

Alumni Spotlight — The 1990's



Alumni Spotlight: Charles '90 and Laura (Wagner) '91 Aftosmis

Charles G. Aftosmis '90 grew up in a military family and traveled the world before completing the requirements of a two-year institution and transferring to a nearby four-year school. Laura (Wagner) Aftosmis '91 lived in a neighboring Greensburg development. They both wanted to receive a degree from an established university but preferred a small campus and low studentteacher ratio.

Both chose to attend the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg—and that is where they met. Laura and Charles were introduced by a mutual friend—and according to Charles, they just “clicked together.” Their relationship developed as they both pursued business management degrees.

They agree that meeting one another, study groups, and graduating are their fondest memories as students. A special memory of Laura's is having her mother, Gladys S. Wagner, who served as an Advisory Board member for Pitt-Greensburg, onstage in cap and gown during the Commencement ceremony.

Laura feels as if she followed in her parents' footsteps, as she recently started her third term as an Advisory Board member. Her father, W. R. Wagner, had earned a Pitt degree from the Oakland campus in 1943. The family's philanthropy is visible on campus through the Wagner Dining Hall dedicated in memory of her father, the Gladys S. Wagner Endowed Scholarship Fund that is open to any business major, and support of campus events such as Blue & Gold Weekend.

Charles and Laura have enjoyed watching the campus grow—both in buildings and programs. What hasn't changed is the personal involvement and genuine interest the faculty have in the students—“There's a relationship. You're not just a number,” Charles said.

Both Charles and Laura fondly remember Professor Robert J. A. Pratt and Dr. Margaret Rechter. They described Prof. Pratt as quite unique: “You had to learn,” they agreed commenting that his method made you think. They added that his teaching wasn't textbook and you were constantly

thinking outside of the box. That's what they really liked about him: "It was real-world application," Laura said.

Dr. Rechter became a favorite for her teaching style and how she made each student feel. Charles and Laura both agree: "She really took an interest in the students."

Charles and Laura wed in 1994. Before joining the family business in 1997, Charles started an advertising/graphic design company. Today, he and Laura own and operate Revest Properties, as well as Northpointe Development Group and a few other real estate management companies based in Greensburg that operate assets including hotels, multi-family housing, office and retail space, and billboards.

Although they don't see themselves living anywhere other than Greensburg, the couple and their dog, Oliver, travel to a new destination each year. They have driven to all but four states plus Canada's western provinces—and try to visit a national park on each trip.

Laura describes her parents as mentors who instilled a strong work ethic and community-minded attitude to give back where you live, work, and play. In addition to their support of Pitt-Greensburg, both Charles and Laura serve as board members for the Animal Care & Assistance Fund. Laura also serves on the finance committee at their church and is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and Daughters of the American Colonists.

Charles is a "car guy" who attended Bertil Roos Racing School to learn how to drive race cars. Earlier this year, he was in a NASCAR Charger at Daytona International Speedway driving 175 miles per hour. He's hoping that the weather cooperates so that he and Laura can make a "Pitt" stop at the Blue & Gold Weekend Car Cruise in October.



Alumni Spotlight: Joanne Cenci-Johns '95

Joanne Cenci-Johns graduated from Pitt-Greensburg in 1995 with a BS in psychology.

What brought you to Pitt-Greensburg?

The campus setting, extensive course/degree options, and the individualized attention from faculty and staff. I loved the feeling of not being lost among the throngs of students and that my voice could be heard.

Were you a commuter or a resident?

Commuter

What activities were you involved with as a student?

I was a student orientation leader for three summers. For my junior year, I was selected to be a Resident Assistant at the Courts. I was also a member of the Student Government Association and was elected to the role of vice president. Academically, I was a teaching assistant in the Psychology department for Dr. Debra Evans-Rhodes.

Did you have a favorite professor, staff member, coach, or mentor that really impacted your life?

Hands down – Dr. Mary Jane Dugan! I recently learned that she passed away in 2017. She was an amazing professor. Mary Jane had grit and tenacity. She taught with passion, and you knew that she was deeply committed to her work and students. I have never met a student who studied with Mary Jane who didn't appreciate her knowledge and passion for teaching.

Of all the classes you took, what is the one class you would recommend everyone take? Who taught the class? Why would you recommend it?

Any of the Psychology courses. Trying to understand how people tick is fascinating to me, and the psychology courses helped me realize how we all share a common experience of what it means to be human. I found insights into the various ways that psychology plays a role in every situation and aspect of life. This has helped me to be more thoughtful, empathetic, and understanding in how I approach both my professional and personal life.

What do you remember most vividly from your time at Pitt-Greensburg?

The lifelong friends that I made--our time at Pitt-Greensburg helped launch us into our adulthoods. Our varied backgrounds, our divergent course work, and our shared college experiences laid the foundation for years of connection.

What have you been up to since graduation?

