

# MICHIANA *Life*

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SUMMER 2015

# Why I LOVE Michiana

Story by Scott Novak | Photography by Craig Hauptert



## England-born community college leader enjoys the amenities of southwest Michigan

**I**n 1995, Barbara Craig turned a two-week temporary job at Lake Michigan College into a career.

Barbara, who hails from Kindlington, Oxfordshire in England, had just received her green card and was looking for a job. She answered an ad for a temp job at the college, and from there she worked her way up to being the executive dean at the LMC Bertrand Crossing campus near Niles.

In late May, after living here 20 years, Barbara officially became an American citizen, and continues to follow her passion of helping young adults pursue their dreams.

### **ML: What brought you to Michiana?**

BC: I was teaching English in Europe and my (future) husband, who is from Stevensville, was having a European experience. I was not looking for a Michigan boy. We spent some time in Europe and we went back and forth several times and finally we said, 'Let's just be here for a couple of years.' And those couple of years turned into 20.

### **ML: Why have you stayed?**

BC: The lake is pretty attractive, but there is no doubt the college is why I stayed. I fell into a really cool organization. I just really like southwest Michigan. There is room to breathe and there are good people. It is mostly the good people. I learned the value of being around good people when I came to southwest Michigan.

### **ML: What is your favorite part of your job?**

BC: This is my favorite time of year right now. It is spring, which means we are close to commencement. This is the time of year when we take stock and reflect and see so many stories of success.

Lake Michigan College students are so diverse and come from so many different places, and they are going so many different places. Sometimes they find themselves along the way. Hands down, the best part of my job is seeing people realize that they can, and then they do it.

One of the really fun things about being in education is seeing how much it is changing. The kids have changed over the years. We have all these bright young people who are going to do great things in their life. They are on their way to achieve a lot of things and to make their communities better.

### **ML: What is your favorite Michiana-related memory?**

BC: Every year there is a 5K run. The ones that are for a cause like the Lory's Place 5K run. To see 1,000 people come out to race for one organization was special. The first time I ran it I felt like the whole world was there. It did not matter where you were from or how many degrees you had, it just seemed like everyone came out to support this one thing.

Another one is the Summer My Way program. It was an idea Mark Weber (of the Niles-Buchanan YMCA) and Nancy Studebaker (with the Niles District Library) had and they got 25 organizations together. All these kids were able to have an educational summer camp experience. I think that is a testament to the power of good people. That is a community working together for the good of everybody.