

SVCC Grad's Cool Job Helps Others

Saving lives and helping the sick and injured are cool ways to spend your working days. Being an emergency room physician is the cool choice for Michael Cieslinski, who started his higher education path at Southside Virginia Community College.

A native of Gasburg, Virginia, Cieslinski graduated from Brunswick Academy before attending SVCC, where he received an associate's degree in general studies/science. Cieslinski then transferred to Virginia Commonwealth University, graduated from VCU Medical School and received a post-baccalaureate certificate in anatomy and neurobiology. He is doing his Emergency Medicine Residency through East Carolina University and at Vidant Medical Center.

This year, he will return to Southside Virginia to work as an Emergency Physician at Southside Regional Medical Center in Petersburg and Southern Virginia Regional Medical Center in Emporia.

"SVCC is such a great community of teachers and learners. The faculty really seem to love what they do and pass that love of learning on to their students," he said.

Coming to SVCC directly from service in the United States Marine Corps, he notes that he had no clear direction for his future and is thankful to faculty members who helped him define his course. He noted Susan Slayton, Sharon Freeman and Shanley Dorin as mentors.

"Enjoy the journey," are his words of advice. Cieslinski said that he left SVCC to pursue a degree in economics and ended up in medicine. He says it was definitely a long and circuitous route but he would not change it for anything.

"Embrace your failures and your critics," he said. "I've learned more from the times I messed than ever from the times I 'got it right'."

His only F grade in college was received at SVCC from Teresa Hudson in Calculus.

He notes, "I thought I could float through the course and floated my way to an F. I learned a hard lesson about my limitations, how to expand them and also, received a healthy dose of humility."

Through his many experiences in life, Cieslinski has formulated an outlook that encompasses empathy, happiness, and health.

He said, "Empathize, be kind, be happy, be healthy. You don't have to work in an emergency room to know that no one gets out of this life alive. What I have learned is, the life we lead is both fragile and unpredictable. Entire families can be broken up at the drop of a hat; lost to violence, car accidents, drugs, random acts of nature, bad health and chance."

He reminds us to make healthy decisions and be a blessing to others, quite a cool prescription for living.