Soon after graduation, I moved to Philadelphia and began my career in Human Resources. I love supporting teams through complex problem-solving and helping individuals uncover their best professional selves. In 2017, I moved to Colorado, where I was the Director of HR for a large multi-faceted, non-profit that supported individuals with developmental disabilities. While that work was exceptionally rewarding (and often equally challenging), sometimes life takes unexpected turns, and in August of 2020, I moved back to PA with a small gaggle of fur babies (my dog and two cats) to become my mom's primary caregiver. Today, I manage a boutique company creating wearable art and help my mom continue to live her most independent life.

How did your experiences and education at Pitt-Greensburg prepare you for life after college?

Holy smokes--that's a tricky question because I am not quite certain anything truly prepares us for launching into life after college. But, the experiences throughout my college life absolutely honed my sense of responsibility, my work ethic, and time management skills (requisite outcomes for anyone carrying a full caseload while working full time), and my friends and mentors fostered the value of community and connection. I learned how to balance myself with others and work while having fun while delivering high caliber outcomes.

As an alum, how do you support Pitt-Greensburg?

In the 25 years since my graduation, I've applied the values of leadership and public service to my professional and personal life. These values were instilled in me while attending Pitt-Greensburg, and they still ring true today. When I moved back home in 2020, I realized there was so much more I could do and wanted to do. Applying to join the PGAA board was the first of many steps in supporting future alumni through fundraising and mentorship.

What advice do you have for your fellow Bobcats?

Enjoy every minute! Even in the worst moments, if you can step back, breathe, and reframe, you can find a sense of peace in the frenzy. The storms will pass, the assignments will get completed, and the years will move by. Take the time you need to care for yourself, and the rest will take care of itself.

For fun:

What song do you always sing along to?

I might rephrase that question and ask what song DON'T I sing along to? If I had to pick one, Last Dance by Donna Summer.

List 3-5 fun facts about yourself that most people probably wouldn't know.

1. In 2018, I went to Germany for the sole purpose of seeing The Rolling Stones in concert.
 2. I used to play golf competitively, and I once stopped someone's drive with my mouth. True story. :)
 3. I find zen in repetition and detail: weeding, running, baking.
 4. I got a hole-in-one once back in Philadelphia, and don't let my competitive golfing background fool you... that is a wildly hard thing to do.
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Alumni Spotlight: Michel Keller '96

Michel Keller graduated from Pitt-Greensburg in 1996 with a BS in psychology.

What brought you to Pitt-Greensburg?

It was a local school that I could commute to, and it felt like home.

Were you a commuter or a resident?

Commuter

What activities were you involved with as a student?

PsyChi

Did you have a favorite professor, staff member, coach, or mentor that really impacted your life?

Dr. Marsh

Of all the classes you took, what is the one class you would recommend everyone take? Who taught the class? Why would you recommend it?

Sexuality

What do you remember most vividly from your time at Pitt-Greensburg?

That it felt like home and all were welcomed. I was a traditional student then finished my degree as a non-traditional student.

What have you been up to since graduation?

I got married- I have four children and four granddaughters! I am currently the Vice President of Education and Workforce Development at the Private Industry Council. I live in Greensburg Pa.

How did your experiences and education at Pitt-Greensburg prepare you for life after college?

To include everyone and to do my best.

As an alum, how do you support Pitt-Greensburg?

Volunteer at events and provide trainings to students and staff when requested.

What advice do you have for your fellow Bobcats?

Live your best life- take advantage of all opportunities that come your way!

For fun:

What series do you recommend alumni binge watch? *Schitt's Creek*

List 3-5 fun facts about yourself that most people probably wouldn't know.

1. I can tap dance.
2. I have a stand-up comedy routine written.
3. I have four kids and four grandkids.



Alumni Spotlight: Jeremy Lenzi '95

Jeremy Lenzi graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1995 with a BA in English Writing.

What brought you to Pitt-Greensburg?

This is going to sound horrible, but it was a last resort for me at the time. And wow, was I wrong in all I perceived about Pitt-Greensburg! I had an absolutely TREMENDOUS experience at PittGreensburg!

Were you a commuter or a resident?

Commuter

What activities were you involved with as a student?

School Newspaper

Did you have a favorite professor, staff member, coach, or mentor that really impacted your life?

Drs. Blevins and Vollmer, as well as Stephen Murabito were outstanding mentors to me. They pushed me way out of my comfort zone, and I truly thank them for this.

Of all the classes you took, what is the one class you would recommend everyone take? Who taught the class? Why would you recommend it?

Poetry Workshops with Dr. Blevins were incredible.

What do you remember most vividly from your time at Pitt-Greensburg?

The bonds I formed with my professors, and the respect I gained for them.

What have you been up to since graduation?

I teach English, Mass Media, and Yearbook at Greensburg Salem High School (GSHS). I also coach cross country and track at GSHS. In the spring, I teach an instruction and learning class at Pitt-Greensburg.

