools, she now comes to MCC at 7 a.m., five days a week. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, she swims her short one-mile route, going the horizontal length of the pool. That's followed up by water aerobics. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she swims her long one-mile route, going the vertical length of the pool. Again, she follows that with water aerobics.

"I like to get everything in by 9 a.m., head home, and enjoy the rest of my day," she said.

At the time she started using MCC's pool, she came because it was an inexpensive way to stay in shape.

"I like water," VanSickler said. "I grew up on the water."

Originally from Howell, VanSickler attended Central Michigan University and graduated with a bachelor of science in education. She met her husband of 55 years at CMU. After she graduated, she started teaching in Vestaburg. Her husband went into the Army for the Vietnam War, and when he got back, he was a student teacher at Vestaburg.

She ended her 28-year career at Vestaburg teaching fifth grade. Over the years, she taught second grade, a second-third-grade combination, adults, and helped in the preschool.

"I took some time off to raise my kids," VanSickler said. "Then, I went back to teaching at Vestaburg."

She and her husband have one son and two daughters. Her son lives in North Carolina, one daughter lives in a northwest suburb of Chicago, Ill., and the other daughter lives in Vestaburg. Both of her daughters are in education, with one

teaching at Montabella Community Schools. She has 10 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

In her years using MCC's pool, she became friends with Lifeguard Sandy Warner.

"She made it fun," VanSickler said. "She went on some road trips with me to visit my kids."

She continues to come to MCC because the pool is clean, the temperature is consistent, and the price is right. She is part of the SilverSneakers® program, through which seniors aged 65 or older may enroll for fitness center memberships at no cost through select Medicare plans.

"I like the people who work there and the people who come," she said. "We have formed quite a friendship."

MCC Auxiliary Services Coordinator Jessa Michaels said VanSickler is a joy to be around.

"Kathy is consistently here five days a week," Michaels said.

"She swims a mile in the pool every morning before water aerobics. That's 36 laps! She then does water aerobics and when the teacher isn't here, she takes it upon herself to teach the class for the other students. She always stops at the desk to say 'hello' and she always has a smile on her face and a happy, cheerful attitude. This place wouldn't be the same without her here!"

In her spare time, VanSickler enjoys playing golf, traveling, playing cards, being with friends, and attending sporting events. She and her husband are Detroit Lions season ticket holders. ■

