t age 30, Montcalm Community College alumna Rachel Gilbert was a homeless, unemployed single mother of three young children. Today she is Director of Nursing at SKLD (Skilled) Medical Residence in Ionia.

success, she said, was nancial support. On the verng c0CM.//ki2 36 497C\(\text{a}\)mg9i7TEMC /\(\text{a}\)t MCC helped her rise from one of the lowest moments in

her life to build a successful career that she shares with her partner, Dan, and their four children.

"All I could think was what was I going to do," she said.

With limited work experience, she feared she would be stuck in a dead-end job, struggling to survive and provide for her family.

"The thought of returning to school scared me to death," she said, "partly because I struggled with a learning disability and partly because of the cost."

She said these were some of the circumstances she had to overcome, and she did so through sheer determination, motivation, positive self-thought and a desire to achieve

something more.

"Some downr got me said. "S nding support that pe call whand will

"Sometimes it was downright grit that got me through," she said. "Second was nding an emotional support system – that person I could call when I was down and who I celebrated with, too. The third key was invested instructors."

Gilbert told stories of instructors who stayed after class to provide her extra assistance, shared lunch with her and allowed her to bring her kids to class. The nal key to success, she said, was nancial support.

"I had federal grants. I took out multiple loans, and it wasn't enough," she said. "I remember the rst time I applied for an MCCF scholarship. I nearly didn't II out the application, not because of what I lacked but because I didn't want to fail."

Gilbert said to help overcome her fears, she was determined to set a good example for her children.

"I lled out and turned in the scholarship form, thinking the worst that could happen is I would be told no," she said.

When she received notication that she was selected to receive a scholarship "I literally jumped," she said. "I couldn't believe a scholarship was awarded to me. I was a person they didn't know, they had never laid eyes on, and they invested in me... It didn't matter if I had to skip a meal, sleep in my car or on a classroom oor. It just mattered that I could be successful."

During her time at MCC, Gilbert was the recipient of several MCCF scholarships. She earned a Pre-nursing Certicate with high honors from MCC in 2013 and an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing with high honors from MCC in May 2015 and continued her education at Davenport University, where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2017.

Gilbert supports e orts for continued education in her workplace and is a member of the Nursing and Health Careers Advisory Committee at MCC.