How did your experiences and education at Pitt-Greensburg prepare you for life after college?

I was pushed to never accept anything less than my best, and I truly appreciate that.

As an alum, how do you support Pitt-Greensburg?

I talk up my experience at Pitt-Greensburg to anyone who will listen.

What advice do you have for your fellow Bobcats?

Enjoy every single second. There are so many more opportunities available today - take full advantage of them all.

For fun:

What is your favorite food?

Pizza, pizza, pizza!

List 3-5 fun facts about yourself that most people probably wouldn't know.

1. I LOVE to read (primarily fiction).
 2. I LOVE to watch movies.
 3. I recently bought a Royal Enfield motorcycle and have truly enjoyed relieving stress on the roads.
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Alumni Spotlight: John McCune '95

John McCune was a nontraditional student working full time while attending the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in the evenings. John graduated in 1995 with a BS in Management. Read more about his life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... taking classes at a major university that was practically in my backyard.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg was ... scared! The first night I drove to class, I was scared to death to walk through that door!

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was the beauty of the campus. I have been on many university campuses, and I would put Pitt-Greensburg at the very top.

The faculty member who had the greatest influence on me was ... without a doubt, Professor Robert J. A. Pratt. He was one-of-a-kind. The man was brilliant. He was really tough, but you DID learn. I still have my t-shirt that says "I survived Professor Pratt" with his caricature on it. If you could make it through a Pratt class, you could do anything.

After Pitt- Greensburg, I went on to ... receive graduate degrees from both Duquesne University and Carnegie Mellon. I worked at Allegheny Energy during my time at PittGreensburg. I currently work as a business consultant with Hewlett Packard Enterprise Services performing work for American Express, Talisman Energy, Symantec, and many others.

My reason for becoming active with the alumni association is ... my enjoyment of staying in contact with young people. I volunteered to help evaluate student resumes and look forward to helping with mock interviews.

In my spare time, I like to ... TRAVEL!

Tell us something we didn't ask ... My son, Matt McCune, is a junior at Pitt-Greensburg. I look forward to handing him his diploma next year!



Alumni Spotlight: Robert Najim '93

Robert Najim graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1993 with a BS in Management-Accounting. Read more about his life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... Pitt rated highly for accounting compared to other universities, the campus setting in Greensburg, and my siblings' recommendations based on their experience with the staff.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg ... was a professionally ran university with main campus continuity and friendly faculty and students.

My favorite thing as a student was ... playing ping pong and grabbing a loaf of bread for lunch from Schallers. That was before the zero-carb diet fad!

The faculty members who had the greatest influence on me were ... Pamela Ondeck, Robert Pratt, and James Deflorio.

Pamela Ondeck gave me a second chance and coaching to improve while I was distracted with other activities that were far less important than my education. Robert Pratt challenged me and stretched my capability development within the quantitative sciences. I just enjoyed Deflorio's classes. He was a very good teacher and cared about his teaching and how he was transferring knowledge.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... work within Alcoa's Financial Shared Services. I have since had 20 years of progressive strategic sourcing, operations, internal audit, and finance experience with world-class organizations. I am currently employed by Black Box Corporation as their director of Global Strategic Sourcing and Supply Chain. I hold an MBA in Operations Management from the University of Pittsburgh, Katz School of Business, and am a Certified Public Accountant, Lean Leader, and a Six Sigma Green Belt. I expect to complete the APICS CPIM in winter of 2017.

My reason for becoming active with the alumni association is ... a desire to give back to the University and help fellow alumni and students be successful.

In my spare time, I like to ... golf, exercise, and volunteer for the Homeless Children's Education Fund in Pittsburgh.

My family is ... #1 in my life, extremely important to me, and the reason why I do what I do and am able to do what I do.

Tell us something we didn't ask ... I also have a side hustle in the movie industry. Check out *All in Time!*



Alumni Spotlight: Eric Packe '90

Eric Packe attended Pitt-Greensburg from which he graduated in 1990 with a BS in psychology.

What brought you to Pitt-Greensburg?

My first semester of my freshman year was spent at Lock Haven University. Lock Haven was a beautiful setting and is a great school, but I realized I wanted to be closer to home. I could commute to Pitt-Greensburg, be close to family, and work a part-time job.

Were you a commuter or a resident?

Commuter

What activities were you involved with as a student?

I was a member of the Psychological Explorers Club and the German Club.

Did you have a favorite professor, staff member, coach, or mentor that really impacted your life?

Dr. Diane Marsh was my advisor for my junior and senior year. She was a great professor, who was really engaged with her students. She was instrumental in helping me navigate internship opportunities and helped me choose the right ones. Dr. Norman McWhinney always made literature classes fun and entertaining. I particularly enjoyed his fantasy literature class.

Of all the classes you took, what is the one class you would recommend everyone take? Who taught the class? Why would you recommend it?

