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the moraine park story

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TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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TECH IS INSPIRING

On a quiet stretch of farmland in Van Dyne, Wisconsin, where cows outnumber neighbors and the days begin with the hum of milking machines, something unexpected is rising from the fields. Made from local produce, bold ideas and a whole lot of heart, Poco Pizza has become one of the area's most beloved culinary surprises.

At the helm is Shawn Pollack, a Moraine Park Technical College culinary graduate whose path to becoming a food entrepreneur was anything but linear.

Pollack left the family farm after high school to pursue his education. He earned a degree in public relations from UW-Green Bay, followed by a master's in media studies in Boston. From there, he built a career in television production and live entertainment—environments far from his rural roots.

As the economic downturn in 2009 reshaped industries, Pollack found himself rethinking everything.

"I realized the thing that brought me peace every night was cooking," Pollack said. "So, in 2010 I came back home and enrolled in Moraine Park's culinary program. That experience changed everything. It showed me that food could be hands-on, creative and community-focused, without the stress of late-night restaurant shifts. I learned I could create a business that fit me, not the other way around."







FARM TO FREEZER

Back on the family farm, a windstorm took down an old shed. While his dad imagined rebuilding it as a man cave, Pollack saw potential for more—a farm-to-freezer pizza operation.

After securing the necessary licenses and outfitting the space, he launched Poco Pizza in 2017. The name—Poco, meaning “little” in Italian—was inspired by an Italian grandmother Pollack met during a trip to Tuscany. Her repeated advice to use “just a little” became the foundation of his cooking philosophy: keep it simple and let the ingredients shine.

The first 500 frozen pizzas sold out in eight hours. “I knew I was on to something,” he said.

That something has since grown into a full-fledged frozen food operation—all crafted with fresh, local ingredients.

The Poco Pizza website opens Monday nights for pre-orders and closes Friday. The farm store is open just five hours a week—Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. That window draws 200–300 visitors weekly.

Orders are picked up in person or delivered across Fond du Lac, Oshkosh and Appleton. The limited hours aren’t a constraint—they’re intentional.

“It’s about safety and simplicity,” Pollack said. “We run a busy farm. This model gives us control and flexibility while still serving a dedicated customer base.”

From tomatoes and peppers to sweet corn and pears, Pollack turns the harvest into creative pizzas that celebrate Wisconsin’s bounty. He also partners with local farms to keep his ingredients fresh.

This connection to the land fuels Pollack’s creativity. Over the years, he has made more than 500 unique pizzas—and counting—adding at least one brand-new creation to his seasonal menu every week. He often wakes up with fully formed ideas sparked by whatever is in season. Favorites include Mexican street corn, the best-selling Van Dyne Special and a brandy old fashioned dessert pizza.

The storefront also houses Kayla’s Sweet Tooth, a bakery brand run by Moraine Park culinary instructor Kayla Sommer—Pollack’s former classmate. She started by baking the free treats on Saturday and now shares the space, adding a sweet balance to Pollack’s savory creations.

“She’s the organized one,” Pollack said. “She tells me what I’m doing each day and keeps my wildest ideas in check.”

