



BY JENNA CAPUTO
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THE PARDI FAMILY

—*Teaching the Next Generation to
Make a Difference*

Nick and Francesca at Military Ball

Nick and Francesca Pardi have made a life out of helping people, and they're working to instill those values in their children's lives as well.

Originally from right here in Niskayuna, Nick loved to spend his summers at his family's camp at Big Moose Lake where he would hike, fish, and swim in the lake. When it came time for decisions about college, Nick thought joining the military first would be a great way to pay for school. In the weeks following 9/11, he enlisted in the New York Army National Guard. After basic training, he attended college at SUNY Albany and continued to serve as a traditional guardsman one weekend a month. During his junior year in 2004, he was deployed with the 69th Infantry / 101st Cavalry to Bagdad, Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom II. He served there one year before returning home to complete his studies while continuing service as a reservist. Nick finished school and received his degree in Criminal Justice and Sociology. He is also a graduate of the Department of Army Inspector General's Course and a graduate of US Army Sergeant Majors Academy.

In 2009, Nick was deployed once again, this time serving with the 206th Military Police Company to Basrah, Iraq. After serving there for another year, he returned home, working with the reserves to serve during local disasters and storms. The COVID pandemic brought him to the frontlines once again, serving with the 104th Military Police Battalion as the operation cell for the Javits New York Medical Station in Manhattan before deploying once again on January 7th, 2021 to Washington, DC as part of the national response to the attack on the Capitol on January 6th.

Nick received various achievement medals throughout his military career, including the Army Commendation Medal and the Bronze Star. He recently served as the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the Northern Task Force of the Army National Guard State COVID Response, and just this past April, took on his new role as Command Sergeant Major on the 104th Military Police Battalion for the NY National Guard. He is also a Sergeant with the Niskayuna Police Department.

Originally from Utica, NY, Francesca grew up with a huge Italian family in a small city where she loved spending time with her cousins. "Family was life, and I wouldn't change that for the world, and today we are trying to instill that in our own kids," she says.

Francesca received her degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resource Management from the College of St. Rose. She began her career as an Association Management executive, managing trade associations before working with the Mallozzi Group as a Wedding and Events Planner. In 2014, she returned to trade association work because she wanted to focus on non-profits, specifically working with the Trucking Association of New York. She switched to independent contract work in 2020, concentrating even more on non-profit and service-oriented companies. She has always felt a need to give back or help in some way, and after sitting on various volunteer boards and raising money for favorite charitable organizations, she knew she wanted to make the work a full-time job. "When I was looking for a new organization to volunteer for, I knew I wanted to do something

—continued



that was impactful and meaningful in my life. When I was 15, I lost my grandfather to Lymphoma. Being such a close family, I saw how it negatively affected everyone. Then, dating Nick, I learned of his father's battle with Lymphoma and how research and clinical trials saved his life so that today he can enjoy his children and five grandchildren. I knew LLS (Leukemia & Lymphoma Society) would fulfill

that impactful feeling I was searching for."

LLS Board Chairman Rick Ostroff invited Francesca to join the Albany Board of Trustees in 2020, where she sat on executive committees for the Light the Night and Visionary of the Year fundraisers. In 2022, LLS opened a position within our region, and Francesca applied knowing this would be the perfect job for her. In March 2022, she became

the Campaign Development Director for the Albany Market and oversaw the Albany Board of Trustees and the Light the Night walks in Albany; Westchester; Hartford, CT; and Fairfield, CT.

Light the Night is a local walk bringing light to the darkness of cancer by allowing the community to gather and celebrate, honor, and remember those touched by blood cancers. The money raised from the walks fund lifesaving research, advocacy, and support for patients and their families. In 2022, the Capital District raised over \$750,000, making it one of the biggest walks in the area. The next walk will take place on October 14th at Siena College with a goal of \$1 million.