Oddly enough, one of my favorite classes was physics with Professor Joe Lokay. I was never really too fond of math or science, but I found the class to be interesting, challenging, and engaging.

What do you remember most vividly from your time at Pitt-Greensburg?

I recall the small-campus feel where you knew almost everyone on campus. This included students, faculty, and staff. I liked the campus, and it grew quite a bit during my time there. Even with new buildings and a growing student body, the campus was quaint and picturesque.

What have you been up to since graduation?

I have spent most of my adult-working career in the restaurant industry. I recently joined Chick-fil-A as a senior experience lead in their service and hospitality department. I spent 10 years with McDonald's in various capacities. The most recent was in global innovation. I also spent 14 years with Einstein Bros. Bagels where I held roles in operations, training, and business development. My wife and I met at Pitt-Greensburg. We have been married 28 years and we have two adult boys.

How did your experiences and education at Pitt-Greensburg prepare you for life after college?

I feel that my experiences at Pitt-Greensburg gave me the skills that I needed to succeed in the business world. I came away with a well-rounded education that allowed me to pursue varied career paths.

As an alum, how do you support Pitt-Greensburg?

I have recently made the decision to sign up for participation in the career panels. Having held many roles in my career, I feel my experience may benefit students who are looking for options within their degree path.

What advice do you have for your fellow Bobcats?

You can be successful in any endeavor to which you put your mind and talents.

For fun:

What is the last book you read? *Six Thinking Hats* by Edward Deobono

List 3-5 fun facts about yourself that most people probably wouldn't know.

1. I have completed 5 triathlons.
 2. I biked from Washington D.C. to Pittsburgh on the trail system.
 3. I was part of the first class to graduate on campus at Pitt-Greensburg.
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Alumni Spotlight: Catherine (O'Toole) Roberts

Catherine "Kate" (O'Toole) Roberts graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1998 with a BA in Anthropology. Read more about her life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was...the small campus size, and it was close to Pittsburgh.

My first impression of Pitt -Greensburg was...that I was impressed with the how clean the campus was compared with the main campus downtown.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was...I don't think I have a fondest memory. They are all good memories of my time in college.

The faculty member(s) who had the greatest influence on me was/were...Dr. Mark McCullough. He had a passion for history and how historical events had an impact on our culture. I took his course on labor history. My final paper was on labor unions that represented steel workers in Pittsburgh. I learned that early in the 20th century, when Carnegie first established the first steel mill in Braddock, there were no safety regulations, overtime pay, and they worked on rotating day and night shifts. By World War II, unions were representing many of the steel workers and were able to institute regular shifts, more safety regulations, and benefits. These changes helped to drastically reduce accidents and deaths at the mill. Now all workers benefit from what unions were able to acquire for steel workers.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to...I went on to work as a field tech for two years for Christine Davis Co. in Pittsburgh. In 2006, I was accepted into Illinois State University Historical Archaeology program and worked with Dr. Orser in Ireland on homesteads of people who were evicted during the famine. In 2016, I was accepted to the University of Maryland Anthropology PhD program where I am working with Dr. Mark Leone. My dissertation will be on 20th century homesteads of people who once lived near Quantico, but the property was purchased by emanate domain in 1942 to support training Marines who were deploying to the Pacific. I currently work for the USMC at Quantico as the Cultural Resource Manager. I also served in the military. From 1997 to 2005, I served eight years in the Army Reserve, and completed one tour in Iraq from February 2002 to April 2003. I recently retired from the Navy Reserve which I served in for 12 years. During my time with the Navy Reserve, I did one tour in Iraq from September 2007 to August 2008 and then another tour from April 2015 to September 2015 in the UK.

My reason for becoming active with the alumni association/staying connected to the University is... because my friend asked me to get involved, and we always had a good time together on campus.

In my spare time, I like to... hunt deer and turkey.

My family/friends are... I only have one best friend. However, I would rather have one best friend than ten “friends” I don’t really like.

Tell us something we didn’t ask... I have a 4-year-old son, Alex, who acts a lot like me.



Alumni Spotlight: Karen Rocco ‘93

Karen Rocco graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1993 with a BS in Management.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was... that I wanted to attend college locally but did not want to move to the city, I much prefer being near the mountains, so Pitt-Greensburg was the perfect fit for me!

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg was... that I loved the smallness of the campus (it was much smaller back in the late eighties) and the beauty of the location. I was able to get a great Pitt education, without having to deal with the hustle and bustle of Oakland. It is funny how things work out; I now work within a few miles of Pitt-Main, but still live within a mile of the Pitt Greensburg campus.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was...the friends that I made during those years. Bonds were created that are still intact today. We might not get to see each other daily as we did back then, but we still keep in touch and remember those special times. I will also always remember the peacefulness of simply walking around campus. I still visit the campus occasionally since I live so close, and it has definitely grown over the years but it still retains its beauty, but now you actually have a dining hall!