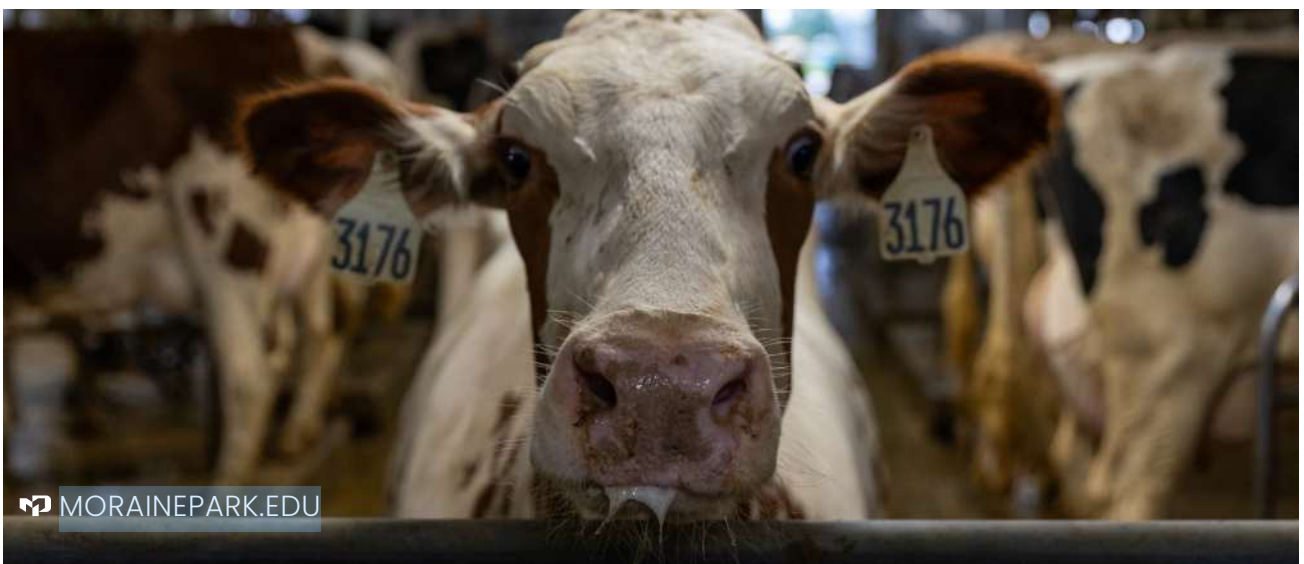


WHAT'S NEXT

Looking ahead, Pollack doesn't see expansion in the traditional sense. He's not chasing shelf space or trying to become the next national brand. He prefers keeping things small and strange.

"I like that I can get weirder with my food—I don't have to ask permission," he said. "Next, I want to create a space where growers, cooks and eaters can connect. A place to learn how food is grown, prepared and shared. It's about education, community and keeping things real."

With creativity in his hands and community at his heart, Pollack is proving that technical education, local roots and bold ideas can build something truly special.







TECH IS HEALING

At Moraine Park Technical College, hands-on learning is a cornerstone of student success, and sometimes, these educational experiences go beyond the classroom. This was precisely the case for Sheena Hoekstra, IT network technician at Moraine Park, whose willingness to help students with their training led to a potentially life-changing health discovery.

In the fall 2024 semester, students in the Diagnostic Medical Sonography (DMS) program at the Beaver Dam Campus needed scan lab participants to practice thyroid scans. Hoekstra, having previously volunteered for other scans, stepped forward once again. Under the guidance of DMS instructor Ivy Dvorak, student Kenlyn Zellmer conducted the scan that revealed three masses on Hoekstra's thyroid.

Although ultrasound technologists in training cannot diagnose conditions, they are trained to identify abnormalities. If something concerning appears during an educational scan, participants are advised to follow up with their health care provider. Understanding the importance of this recommendation, Hoekstra scheduled a medical ultrasound with her doctor. The scan confirmed what the student had observed, prompting her physician to order a thyroid biopsy.

Fortunately, the biopsy results came back benign, and no further treatment was necessary. However, this experience underscored the vital role that hands-on education can play—not just in training students, but also in potentially detecting health issues early.

"The experience was incredibly valuable from an educational standpoint," Dvorak said. "The DMS program thrives on having scan lab participants come in to be scanned, as it provides students with the opportunity to practice and refine their skills. Many individuals have anatomical variants or congenital anomalies that become apparent during scanning, and it's an excellent learning opportunity for students to be able to identify both normal and abnormal anatomy. The hands-on experience also helps to better prepare the students for their clinical rotations, where they'll gain even more experience working with actual patients. This particular experience offered the student an in-depth understanding of thyroid scans and identifying normal versus abnormal anatomy."

Hoekstra reflected on the experience, recognizing that this unexpected discovery could have been crucial if the masses had been malignant. Thanks to the educational exercise, she was able to gain peace of mind and ensure her health was in check.

Hoekstra's story is a testament to the real-world impact of Moraine Park's technical training programs. For Moraine Park students, instructors, employees and community volunteers, this serves as a reminder of the incredible value of hands-on learning and community involvement.

To learn more about Moraine Park's educational scans, visit morainepark.edu/ultrasound.



TECH IS RESPONSIVE

For the last year, the West Bend Campus community has watched the exterior of the building expand and transform into a brand-new, beautiful canvas along County Highway D. This transformation is part of Moraine Park's long-term vision for growth and is one of four referendum projects approved by voters in 2022. It now stands as the third completed project. Here's a peek inside at the spaces and the benefits they will bring to Moraine Park's communities.





JOIN US IN STRENGTHENING MANUFACTURING IN OUR DISTRICT

The Moraine Park Foundation is working to raise \$2 million to fund equipment for the new Advanced Manufacturing Center. Today, they are just shy of their goal. Be part of Moraine Park's history and help ensure students have access to advanced manufacturing technology for years to come.

Donate to the West Bend Equipment Campaign today. Contact the Moraine Park Foundation at (920) 924-3225.



ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CENTER

A majority of the project focused on the addition of the Advanced Manufacturing Center at the West Bend Campus. This need was identified directly by local business and industry partners seeking more skilled workers. At the time, the West Bend Campus spaces were outdated, and welding instruction was held off-site at a small regional center in Jackson. To meet current and future workforce demands, the campus required an expansion to house all manufacturing instruction in one location and to provide new equipment that meets industry standards.

The new space features innovative solutions, advancements in robotics and cutting-edge technology, including the fiber laser welder (mentioned on page 15).

As part of this project plan, welding operations moved back to West Bend, and the Regional Center in Jackson closed, allowing the College to free up budget dollars tied to the lease of that space.

Local business and industry partners played an active role in shaping the Advanced Manufacturing Center, providing input at every stage of the planning process. Today, the Center is home to 12 robust manufacturing, automation and robotics programs that are helping to meet the needs of the local workforce.

CAMPUS UPDATES

Part of the project also included campus updates such as a new front entrance, an expanded conference center and the reconfiguration of the student services department.

The new entrance and student services areas feature a bright, fresh design with ample space for employees to assist with various student needs. These areas incorporate forward-thinking materials, such as modular walls, allowing for future reconfiguration without the need for major construction.

The expanded conference center is a beautiful, versatile space available for both internal and external use. It offers enhanced capacity for Moraine Park's professional development and operational needs, as well as a welcoming venue for community events.

Additional updates included the construction of a school Spirit Store, the restoration of the former student services area into offices for campus leadership and the relocation of the Economic Development Washington County.

The project was completed in August and welcomed its first class of students to use the new state-of-the-art facilities this fall.

Moraine Park is approved to use up to \$1.5 million from its general budget for facility improvements each year. The College develops a comprehensive three-year facilities plan to ensure these funds are directed toward planned updates as needed. Any facility updates exceeding the \$1.5 million threshold require approval through a district referendum.

The Advanced Manufacturing Center addition and the new main entrance were part of the approved 2022 College referendum. All other renovations are included in the College's annual capital improvement plan and budget. The equipment for the Advanced Manufacturing Center is being supported by a \$2 million campaign led by the Moraine Park Foundation. To date, 22 partners have contributed over \$1.8 million toward meeting these equipment needs.

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CARL PRIESGEN
SENIOR PROTOTYPE TECHNICIAN

TECH IS INNOVATIVE

In the center of Wisconsin's manufacturing landscape, Maysteel Industries and Moraine Park Technical College are investing in innovation and shaping the future of manufacturing talent.

Maysteel, a custom sheet metal fabricator with an almost 90-year legacy, operates six facilities across North America and plays a vital role in powering today's world. The company serves markets like data centers, renewable energy and essential infrastructure—sectors that support AI, clean energy and the national grid.

By scaling production quickly, adapting to evolving demands and investing in its people, Maysteel stands out as a leader in the industry.

"We give team members opportunities to grow here at Maysteel," Kevin Matkin, chief executive officer at Maysteel, said. "There's growth potential across our markets and for our team members, and Moraine Park is a big part of helping us make that possible."

TRAINING THAT TRANSFORMS

Maysteel's partnership with Moraine Park dates back decades. Today, the company relies on the College to help train and upskill its workforce in welding, CNC tool and die, leadership, blueprint reading, maintenance apprenticeships and more. The partnership is more than transactional—it's transformational.

"Maysteel has hired many MPTC graduates," Todd Kaull, chief operating officer at Maysteel, said. "They come to us not only with strong technical skills, but also with a genuine desire to work in manufacturing. Skilled manufacturing talent is the heartbeat of growing our business, and Moraine Park helps supply that. One of our employees, Charlie, started as a welder and is now our second shift supervisor. He's just one of many who've grown with us because of the foundation they got from MPTC."

In addition to its core programs, Moraine Park's Economic and Workforce Development team works directly with Maysteel to develop customized training tailored to the company's evolving needs.



INVESTING IN INNOVATION

Maysteel played a hands-on role in the planning and design of Moraine Park's West Bend Advanced Manufacturing Center, investing in its development and offering critical feedback on the space. This collaboration led to the integration of fiber laser welding, a game-changing technology Maysteel uses, champions and helped bring to life through the donation of a fiber laser and cell.

"The new space showcases that manufacturing isn't dirty or outdated," Kaull said. "It's clean. It's modern. It's cool. And that helps attract young talent who want to be proud of what they do."

The center is not only a resource for Maysteel—it's a regional asset, connecting students with high-demand careers.