Francesca is also involved with the Visionaries and Student Visionaries of the Year fundraising programs. This 10-week philanthropic competition allows candidates to form powerful fundraising teams to compete in honor of two local blood cancer survivors from the Capital District. Last year, they were the number one fundraiser in the region, raising over \$1.3 million, and Adam Neary, the Man of the Year, is a Niskayuna resident who went on to receive the title of the National Man of the Year. The Student Visionaries is a 7-week program that allows highly motivated high school students to embark on a journey of professional growth, fostering skills like



Nick & Francesca
San Francisco

entrepreneurship, marketing, and project management while working to raise money for LLS's mission. This year's students just completed their competition and raised \$258K.

Francesca also focuses her time with other endeavors in the Capital Region. During March 2020, Feed Albany was founded as a 501 c-3 non-profit to feed restaurant workers who had been affected by the shutdown, but it quickly transformed into feeding anyone in need. The group's founders, Dominick Purnomo (dp's An American Brassiere & Yono's), Jason and Kay Peirce (Savoy on Lark), Matthew Peter from the Albany Parking Authority, and Joe Bonilla (Relentless Awareness) asked for volunteers to feed people out of dp's, no questions asked. Francesca started as a volunteer packing meals but quickly became a board member and then a part-time executive director of the organization, working with various other groups to distribute over one million meals before they closed its doors in November 2022 when the Capital District was open and functioning again. During that time, Francesca partnered with Schenectady Police Department's Chief Eric Clifford, Lt. Mike Dalton, and Nick Mannix to develop a new initiative under the Feed Albany umbrella called Feed the City. Partnering with the Schenectady, Rotterdam, and Scotia Police Departments, Feed the City worked to feed any resident in Schenectady County who needed the help. Nick also worked with the group to deliver meals to those in the Niskayuna area. Feed the City has continued on to this day and works in different capacities.

After volunteering with the Albany Chef's Food and Wine Festival, Francesca joined their Board of Directors as well, serving from 2015–2020, including serving as auction chair in 2017–2020, raising over \$100K for the arts in Albany County. Both she and Nick have volunteered with the group over the last eight years.

Nick and Francesca met each other during college on New Year's Eve 2006. They now have three children: Adelina (7), Dominic (6), and Isabella (2), and Gunner, their German Shepard. Their kids are fifth-generation Niskayuna residents and are a big part of their family's volunteer activities. After listening to what Mom did, Adelina and Dominic wanted to help feed people too, so they launched a lemonade stand, raising just over \$400 for Feed Albany. Adelina presented the check to the board herself. She also wanted to contribute to their family's



team for Light the Night, so she made and sold bracelets, raising over \$1,000 in the process. All three of the children walked as part of the team in support of and in memory of family members with blood cancers.

In addition to their volunteer work, the Pardi family is involved in Niskayuna sports, including baseball, football, and wrestling. They enjoy exploring the many hiking trails in our area and love to travel to Cape Cod and Big Moose Lake to experience the fun that Nick always had there as a kid. They also raise their own chickens.

Nick is an avid, self-proclaimed government history nerd and enjoys trying out a new hobby each year. He's tried fishing, ice fishing, leather working, wood carving, motorcycle riding, and pretty much anything outdoors, including attending the kids' sports events. Francesca loves anything to do with food and wine, often enjoying meals out at our local restaurants. She loves to hike and will be hiking the Rocky Mountains with LLS's Team in Training this June in Denver.

Their family mantra is, "Be kind to everyone because everyone is fighting a battle you don't know about." They urge our community to get involved whenever possible and to share the experience with our children. "Teach your children to give back," says Francesca. "Teach them to think of others and how they can help someone. Give them the tools to make a difference." 🐾

Morgan Stanley



The Sunway Team at Morgan Stanley

Mary Irish, CFP®
First Vice President
Wealth Advisor

Graham Irish
Financial Advisor

1212 Troy Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110
518-386-2912 • 518-386-2984
[advisor.morganstanley.com/
the-sunway-team](https://advisor.morganstanley.com/the-sunway-team)

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