’Tis the season for holiday baking, and there are few people busier than Janet Trzecinski of Port Washington.

Trzecinski, who is secretary to Port Washington High School Principal Eric Burke, started baking cookies Saturday and will continue making a variety of treats until Christmas.

She starts baking at 4 a.m. and will gladly stay in the kitchen all day if she doesn’t have other commitments.

The vast majority of the cookies she gives away as gifts or for fundraisers.

“I use them as gifts and as thank-yous to the nice people in my life,” Trzecinski said. “There’s a lot of love in them.”

She also has customers who request trays of her cookies for family gatherings and holiday parties.

“It’s hard for me to sell them because I don’t know what to charge,” Trzecinski said.

She buys holiday plates and trays after Christmas for her cookies, and people often return them to be filled again.

Trzecinski is also known for her carrot cake, which is chock full of carrots, pecans, pineapple and coconut. She makes hundreds of them for fundraisers, including for the Port High vocal music program, Thomas Jefferson Middle School Holiday Marketplace and the Food Pantry in Port. That is one of her secret recipes.

Despite making hundreds of carrot cakes in batches that yield four 9-by-7-inch cakes, Trzecinski said she hasn’t had a piece of her famous cake in years.

“I don’t make them for me. I make them for others. It’s how I give back,” she said.

Vocal music teacher Dennis Gephart said Trzecinski came to him with the idea of selling carrot cakes to raise money for the vocal jazz group Limited Edition’s trip to New York for an international a cappella competition.

“She said she wanted to do something to help us. All you have to do is say Janet’s carrot cake, and it sells,” Gephart said. “She’s awesome, and the cake is awesome. She’s always the one who steps up. She just does it and doesn’t expect anything in return.”

For her family’s Christmas, it’s not carrot cake but a yule log cake that Trzecinski makes, decorating it with meringue mushrooms and fresh greens.

Each year, Trzecinski vows to organize her cookie recipes so her favorite holiday treats are in one binder. So far, she has three recipes in the binder, but maybe this year more will be added.

Instead, she opens a closet filled with cookbooks and recipes clipped from newspapers and magazines to find her favorite recipes.

She makes two double batches of 11 must-have cookies — ones she or her family or friends would miss if they aren’t on the tray — and usually tries two or three new ones.

The standards include Danish sugar cookies, chocolate and vanilla Sachertortes, spritz, chocolate-dipped creams, chocolate mint, peanut blossoms, frosted pecan cuplets, chocolate caramel delights, Scottish reels and pecan fingers.

She buys pecans in bulk from a pecan farm in Georgia.

“On Facebook, I posted that I baked all weekend and lost eight pounds — eight pounds of pecans,” Trzecinski said.

Last year, she bought a baker’s rack for her garage, where she stores baked cookies to keep them cold. After all the cookies are baked, she adds finishing touches, such as frostings and glazes.

“As long as they’re kept cold, I don’t have to freeze them,” she said.

Trzecinski learned to cook and bake from her mother and barely remembers not cooking, figuring she was about 8 or 9 when she started.

“I was always doing things in the kitchen,” she said. “I can always remember cooking stuff. If you love to eat, you might as well learn to cook. It’s my hobby. It’s what I do for recreation.”

In addition to her mother’s guidance, Trzecinski picked up cooking tips on her previous jobs, by reading cookbooks and by trial and error. The only classes she took were in cake decorating and candy making.

Trzecinski was a baker for the former Boder’s Restaurant in Mequon for four years. She then moved to southern California, where she was a cook for a T.G.I. Friday’s restaurant. After her daughter Michelle was born, she stayed home and turned cooking into her hobby.

“I don’t cook much in summer. It starts in the fall with carrot cake, then it’s Christmas cookies,

then it’s soups and trying new recipes,” Trzecinski said.

She makes large quantities of whatever she cooks, whether its cakes, soups or cookies. She often organizes chili or soup dinners to raise money for co-workers who have medical problems and provides the appetizers for artists’ receptions at Gallery 224.

Her 89-year-old mother Marge Adams lives across the street and Trzecinski likes to makes meals for the two of them.

“I call it meals on heels,” she said.

When her husband Michael died two years ago, Trzecinski said, cooking helped her deal with her grief.

Chocolate mints were his favorite cookie, so it’s bittersweet when she makes them.

A few of Trzecinski’s cookie recipes can be found on the recipe page in this week's Good Living section.