"To stay competitive and innovative, we need talented, high-energy, dedicated employees," Matkin said. "That's what Moraine Park gives us. And with this partnership, I believe we'll be here for another 90 years and beyond."

The future of manufacturing is hands-on, high-tech and happening right here. Through cutting-edge training and a shared commitment to excellence, Moraine Park and Maysteel are preparing students to lead Wisconsin's workforce into the future.





TECH IS TRANSFORMATIVE

Leaving the comfort of home for the unfamiliar world of college can be scary. For many high school students preparing for this transition, the thought of reestablishing themselves in a new place, making new friends and choosing a career path that feels like it will ultimately shape their entire future is beyond overwhelming. For Shianne Reyes, of Randolph, this feeling was all too real.

As Reyes approached her high school graduation in the spring of 2021, she was not ready to leave the familiarity of her small hometown and decided to find a transitional option closer to home.

"Moraine Park was an easy decision," Reyes said. "Not only did it give me the time and space to truly explore what is next, but it was the most cost-efficient choice for me."

Reyes enrolled in the Small Business Entrepreneurship program at Moraine Park and attended classes both online and at the Beaver Dam Campus.

"I knew I was interested in business, but I wanted exposure to all aspects, including marketing, finance and business

operations," she said. "The program gave me exactly what I was looking for and ultimately helped me to select finance as my career path."

In 2023, Reyes was preparing to graduate from Moraine Park with her associate degree, but she found herself ready for something more.

"I gained so much from my time at Moraine Park," she said. "I left with more knowledge and the confidence to move on to bigger things."

Her goal always was to earn a bachelor's degree and through support services at the College, Reyes learned of Moraine Park's seamless transfer opportunities. A few months before graduation, she met with UW-Milwaukee (UWM) to solidify a path for her.

"The transfer process was so easy and my credits transferred without any hassle," she said. "I began my journey at UWM with enough credits to be a junior, and I was excited to have the opportunity to explore city life for two years."

Reyes fully immersed herself in her experience at UWM. She moved to the city, made new friends and began her studies to become a finance professional.



Photo provided by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

"The foundation I built at Moraine Park helped prepare me for UWM," she said. "The transition from small town to city, while challenging at times, has been a fun adventure. I've made friends and am really enjoying my classes."

Reyes found support from both Moraine Park and UWM staff through her transition, elevating the overall experience. As an added bonus, she received four scholarships from UWM to help reduce financial stress.

"I left Moraine Park with no debt at all, so the idea of incurring college debt was a little stressful," she said. "I was surprised to find so much financial support and am very thankful for the scholarship support I've received. I will leave UWM with very little college debt."

Reyes is scheduled to graduate from UWM in December of 2025 and plans to move back to Dodge County and pursue a career in finance closer to home.

"I've enjoyed experiencing the city, but at my core, I'm a small-town girl," she said.

While she is still determining exactly what's next after graduation, we know that the solid foundation she built at Moraine Park and the experience she received at UWM have helped set her on a path for success.

"I encourage all students to think carefully about their options and not to let the fear of missing out on the traditional college experience deter them from starting at a technical college," she said. "The affordability and convenience of a technical college are significant benefits, and as a transfer student, I still feel like I received the full university experience."

Start your journey at
morainepark.edu/university-transfer.





When Ella Purvis of Beaver Dam graduated from Moraine Park Technical College's Criminal Justice program in May 2025, she left with the confidence and skills to start her dream career in law enforcement.

Today, Purvis is a Cadet with the Oshkosh Police Department and is completing Police Academy training at Fox Valley Technical College. Once she graduates from the academy, she'll begin field training, a three to four-phase program followed by a year-long probation period.

Her journey to this point started with a passion for protecting her community. At Moraine Park, she immersed herself in the hands-on learning environment. One of her favorite classes, Emergency Response/Operations, gave her real-world experience through take-down tactics and live scenario simulations that prepared her for the challenges of police work.

Beyond the classroom, Purvis was a leader. She was selected as the College's 2025 Student of the Year, served as president of the Criminal Justice Club and played an active role in Student Senate—advocating for students and contributing to campus life.

"For anyone interested in the Criminal Justice field—try it," Purvis said. "Introductory courses can help you discover where you fit. Volunteering, attending career fairs and doing ride-alongs are great ways to explore the profession."

She also encourages others to consider becoming a community service officer, sharing that the hands-on experience was invaluable in preparing her for her career.

From student leader to future patrol officer, her dedication to serving others continues to guide her path, and Moraine Park is proud to have been part of her journey.





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OSHKOSH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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