The faculty member(s) who had the greatest influence on me was/were... Dr. Pratt. If you ever had him, I really need to say no more. At the time those courses were stressful, but looking back now I realize that I learned so much and that knowledge has helped to get me where I am today.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to... Alaska where I moved with my husband after graduation. I started working at a small travel college which has now grown to become Alaska Career College. I worked my way from the front desk, to Financial Aid Administrator, and

finally to Financial Aid Director. When I moved back to the area four years later, I was hired by Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science (PIMS) as the Registrar/Financial Aid Director. During my 20 years at PIMS, I have been promoted to the Chief Administrative Officer and am onethird of the Leadership Team that will replace our outgoing President/CEO within the next 12 months. I could not possibly love my job and the people that I work with more than I do!

My reason for becoming active with the alumni association/staying connected to the University is... working in higher education over the years, I realized that your educational background is the first stepping stone to your career and supporting your alma mater is critical to ensure the same opportunities for future students. I see the passion of PIMS graduates every day and wanted to give back to my alma mater as well!

In my spare time, I like to... watch two of my three children play hockey. I spend a lot of my spare time in ice rinks. I love to be outdoors and spend time with my husband and three children. I used to be a runner, but life got a bit busy so maybe I will get back to that eventually after I finish my MBA (I am currently three courses in).

My family/friends are... the most important thing in my life. Watching the boys play hockey and my daughter ride horses and cheer keeps me quite busy and fulfilled. The team that I work with at PIMS have become my best friends and a secondary family (since I spend so much time with them), and I am so blessed to be surrounded by such positive and amazing people. But most importantly, my husband is the center of my world and we try to find time for “us” as much as we can. This year in November, he and I are planning a trip Greece so that he can pace a client in the Athens Marathon (he is a Personal Trainer). Together with our partner we own a small personal training studio in South Greensburg called No Boundaries Fitness.

Tell us something we didn't ask: I have completed 3 full marathons, several ultra-length races, and a numerous half marathons. My husband, who is much more competitive than I, is a 5x Ironman.



Alumni Spotlight: Dana C. Romano '96

Dana C. Romano graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1996 with a BS in management.

What brought you to Pitt-Greensburg?

I grew up wanting to attend the University of Pittsburgh. Pitt-Greensburg was perfect because it was a beautiful campus that was close to home.

Were you a commuter or a resident?

I was a commuter.

What activities were you involved with as a student?

I wasn't really able to be involved as much as I would have liked because I was working fulltime while obtaining my degree.

Did you have a favorite professor, staff member, coach, or mentor that really impacted your life?

It has been so long, I don't remember and doubt they are still with the university.

Of all the classes you took, what is the one class you would recommend everyone take? Who taught the class? Why would you recommend it?

Human Resources (HR) courses. An organization is only as strong as its people. My human resources and psychology courses were my favorite and helped me decide that HR was the field that I wanted to pursue.

What do you remember most vividly from your time at Pitt-Greensburg?

I enjoyed working in teams and meeting new friends through group coursework.

What have you been up to since graduation?

I was a non-traditional student and worked full-time in HR for the first eighteen years of my career. My last position was as a human resources manager at a telecommunications company called Marconi (Ericsson), where I was in charge of employee retention for North America.

In one of my former roles, I was able to work with colleges to help retain talent in southwestern Pennsylvania and thoroughly enjoyed working with students. I made a career decision to follow what I was passionate about-- helping others, and I started to work for the university that I love.

I have the best job in the entire world and proudly work as the Interim Director of the Career Management Center at the University of Pittsburgh's Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business. I help master's degree business students from all over the globe which currently includes 17 different countries with career-related professional development. It is extremely rewarding to watch my students grow throughout their master's program and know that I played a small part in what made them successful post-graduation.

Proudly, I was nominated and recently received the Chancellor's Award in the Student Impact category. This is the highest honor that a staff member can be awarded at the University of Pittsburgh, and it is extremely competitive. I am humbled and honored beyond words to be recognized for doing what I enjoy so much.

How did your experiences and education at Pitt-Greensburg prepare you for life after college?

My love of business was established through my undergraduate degree at Pitt-Greensburg.

As an alum, how do you support Pitt-Greensburg?

I have helped with resume reviews and recently was invited to present in a human resources class on campus.

What advice do you have for your fellow Bobcats?

Enjoy your time at Pitt-Greensburg and build your network by getting involved in things that interest you. Your future is yours to write; enjoy this chapter of your novel. Lastly, my favorite quote and words to live by are this quote from Jennifer Dukes Lee: “In a world where you can be anything, be kind.”

For fun:

What is the last book you read?

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria by Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD.

List 3-5 fun facts about yourself that most people probably wouldn't know.

