

MEMBER PROFILE

MARIE BJERKE

My name is Marie Bjerke and I am the Secretary for the BCBSM Retiree Association. My career at BCBSM began in June 1971 as a temporary employee assignment for two weeks while an employee was on vacation. I never left. I had just graduated from college and gotten married, but wasn't sure where we would end up since my husband had to complete his student teaching and was then looking for a teaching position. I stayed on at BCBSM and never regretted it for a minute. My temporary assignment was in Human Resources and that is where I remained for 35 years.



I started in what is now Benefits Administration and from there moved to Recruitment. There I filled internal positions through the job posting process, as well as conducting external recruitment for nonexempt positions. It was during this time that BCBSM was growing by leaps and bounds and it was nothing to fill 30-35 positions a week for clerical, pricing, membership and billing and customer service positions. From Recruitment I went to Employee/Labor Relations. This was prior to the organization of the Detroit office by the UAW.

The Detroit location, along with several other smaller previously organized locations, had their first combined negotiations in 1981. I remained Employee/Labor Relations, except for a brief stint in Joint Programs, for the remainder of my career. I have been involved in every contract negotiations since 1981.

During this time, my husband, Lee and I had two daughters, who are now grown. Heather is a nurse and works at BCBSM conducting Hospital audits and Erin is a teacher at a private school in Kalamazoo, Michigan. We have three grandchildren (two boys and a girl) under three years of age. Erin is expecting our fourth grandchild in January 2009.

My husband retired from teaching 10 years ago. While teaching he coached high school baseball, football and basketball as well as college baseball and when he retired conducted hitting/pitching lessons for kids of all ages as well as running baseball camps at Total Baseball in Wixom, Michigan. He is the founder and Head Instructor.

I am still adjusting to retirement and enjoy cooking, reading, and knitting/crocheting. I baby sit for two of our grandchildren (Logan and Alaina) one day a week and enjoy watching them learn and experience new things each week.