

Alumna Casey Pioli puts her heart and soul into the job

Sometimes your dream job takes a while to present itself. In Casey Pioli's case, she was able, after a few twists and turns, to parlay her past experiences and passion for helping others into a career that she couldn't have imagined when she graduated Ramapo College nearly 10 years ago.

Pioli is the Marketing & Program Manager for the [JBJ Soul Foundation](#), a non-profit organization started in 2005 by rocker Jon Bon Jovi to establish programs that provide food and affordable housing while also supporting social services and job training programs.

Pioli graduated from Ramapo in 2013 with a contract major in Contemporary Arts, earning the Outstanding Academic Achievement Award for her major. Hailing from Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Pioli was a four-year resident student at Ramapo. She currently resides in the "City by the Sea," Asbury Park, N.J.

Tell us about the Bon Jovi Soul Foundation. How did you get involved?

The [Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation](#) is built on the mission to break the cycle of hunger, poverty and homelessness through developing partnerships, creating programs and providing grant funding to support innovative community benefit organizations. In October 2011, the Foundation opened the first [JBJ Soul Kitchen](#) in Red Bank, N.J., to address the issues of food insecurity and since has opened two more locations in Toms River, N.J., and on the Rutgers University Newark Campus. I got involved with the JBJ Soul Foundation through a friend of mine who volunteered for the organization and had an amazing experience. She knew I was very interested in the mission of JBJ Soul Foundation and had a background in marketing, so when she became aware of this potential position, she contacted me.

Were you involved in similar projects, even as a volunteer, before joining JBJSF?

I have always been very involved in my schooling and extracurricular activities while growing up. I attended the college preparatory high school, Academy of the Holy Angels, where I was an Angel Ambassador, and became very involved in community service and volunteer activities. Beyond this, I worked as a caregiver throughout my life, helping raise several families across New Jersey and New

York. Child and family care is something I am very passionate about, and shaped my career choices to have an impact on others.

Did your Ramapo experience influence your career choice at all? If so, how?

Ramapo College was a very big influence on my career. Throughout my life, I always performed and had a strong love for singing and theater. During my senior year, I was given an incredible opportunity to intern for Sesame Street, which instantly transformed my passion for entertainment into a career. Post-graduation, I worked in television production, which eventually led me into the field of live event production, which was always a dream of mine. Once the pandemic hit, that dream was put on pause, and like many others, my career shifted. When I was presented an opportunity to use my skill set as an event producer and marketing professional at the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation, I could not pass it up.

Can you offer any advice to students who are interested in pursuing a similar career path with a non-profit organization?

First and foremost, my biggest piece of advice is never stop chasing your dreams, no matter how “impossible” they may seem or how many times you might want to give up. Sometimes in life, the biggest risks are worth taking, and in the moment, it may not present itself as so, but eventually it will lead you to the path you are meant to be. One of my favorite quotes is by author, Erin Hanson: "There is freedom waiting for you, on the breezes of the sky. And you ask 'What if I fall?' Oh, but my darling, what if you fly?" This rings true to my career because it has come with many ebbs and flows, difficult choices, pauses in jobs, and led me to a place I never thought I could dream of.

If you are interested in a career path with a non-profit organization, find a mission that you believe in. Volunteer once a week or once a month, have a conversation with those who work for the organization, and get involved in some capacity. Attend as many events as you can, do your research and get educated, so that you can help spread awareness about that mission.

You may have to make some sacrifices such as moving away from home, or taking a pay cut, but if you are passionate enough about helping those who are in need and making an impact on someone's life in a positive way, the risk is worth the reward.