1. I enjoy cooking, baking, and entertaining for my family and friends. My specialties are chicken marsala, baked rigatoni, Italian wedding soup, and chocolate chip cookies. My girls' cheerleading squads and son's football teams have enjoyed baked treats after games for years.
2. I am currently obtaining my M.Ed. in Higher Education Management so that I can teach.
3. Both of my daughters, Danielle and Gina Romano, are students at Pitt-Greensburg. Danielle is a junior and following in my footsteps studying business with an interest in HR, and Gina is a freshman entering the nursing program. H2P!



Alumni Spotlight: Troy Ross '99

Troy Ross graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1999 with a double major in political science and anthropology. Read more about his life during and after PittGreensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... the size. I grew up in a small coal mining town named Whitsett, which is in Fayette County along the Youghiogheny River. It was the type of community where everybody knew everyone and looked out for one another's children. It felt right to me to be in a place that could still offer an environment where people knew each other by name, and I felt I could get that at Pitt-Greensburg.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg was ... friendliness. One of the first people I met on campus was Officer Simeon McClain, and he made my friend and I feel so welcomed. Since then, I've met so many terrific people that have made Pitt-Greensburg feel like home.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was ... my entire freshman year! Looking back 20 years later, I still smile at that time in my life and how special it was. It was the first time I lived away from home, and I learned so much about myself that year. I also lived with some of my closest friends that year who made every day exciting. It was perhaps the best eight months of my life!

The faculty members who had the greatest influence on me were ... Dr. Anthony Boldurian and Dr. Kerry Manning.

One of my first classes as a freshman was with Dr. Boldurian, and, to be honest, he scared me to death! I actually considered dropping the class, but I'm so glad that I didn't because he was so passionate and an incredible teacher! He challenged me to do my best or suffer the consequences, and I'm thankful for that!

Unlike Dr. Boldurian, Dr. Manning made me feel comfortable and relaxed from day one! He made learning fun and immediately engaged classes in lively conversations on current topics. His classes made me examine my own worldviews and be prepared to express them confidently. Many years later, Kerry and I have become friends, and he is still teaching me new things ... usually on the golf course!

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... work at Pitt-Greensburg. I spent some time in the Admissions Office before being hired in the Office of Housing & Residence Life. I'm currently the director of housing and residence life. I also went back into the classroom to obtain my masters in higher education management at Pitt's Oakland campus.

My reason for becoming active with the alumni association is ... to connect with old friends and help out Pitt-Greensburg whenever I can, but what is even more satisfying is catching up with a student that I had the opportunity to help at some point during his/her college career. There's nothing like the feeling of someone telling you about the positive impact that you made in his/her life!

In my spare time, I like to ... golf, when the weather permits. Now that I'm not reading textbooks, I always have a book on the nightstand that I'm working on. I also enjoy geocaching, which is a GPS-based scavenger hunt. If you've never tried it, it's a wonderful activity for enjoying nature, getting some exercise, and spending time with family. Next time you're at PittGreensburg, see if you can find one of the many hidden on campus!

My family/friends are ... always so supportive and encouraging. I couldn't have lasted this long without them. My family helped make me who I am today by instilling values that help guide me every day. My friends are like another family to me, and I wouldn't have made it through college and beyond without their help. Finally, my wife, Jessie, is the kindest, sweetest person I know, and I thank her for accepting me, corny jokes and all!

Tell us something we didn't ask ... Each year, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Walk to Cure is held on campus. It's a great chance for alumni to visit the campus to see all the exciting changes that have occurred. Also, it's a terrific organization you'd be supporting. This year's walk is Saturday, September 26, 2015, and I hope to see you there!



Alumni Spotlight: Kathleen (Crouse) Ruper '96

Kathleen (Crouse) Ruper graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1996 with a BS in Management-Accounting. Read more about her life during and after PittGreensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... that I needed to commute from my home in Connellsville. I went back to college later in life – 12 years after obtaining an associate's degree in business administration. I was married and had a full-time job. My younger brother was attending Pitt-Greensburg at the time, and he spoke highly of the campus and the accounting curriculum. The campus was only 30 minutes away, so it was a good fit in all respects.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg ... was that it was very appealing. The first time I drove to Pitt-Greensburg, I was very impressed with the location and thought it was a beautiful campus. I liked that it was nestled in a rural setting and not in the city proper. The surroundings made me feel comfortable and cozy. I loved the smaller classes where the instructor could get to know each student and you weren't just a number.

My fondest memory as a student was ... the camaraderie and feeling of teamwork I had with several of my classmates, even though I was a non-traditional student who took mainly evening classes. Whether it was meeting for a study group, being in class together, or going to dinner together afterward, I always had a feeling of belonging to a special group of people. In fact, after graduation, I carpooled with two of my fellow classmates to the Becker review course for the CPA exam in Pittsburgh.

