A rocking chair had little appeal for two successful retirees who, after chalk ing up more than 62 years collectively in stimulating careers, signed up to volunteer at Manatee Community College (MCC).

A celebrated full-time professor for three-plus decades, John James produced or directed more than 160 plays and chaired the MCC theatre department. Barbara Jagielo, R.N., was a nursing department chair at an Ohio community college. Both call on a wealth of knowledge in their respective fields to accomplish the same goal — help MCC students succeed.

While John teaches as an adjunct and occasionally directs plays, his main duties these days are apt to include selling tickets, working backstage, hanging panels or vacuuming the carpet in the new Howard Studio Theatre.

“Whatever needs to be done, I will do it,” said John, adding: “I particularly enjoyed organizing an archive to preserve the department’s history.”

Barbara enjoys student interaction. Soon after she and her husband retired to Longboat Key, the high-energy woman made an offer to MCC: “Here I am,” she said. “What can I do?”

Now in her second year at MCC, she encourages and mentors Level 1 nursing students, participates in classes, tests and labs — even consents to be poked and prodded as a willing patient to help students learn nurse-patient interaction skills.

“I learn something new every day,” said Barbara. Next spring, Barbara will see “her” first class of students graduate. “Students are our future. If we help them balance theory with caring and nurturing, patients will be in good hands,” said Barbara.

John and Barbara are in the vanguard of MCC’s new volunteer program, established by MCC President Dr. Lars Hafner to tap into the area’s reservoir of talent to benefit both appreciative students and volunteers who enjoy a stimulating campus environment.

Volunteer opportunities are available at MCC’s Bradenton, Lakewood Ranch and Venice locations. Opportunities include answering phones, tutoring, assisting in labs, helping in the library, bookstore, registration office, and at athletic, theatre and art events.

“We welcome volunteers of all ages,” said Judy Wishart, volunteer services, adding: “Volunteers at MCC have virtually unlimited opportunities to keep learning while contributing to the future.”

Want to know more? Call 941-752-5208.

mccfl.edu/Volunteer

Volunteer Barbara Jagielo, front, with several MCC nursing students.