

# Andrea Puskas brings history, social science to life at MCC



By Shanika P. Carter

**A**ndrea Puskas always had a love for museums and history, but she never knew it was something she could have a career in.

"I knew I wanted to do something with history, and even though I had gone to museums, I never thought of museums being an option to me for a career until I went off to college," she said.

In her new role as a full-time social science instructor at Montcalm Community College, Puskas can now help others learn about history.

Puskas grew up in Pierson and graduated from Tri-County High School in 2007. She began her connection with MCC as a dual-enrolled student. Upon earning her associate degree from MCC, Puskas transferred to Central Michigan University (CMU) where she obtained a bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology with a minor in museum studies and history, as well as a master's degree in cultural resource management with a focus on museum studies, and she cross-trained in archeology public history.

While at CMU, Puskas worked at the university's museum, specializing in collections management. This entailed carrying, handling, and researching artifacts and museum collections. She also interned at the campus's Clarke Historical Library and the Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth, NH. It was there where Puskas had the task of processing an extensive historical wallpaper collection of 500 pieces from the 1700s to about the 1950s, which she describes as a fascinating experience.

It was her plan to move to New England to find a job at a history museum, but she and her high school sweetheart of 11 years, now her husband, decided to stay in the area to be closer to family. Realizing there was not much in the area in relation to

working with museums, Puskas started working as an adjunct instructor at MCC in 2019 and fell in love with teaching.

Primarily focusing on courses related to the American political system and social issues, Puskas also serves as part of the college's Co-Curricular Committee and is assisting with bringing back a stronger presence of history to the campus. In addition, she is serving as a club advisor and is working to establish a history and culture club at the college.

Puskas embraces hands-on experiences both in and out of the classroom.

"My classrooms are places of active learning. I want my students to be just as responsible for creating the knowledge in the class as I am," said Puskas. "I feel the more engaging the lesson is, the better my students are going to be able to connect to it."

Puskas also wants her students to see themselves in history, knowing that history belongs to them, and recognizing the various diverse groups on campus including women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community.

"Over the past semester, I have been working at diversifying the primary sources I have my students use, so we are bringing in those diverse historical voices," she said.

"There is a lot of potential here at MCC, so I just want to try to bring some of those exciting opportunities for our students," she said. ■