The faculty member who had the greatest influence on me was ... my accounting professor, Pamela Ondeck. She was an amazing instructor. She was tough but fair, and she made me want to be the best that I could be. Her passion for teaching and her knowledge of accounting were inspiring. She recommended me as a part-time adjunct accounting instructor a few years after I graduated. I have been teaching Financial Accounting at Pitt-Greensburg since 1999. Mrs. Ondeck and I are friends to this day.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I ... worked at a small public accounting firm right after graduation and while I was studying for the CPA exam. After I passed the exam and acquired the requisite number of hours to be a CPA, I got a job offer from Supervalu. I had a friend who worked there, and she had asked me to send her my resume. I had actually forgotten about it until I received a call for an interview. I worked there for 10 years until I was one of many who lost their jobs due to downsizing. I then took a job in the business office of the Connellsville Area School District, where I currently work.

My reason for staying connected to the University is ... that I will always be grateful for the quality education I received and the opportunities that it provided. I have been connected to the University through my teaching at Pitt-Greensburg and have stayed in touch with a couple of my instructors from my days as a student.

In my spare time, I ... enjoy reading and love to travel. My husband and I always talk about all of the places we would like to visit when we retire.

My family members ... have always been a source of strength and support for me over the course of my education and work career. As previously mentioned, my brother is a PittGreensburg graduate, and we actually took two classes together. We still sometimes reminisce about the time we spent at the campus and the teachers that we had in common during our time there.

Tell us something we didn't ask ... I believe in the importance of giving back to those who have helped you in the past. That's why my husband and I make a donation every year to the University. Pitt contributed to my success, and my goal is to ensure the success of future graduates.



Alumni Spotlight: Julia (Cleary) Sefcheck '99

Julia (Cleary) Sefcheck graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg in 1999 with an English writing major. Read more about her life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... I really wanted to go to Pitt, and PittGreensburg was basically in my backyard. (We could sit on our back porch and watch the fireworks that marked the beginning of the new fall semester). The campus offered both English writing and English literature degrees. It also provided me with the option to transfer to the Oakland campus. I originally planned on going to Oakland. I had applied and been accepted. I had gone to small schools up to that point, and I loved the idea of being in the city and anonymous—lost and exploring a larger world. I was in love with that idea until I saw the freshman dorms. Sharing a room AND a bathroom with a floor of strangers held no appeal for me. Pitt-Greensburg ended up being a great choice for me. The campus was beautiful, and everything seemed new and fresh! I had four great years at Pitt-Greensburg!

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg was ... possibilities! I was excited to be attending a university. I was excited at all of the possibilities in front of me! I couldn't wait to tackle all of my new classes and be challenged. Everything seemed bright—new and clean. The campus was gorgeous, and I was struck by how green and lush it was. I always get a thrill when things are aesthetically pretty and charming, and that's how I felt about the little picturesque bridges that span Slate Run Creek. Powers Hall was under construction at the time, and I remember trying to find my first class. It was like a maze, and the rooms weren't marked. Luckily, I found the right classroom. I also remember being impressed with the library. I spent a lot of time there my first year studying and reading in between classes.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was ... the four years I spent on the UPG Press, especially the years I was editor. It took a lot of time and effort, but I enjoyed being on the staff and directing the staff. There isn't one specific memory, but there was an overall feeling of camaraderie, and we were always laughing and having fun. I know I'll forget a good many of the people on the staff, but I have to thank Kate, Fred, Jeremy, Steve, Tracey, Jen, and all the others who made entering the Press Room every day a great experience!

The faculty members who had the greatest influence on me were ... Dr. Sayre Greenfield, Dr. Anthony Boldurian, Dr. Marybeth Spore, and Mr. David Guo.

I thoroughly enjoyed every course I had with Dr. Sayre Greenfield. I think I tried to take at least one of his courses a semester. I really appreciated his enthusiasm and passion for what he was teaching. During my senior year, a few of us held a Renaissance event on campus, and he dressed as William Shakespeare, and I was the queen. I still have a picture of us dressed as these characters on my piano.

I took a handful of archaeology classes. Dr. Anthony Boldurian is another faculty member I appreciated for his passion and enthusiasm. His classes were never dull. Another highlight of my time at Pitt-Greensburg was the field trip the class took to the dig site in Greene County. I still have an appreciation and interest in archaeology.

Dr. Marybeth Spore was the faculty advisor for the UPG Press. She helped me develop professionally, encouraged me to apply for editorial positions, and recommended other opportunities on campus. She's been a great reference for me over the years.

Mr. David Guo worked for the Post-Gazette and taught journalism classes. He helped me in attaining an internship with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... work at my family's store while I worked as a freelance writer. I wrote articles for The Catholic Accent and The Herald Standard. I worked for a short time as a reporter for The Gateway Press. My journalism career was short-lived. I attended St. Vincent College and earned a Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate in Secondary English. I worked as a substitute teacher for a few years. From 2005 until 2014, I was employed with the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette, Inc. (PIC). I started as a youth specialist working with both in- and out-of-school youth. I became the youth supervisor and managed the youth staff and all youth programs including their after-school programs and summer work experience. During my employment with PIC, I worked with youth ages 5 to 21 in a variety of programming which encouraged education, STEM, literacy, and employment. I left PIC last year to pursue some entrepreneurial options, and I am currently working to grow a store online at Etsy.

