

From the office to the piling grounds

Seth Stapleton, Tribune Staff Writer Published 7:00 am, Saturday, October 1, 2016



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VERONA TOWNSHIP – Each fall, after a full day at the office, Michelle Pollum will quickly head off to turn in another full shift at her second job.

This has been the case for the past 15 years for the Minden City resident, who has moonlighted as a seasonal employee for Michigan Sugar.

For about a month, starting around mid-October, Pollum will serve as a piler operator at the company's Verona Piling Ground.

During the day, she works in the circulation department at the Huron **Daily Tribune** in Bad Axe.

"It's tiring, but it's a lot of fun," said Pollum. "There is a lot of camaraderie — you get to know the farmers and the families. I enjoy doing it."

Added Pollum: "It's like a family out there."

Pollum said she first started working seasonally for Michigan Sugar at its Ruth Piling ground, before moving on to Sandusky. This fall will be her fourth year at Verona.

During the harvest season, Pollum will work a regular day at the Tribune office in Bad Axe until 3 p.m., then head out to Verona to work from 3:30 to 11 p.m., sometimes later.

She also takes on weekend shifts.

While the schedule may seem hectic to some, Pollum said it has become commonplace for her.

"I've done it so many years, it's weird when I don't do it," she said. "I've worked two jobs my whole life, so to not do something like that is stranger for me."

Over the years, Pollum has performed just about every job at the piling grounds, including piler operator, wing operator, collecting tare samples, tractor driver and weigh station attendant.

She said the harvest season used to be longer than a month, back when the trucks had to go through the fields to get the sugar beets loaded. Now technology is making the process more efficient, with pickers called "mousers" being able to load trucks up from the roadside.

Pollum said safety is of the utmost importance when on the job, especially with all the trucks and heavy machinery scattered about.

With that in mind, employees are required to go through safety orientation each year. That class is fast approaching, meaning Pollum's days working a single job will be coming to an end.

But she doesn't really mind.

"You get to know these truckers and the families and you kind of look forward to seeing them," she said. "Yes, you only see them once a year, but you look forward to seeing them."

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