

Alumni Spotlight

Featuring Joey Pagano



Joey Pagano, 48, of Monongahela, attended Westmoreland County Community College from 2016-2019, and is our featured alumnus. With a major in Human Services and Social Work, Pagano has taken his passion of helping people and made it his life's work.

So what made Pagano decide to take the path of attending Westmoreland after high school?

"My decision to attend college was driven by my deep-seated desire to pursue a career in social work. My passion for helping people and making a meaningful impact in their lives guided this decision. Westmoreland County Community College's well-regarded social work program, known for its comprehensive curriculum and hands-on learning opportunities, seemed ideally suited to equip me with the necessary skills and knowledge," Pagano said. "Moreover, the college's commitment to fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment was pivotal in my choice, as it aligned with my goal of becoming an effective and compassionate social worker."

Some of us may have that one mentor that sticks out in our minds as having such a positive impact on our lives. Pagano has two!

“Robert Brinker and Stephanie Turin stand out as my favorite instructors due to their exceptional teaching methodologies and profound expertise in their respective fields, which have greatly enhanced my learning experience and academic growth,” says Pagano.

After his time at Westmoreland, Pagano obtained his Master of Social Work and is a Licensed Social Worker. He will also have his Doctor of Social Work completed at Capella University by summer of this year.

Currently, Pagano holds the position of Center of Excellence Supervisor at Southwestern PA Human Services (SPHS) and serves as the Vice President and Clinical Director at Club Serenity, Inc. Additionally, he is recognized as an esteemed author at The Traveling Social Workers.

But it doesn't stop there. Pagano is a dedicated advocate for addiction recovery.

“In my role as an international lecturer and advocate in addiction recovery, I have delivered keynotes and conducted workshops worldwide, with notable speaking engagements across the UK, enhancing my global influence. My best-selling book, ‘No Addict Left Behind,’ nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, has impacted thousands globally, complemented by a significant media presence, including 35 podcast features in 2023,” he said. “My upcoming book, ‘From Scars to Stars,’ co-authored with Jodie Pagano, merges clinical insights with real-life experiences and is set for a 2024 release. Additionally, I spearheaded ‘Rock for Recovery’ at Club Serenity, Inc., marking a major community outreach event in the Mon Valley.”

Working with the community is also very important to Pagano.

“In terms of community involvement and professional networking, I am actively engaged through my roles at Club Serenity, Inc. In these capacities, I contribute to the community in multiple facets. At Club Serenity, my responsibilities involve overseeing various initiatives and programs that address community needs. This position allows me to not only apply my professional skills but also to make a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve. My involvement here is not just a professional commitment, but a personal one as well, reflecting my dedication to fostering positive change and support within the community. Additionally, these roles provide me with the opportunity to connect with other professionals in the field, enabling a collaborative approach to community service and development,” states Pagano.

Joey Pagano isn't the only Pagano to graduate from Westmoreland. His wife, Jodie, is a fellow alumnus, having also graduated with a degree in Social Work. When Pagano has down time, his hobbies and interests encompass a diverse range, including writing, a passion for education, a commitment to recovery and a strong focus on family values.

How did his time at Westmoreland prepare him for his current career?

Pagano explains, "The education I received in social work laid a solid foundation, preparing me comprehensively for advanced academic pursuits in the field."

His advice to current college students?

"As a professional with experience in the field, my advice to current students at the college would be to actively engage with your coursework and seek practical applications of your learning. Embrace opportunities for hands-on experience through internships, volunteer work or collaborative projects. Networking with peers and professionals in your field of study is invaluable, so take advantage of events and forums offered by the college," he said. "Remember, your time in college is not just about academic achievement but also about personal and professional growth. Stay curious, be open to new ideas, and never hesitate to seek guidance from your mentors and instructors. Your college years are a pivotal time for laying the groundwork for your future career, so make the most of it."