My reason for becoming active with the alumni association is ... not a straight path. I could have just volunteered because I fully believe in the education and experiences offered at PittGreensburg. That option would have been too easy. My friend and current Pitt-Greensburg staff member Courtney DeCarlucci has been inviting me to events. Last year, I ran into Sean O'Donnell at the annual croquet event. He was president of the PGAA Board at the time. We began talking, and I said I would like to become involved. Halfway through this year, I became a member of the Board. I hope to be able to contribute more time in the future.

In my spare time, I like to ... play with my dog, read (I'm working through a list of the Top 100 novels of the 20th century), paint/draw, be creative (whatever that entails—cooking/baking, building, sewing), write (I'm still hoping to write a best-selling novel someday), and plan and host themed dinner parties. I like to be challenged and learn new things (wherever my whims take me).

My family/friends are ... very important to me and are the biggest supporters of all of my crazy ideas/plans!

Tell us something we didn't ask ... I was very privileged to be involved in many things while at Pitt-Greensburg and many firsts. I was a member of Sigma Tau Delta, and took part in READfor Lifelong Learning. I was in the first group of Presidential Ambassadors and inductees of the Senior Honor Society. I really appreciate all of these opportunities as well as the others that PittGreensburg afforded me.



Alumni Spotlight: Barbara Lynn (Smirga) Smith '94

Barbara Lynn (Smirga) Smith graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1994 with a BA in legal studies. Prior to that she studied criminal justice at the Pitt-Greensburg campus. Read more about her life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... being able to attend a smaller campus while still having the prestige of the University of Pittsburgh title. Another contributing factor was the student-to-teacher ratio which ensured more personal attention and support.

My first impression of Pitt -Greensburg was ... how beautiful the campus was. It had a peaceful and serene feeling. As the year went on, I saw that every season at Pitt-Greensburg could have been pictured on a postcard.

My fondest memory is ... the fall between classes. I would go sit outside to do homework, study, and enjoy how pretty the leaves and surroundings were.

The faculty member who had the greatest influence on me was ... Professor Mike Rubinoff. It was my first year in college, and I was somewhat apprehensive to speak out or ask questions. Professor Rubinoff was straightforward and outspoken, but he always made me feel like any question was a good question. A few times after class he would ask me to stick around, and I can clearly remember him saying to me, "I saw that puzzled look on your face, do you completely understand the point I was trying to make and why?" He would then take the time to go over it

again until he was certain I understood. In all the years since then, I have never forgotten him and how he would go above and beyond for his students. He was a brilliant man who loved to share his knowledge and passion for the law.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... complete a degree in legal studies at the Oakland campus. After that, I was fortunate enough to be a stay-at-home wife and mom for ten years. When I re-entered the workforce, it was at an out-of-state juvenile correction center for male felony offenders ages 11-18. While that was a very challenging job, it was also very satisfying just knowing that I played a part in some of those young men being released with an education and with problem-solving skills that gave them a chance of not becoming a repeat offender. I currently work for the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute in the Fiscal Compliance Department. I handle the accounts of patients who are participating in clinical trials. I review their accounts and charges to ensure that nothing is billed to them that the clinical trial should be covering.

My reason for staying connected to the University is ... not only am I an alumni and employee of the University, but I am also the parent of a child attending Pitt-Greensburg. My daughter Danielle “Bella” Smith is in her second year at Pitt-Greensburg majoring in business management. I am extremely proud that she chose Pitt for her education.

In my spare time, I like ... reading, hockey, Pitt sports, music, and spending time with my family.

My family is ... quite large. My mom is one of nine kids, and I am the oldest of 18 grandkids and four great grandkids. All of my life my parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles were always my biggest encouragers and supporters. (They still are today!) I was the first in my family to go to college and graduate with a four-year degree. I am the oldest of three children, and we all attended Penn-Trafford High School. I am blessed to be married 21 years to Jim Smith, the kindest, most hardworking man I know. I have known him since we were little kids. When I was 15, I told my family that “he was the guy I was going to marry.” Bella is an amazing daughter who continues making our job as parents very easy. She is my biggest blessing and with every milestone she surpasses, I am even more proud of her.

Tell us something we didn’t ask ... A couple of strange things about me is that I collect hockey cards and have them all listed alphabetically and categorized on an Excel spreadsheet. I am also a fan of One Direction and 5 Seconds of Summer—due largely in part to having a teenage daughter that plays boy band music over and over again. We attended both of those concerts this past summer. I do enjoy normal music too!