

# PROFILE

## Aggelou leads major sports brand

By **TERRY POULOS**

Rising sports industry executive Sotiris Aggelou personally embodies his company's motto "Come ready or never start." As the VP of Development for Crons, the fastest-rising player in the sports apparel sector, Aggelou, 36, knows well what one must do to overcome challenges. As a 6-foot, 3-inch shooting guard, he came to America from Greece at the age of 17 to play basketball for the University of Pittsburgh in the late 90's. He had no family or friends in the states and didn't speak a word of English.

"I got off the plane and had a tag with me that read 'show me the next gate,'" recalled Aggelou, who spoke expert English to *The Greek Star* in a mid-Summer 2010 phone interview. "My life correlates to what I do with Crons. The brand tells my story. This opportunity (with Crons and America in general) has truly been a blessing."

A native of Harkila, Greece, Aggelou played at Pitt for two years before transferring to St. Francis College of Pennsylvania, where he continued playing ball and finished his undergrad degree. Once knowing virtually zero English, he worked doggedly to earn a bachelor's degree in English communication and public relations.

Upon graduation, he returned to Greece to play professionally for eight years. Six of those were with Halkila, one with Milonas outside Athens, and one with Kalamata. Aggelou, who currently attends St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Oakland, PA, would play for three championship squads with his hometown Harkila team.

When his playing days were over, Aggelou wanted to coach

so he returned to Pennsylvania to take a position on the hoops staff at LaRose College. That's when he encountered Crons founder and CEO, Pat Cavanaugh, a fellow Pitt hoops alum. The two immediately hit it off, with Cavanaugh so impressed with Aggelou both from an academic and motivational standpoint he decided to tap him to work for his then fledgling Pittsburgh company. Cavanaugh personally runs Cavanaugh Marketing Network, Crons' parent organization. With a busy workload, he eventually promoted Aggelou to lead the entire Crons brand, largely from top to bottom.

Crons is divided into four segments: Team Gear, Lifestyle Apparel, Nutritional Supplements, and School Programs. Foremost, they supply uniforms and assorted athletic apparel to various prep and collegiate institutions throughout the U.S.A. The Crons Brand is the official apparel and uniform provider of the Big South Conference and the exclusive apparel and uniform provider of the SIAC and its 13 member schools of the NCAA, in addition to the Robert Morris University basketball team, to name some of its more prominent clients. The brand targets motivational sports figures as product endorsers, weaving that philosophy into every crevice of its organizational structure and product line.

"Just this year, we signed high school coach Natalie Randolph, the first-ever female head football coach, as a spokesperson," related Aggelou, who has two daughters

with his wife Amy, a Clinical Coordinator and professor for Pitt undergrads. Natalie was the focus of a recent ESPN "Outside The Lines" feature article.

"Natalie has a distinct Crons story," said Aggelou. "We're constantly looking for people just like her who fit our message and mentality, which is substance and perseverance. In that respect, we're an inspirational company. We focus on those who were not always number one, people who've overcome adversity or faced special challenges and then became a success. Those who were doubted, yet persevered. All our garments are woven with that in mind. From the smallest details, such as the label, which is sewn upside down so the athlete can see them while wearing the uniforms. We approach life with the thought that every day, we do our BEST and make our BEST BETTER. We use messages on our garments such as 'The Guy Working Harder Than You, That's Me,' and 'Ignore the Noise.' We even have hidden labels in our products that contain motivational tags. When you're successful, people jump on your bandwagon and want to be part of your journey."

Taking note of Crons success stories and rising success of the brand itself, media of recent have been jumping on Crons' own bandwagon. It was able to capture the interest of the *New York Times* and CNBC, among others. The company also initiated its 'Achievers Program,' a pilot proj-



Sotiris Aggelou

ect involving 1,000 young student athletes which employs curriculum to motivate and educate kids. On that note, Cavanaugh had this to say about Aggelou at the time of his hiring.

"Sotiris' career uniquely portrays the mentality behind the brand," said Cavanaugh. "Having come to America to play basketball not knowing a word of English, he has overcome a lot in pursuit of his basketball goals with just plain hard work. He comes to Crons with the mentality of an athlete so I'm confident he'll be able to build Crons into a brand that speaks to the attitudes of young athletes who want to be successful."

