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MCC instructor is passionate about lifelong learning

Scott Smith's goal as an instructor is to instill a lifelong learning mentality in his students.

"The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know," said Smith, who has taught chemistry at Montcalm Community College since 1999. "If I can instill the desire to always be in a learning mode in my students, then my time teaching is not in vain."

Smith said he has always been a curious person and that's why he chose science.

"I have found that most students also have this curious nature, which makes my teaching philosophy simple: let's learn, have fun and grow together," he said.

"I realized early on that not all students enjoy chemistry as much as I do, so I tend to do a lot of chemical and physical demonstrations," he added. "For those who only need a single chemistry course, my hope is that they will at least recognize how amazing our natural world is and that we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made.'"

Smith's love of learning started when he was a child.

"Both of my parents were teachers, so, of course, I didn't want to be one," he said.

Smith's mother, Jacalyn Smith, taught kindergarten at Carrie Knause Elementary, now called Carrie Knause Early Childhood Learning Center, in St. Louis, and his father, the late Kenneth Smith, taught natural science courses at MCC for 40 years.

"When I was young, dad was always going to school," he said. "He spent two years doing summer research at the University of Michigan Biological Station and our family stayed there. I made a lot of friends with kids of other professors, and we got into a lot of harmless trouble collecting insects, bothering bats, looking for black widow spiders, which do exist in Michigan, and many other scientifically-oriented activities.

"My father inspired me to become a teacher," he added. "I wanted to do something else, but he kept saying, 'You would make a great teacher,' and eventually I decided he was right."

Smith started his career as a microbiologist and was promoted to the position of senior technologist in charge of the department.

"After three years, I found this to be too much administrative work and decided to obtain the Michigan Teacher Certification," he said.

Smith is currently teaching Physical Science, Survey of General Chemistry and College Chemistry courses, all of which include hours in the science laboratory.

He earned an Associate of Arts and Sciences from MCC, a Bachelor of Science in Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics from Central Michigan University, a Master of Arts in Chemical Education from Western Michigan University and is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Pharmacology and Toxicology at Michigan State University.

Smith is a member of the American Chemical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the MCC Faculty Council, the MCC Curriculum Committee and the MCC Faculty Sabbatical/Fellowship Committee, of which he serves as chairperson.

He resides in Alma with his wife, Kathy. They have two children, Jodi and Matt.