MCC retirees return to help students succeed

Monroe Community College’s “Retirees: Advocates for Education” Program

by Janet Ekis, College Relations Specialist, Monroe Community College

Thirty-three year old Sandra Rogers, a native of Liberia, enjoys her work with the elderly residents of a local nursing home. She began taking MCC courses a few years ago without declaring a major. However, Rogers eventually decided to build upon her easy rapport with the people she cares for and pursue a nursing career. That decision was a monumental one. “I suddenly knew why I was here,” she said.

Rogers also knew she would have to conquer math and chemistry – two subjects that she’s never considered strengths. That’s when she signed up for tutoring through MCC’s “Retirees: Advocates for Education” program and began to work with Professor Emeritus John Cullen.

Professor Cullen spent more than 20 years teaching chemistry at MCC. After retiring in 2006, he decided to return and resume a part of his career he’d always loved: helping students learn. These days, he spends part of two days a week tutoring them in chemistry and lower-level math courses. “The students are eager,” he said. “They want to be there. Their enthusiasm makes the experience rewarding – rewarding and fun.”

Last year, 13 MCC retirees-turned-college volunteers helped more than 100 students from 23 different programs. They proctored tests for students with disabilities, coached non-native English speaking students in conversation and led 356 one-on-one and small group tutoring sessions.

“I wouldn’t have passed chemistry without Professor Cullen’s help,” said Rogers. “I have a lot of responsibilities outside of school. It’s hard. But I have more confidence now. I’m a different person – a more determined one.”