Cavanaugh played on NCAA tournament teams at Pitt in the mid-80's. He earned an MBA while simultaneously playing pro ball overseas and working in marketing. He knows a winner when he sees one. More than a decade ago, he placed a bet on an over-achieving immigrant to America, and it's been paying dividends ever since.

That's the essence of the Crons story.

## Phil-Hellene Falls for Greek Culture, Incorporates Items into Her Life and Business

By **MARIA A. KARAMITSOS**

CHICAGO—Jackie James, a wife, mother and entrepreneur, has fallen in love with the Greek culture. She's half Assyrian and half Irish, though she's enamored with Greece and many of its traditions.

On a trip to Greece several years ago, she was taken in by the beauty of the country and the people. "I'm dark-haired and dark-complected. Everyone thought I was Greek. The warmth of the people really made me feel at home. I love Greece," James stated. Among her souvenirs was a bracelet with the fabled evil eye. "It was cute, and I liked the idea of having something handy to ward off evil."

James didn't think too much about the "mati," as it became part of her every day. For years she'd worked as a wedding/event planner, and once worked on a Greek wedding. She was struck by the presence of the evil eye.

"One of the family members came from Greece, and she brought all these medallions with the evil eye in them. She carefully added them to all the centerpieces, and they looked beautiful. Right there was a reminder of my amazing trip and the story of the evil eye," she added. "I knew there was a significance."

A wedding planner keeps long, odd hours, so when James married and had a family, she eventually left the profession after 20 years. She'd learned so many things in the course of her work, and loved every aspect of weddings.

Over the years, she'd compiled her own bag of tricks, which she would bring to her events. Something inevitably went wrong, and she was able to save many a day. The ambitious and creative woman turned it into a business idea - wedding emergency kits - all the things you need, but don't know you need, until you need them. In 2008, the aptly named Mojuba Weddings was born. In some African cultures, Mojuba refers to a bag of magical items that bring joy and happiness, and also a prayer of praise and tribute.

The handcrafted and elegantly designed wedding day survival kits have really taken off. "Even after months of planning and countless hours considering every last detail, unplanned things happen on your wedding day," James described. "Maybe the best man was in a rush and nicked his face with a razor, or the flower girl

decided to indulge in chocolate cake and stained her dress, but being prepared for those moments can turn a stressful wedding day into a magical one," she explained. The groom's kit contains,



among, other things, threaded needles to fix loose buttons, plus aspirin, playing cards to pass the time, mouthwash and more.

The bride's kit contains hair pins, stain removers, shoe pads and a multitude of other items - enough for the bride and her bridal party - that really come in handy. "You never know what's going to happen. I've seen a lot in my years of event planning. No one thinks about these things. Then when they happen, it's disastrous. You don't want this stuff to ruin your big day. Once we had the mother-of-the-bride get her dress caught in an escalator and was filled with grease. It happens. We have a solution for these things. Things do happen. If you don't use the items that day, they are all practical and can be used later."

The mati has made its way to the Mojuba. "I put bracelets in the bride's bag and medallions in the groom's bag. You're in the spotlight. Any extra help to keep bad things away is always welcomed. I love the story behind the wearing of the evil eye. Many other cultures believe in this concept as well. We all could use a mati to keep away evil spirits, and not just on our wedding day!"

If you've been married, you know that anything can go wrong, and that as hard as you plan something will go wrong.

"The kits have saved the day for so many bridal parties. People all over the world are buying my product. It's very exciting," the entrepreneur stated. The kits make excellent gifts for bridal showers. The brides - and grooms - really do appreciate it. For more information, and to order, visit [www.mojuba.com](http://www.mojuba.com).

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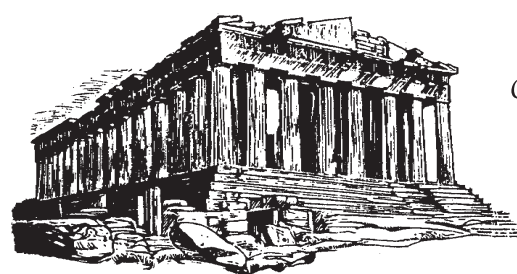
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