



This week's History Matters Update focuses on another of our detectives, Barb Switalski, who you may know from her many years as a teacher in the Gaylord School System or as the Head Varsity Swim Coach at Gaylord High School. After graduating from Adrian High School, Barb earned her BA Degree in Elementary Education from MSU in 1979 and followed that with an MA from MSU in Elementary Education Classroom Management in 1985. She was the first person in her family to graduate from college and was soon followed by two younger sisters.

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Barb and her husband, Mike, have been married for 37 years. During that time, they raised four children here in Gaylord. They have also added three grandchildren to the family and anticipate the possibility of more. Barb is also very involved in the Gaylord community as she has worked on Alpenfest, served on the United Way board, is currently a member of the AAUW, a cookie maker for RSVP, a reader at St. Mary's church, and an active member of the Otsego County Historical Society where she serves as the secretary of its board of directors. Barb is the 2018 recipient of the Zonta Club "Golden Hug Award" presented for going above and beyond the call of duty.

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Barb was hired in Gaylord by Mr. Tom Gill in 1979 to teach 7th and 8th grade Social Studies in one of the district's portable classrooms. She continued teaching in Gaylord for 35 years, ultimately retiring in 2014.

Once the Sportsplex was built, Barb was the GHS Assistant Varsity Swim Coach until 2003. Then she moved up to the Head Varsity Swim Coach in 2004 until 2018. In all, Barb coached the Gators swim team for a total of 20 years.



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As a History Detective, Barb is interested in learning more about ghost towns, Polish heritage, and St. Mary Cathedral. When asked what motivated her to join the History Matters Team, she replied, "To deepen my knowledge of the history of my community and to get that information into the hands of those who want to know more about our county."

We welcome Barb, and all the energy she brings, to our little band of history sleuths.

This week's History Matters Update was written by Jim Hilgendorf