

Voice



Students Organize Walkout to Express Safety Concerns



In March, students from the Henry Viscardi School at The Viscardi Center participated in the National School Walkout to remember the 17 victims of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting and encourage lawmakers to consider new approaches to school safety. For students, the walkout was also a chance to spread another important message — as citizens of the world, young people with disabilities have the power to voice opinions on national social issues and influence change alongside their peers.

Angelo Zegarelli, Head of School at the Henry Viscardi School, explained that the school administration supported students in creating a safe, structured way to demonstrate their concerns.

“Every day we empower our students and encourage them to advocate for themselves and others,” he said. “We’re giving them the skills and opportunities to be active members of their communities and are proud that they are knowledgeable and aware of what is happening locally, nationally, and globally and the role they themselves can play in influencing change.”

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Taking the Stage

Broadway came to Long Island in benefit of the Reach for a Star Luncheon, an annual fundraiser supporting afterschool programs and extracurricular activities at the Henry Viscardi School. A performance by special guest Kara Lindsay, famous for roles in *Newsies*, *WICKED*, and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, included a song with the Viscardi second graders.



Opening Doors

Small changes can make a big difference. The Viscardi Advisory Council’s “Open the Doors to Opportunity” campaign expanded doorways in the Henry Viscardi School high school wing, making it easier for students to move in and out of classrooms, which promotes independence and facilitates a quicker exit in the event of an emergency. The group of young professionals celebrated the completion of the project alongside local officials, students, and staff.



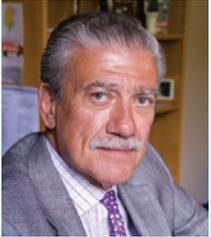
Learning in Style

Founder Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. and his wife, Lucile, believed meaningful employment can transform the lives of people with disabilities. The Viscardi Center recently rebranded and updated its program participant-operated clothing boutique to continue their vision. Named Henry & Lucile’s, this retail-training site prepares enterprising adults to seize career opportunities. **Turn to page 3 to read how training at Henry & Lucile’s positioned one young person for paid employment.**



Having a Ball

The Viscardi Varsity Cougars wheelchair basketball team showcased their skills for Nassau County Executive Laura Curran at a press conference announcing the 2018 Nassau County Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged. Viscardi students will join over 1,000 other athletes with disabilities in the Games.



Activism. At times extreme, but in the case of individuals with disabilities a necessity. Over the past two years, I have used

this column to raise awareness of critical issues affecting the disability community. Issues that range from a dismal labor force participation rate to devastating proposed Medicaid cuts to a lack of accessible oral health care.

Much can be said about the power of engagement. Here at The Viscardi Center, we enthusiastically encourage children, adolescents and adults with disabilities whom we serve to advocate for ourselves and others. We teach to the power of our “voice” when it comes to expressing views on matters that affect our lives positively and negatively — whether it be through written word, exercising our right to vote, or joining the conversation.

I have personally been involved with the disability rights movement for over 50 years and am always eager to foster a desire in, and the confidence of, our next generations to be great future civil rights leaders. I have had the joy of watching this spark ignite in our students and program participants. There is much to be done to make our communities safer, more inclusive, and equitable for all. I applaud my fellow citizens with disabilities, when we are empowered to act, and then act. Life is meant to be lived through personal engagement, to own the outcomes, good and not so good, of our efforts, and to accept our citizenship duties with dignity and grace.

John A. Ken
President & CEO

Supporter
SPOTlight

Candy Cucharó:
Leading with Heart

“I like to know how I’ve influenced positive change.”



When Candy Cucharó moved to Manhasset in the early ‘80s, she felt motivated to get involved in the local neighborhood. Then a professional in the banking industry, she made an impact by volunteering as a classroom assistant at the Henry Viscardi School in nearby Albertson. In turn, the experience made an impact on Cucharó by igniting a growing passion for philanthropy.

Now, in 2018, she continues to leave her mark as the unanimously appointed new chair of the Abilities, Inc. Board of Directors at The Viscardi Center. Her leadership and expertise will guide the Center’s progress in advancing work opportunities for adolescents and adults with disabilities in a competitive and ever-evolving employment market.

“The Viscardi Center’s mission has always been compelling to me,” Cucharó said. “It specializes in serving a group that is still overlooked. Even today, I believe society isn’t doing enough for the disability population.”

In the decades following her time as a volunteer, Cucharó made moves to address social issues that she believed deserved more attention. She went back to school and received a MSW from Fordham University, adding to an MBA with a concentration in strategic planning from NYU. She

then paved a second career in non-profit management and research, from Program Director at Tuesday’s Children — an organization providing personalized support to traumatized, grief-stricken children, families, and communities affected by terrorism or traumatic loss — to Infant Mental Health Specialist at the Institute for Parenting at Adelphi University and founding Board Member of the New York State Association for Infant Mental Health.

An unwavering desire to “do good” brought her back to The Viscardi Center in 2013, when she joined the Abilities, Inc. Board of Directors, and later, the Reach for a Star Luncheon Committee. These days, Cucharó views Viscardi as family — literally. Her daughter Elena, who developed a career as a music teacher at the Henry Viscardi School, met her husband at the organization. When she’s not giving back, and managing the Gristmill Foundation, a small family foundation, she’s spending time with her two-year-old granddaughter.

Looking forward, Cucharó is determined to focus on projects that solve real challenges with real results.

“I like to know how I’ve influenced positive change,” she said. “At Viscardi, I can see the outcome of my support.”

Meet Oscar

In It for the Long Haul



Each time Oscar slips on his red vest and clocks in at Lowe's Home Improvement in Garden City, he's determined. This determination shines through as he helps

shoppers transport patio furniture into their cars or find the right lighting fixture down one of the store's sprawling aisles; it's present as he tracks down online orders and mans the cash register. As Oscar puts it, being a successful loader and sales associate is all about having a positive attitude.

"My favorite section is the tool department, but I know where everything is located in the store," he said. "When I'm at my job, I work hard and try my best."

This sense of determination led Oscar to transform what began as a temporary gig in the garden department into a permanent position. After proving his dedication as a seasonal employee, he approached the store manager about keeping his job long term. Oscar's self-advocacy paid off — as of May 2018, he's been employed at Lowe's for a full year.

The path to employment wasn't always so clear. For years, Oscar struggled to find a job that matched his needs as a young adult with a disability. Then, while volunteering as a file clerk at Nassau University Medical Center, he and his family tried something different. Oscar enrolled in Viscardi's Work-Readiness Program, where he strengthened social and customer service skills at its on-site clothing boutique. He emerged six months later with a refined resume and renewed confidence in his abilities.

To boost his confidence during the interview process, he then sought assistance from a

Viscardi Job Developer, who coached him through mock interviews and connected him to open positions that suited his interests. Everything finally came together when Oscar met with the hiring manager at Lowe's. He nailed the interview and landed the job.

Oscar's future is brimming with possibilities. He received his driver's license this spring, and plans to purchase a car so he can commute to work. On the job, he continues to grow his skills. He recently experienced a personal milestone when he prevented a distracted customer's young daughter from running into a busy street in front of the store. Coworkers nicknamed him a "Lowe's Hero" for saving the day, but Oscar remains humble about preventing the potential accident. According to Oscar, he was simply doing his job.

Learn more about employment programs and services for people with disabilities at ViscardiCenter.org.

out & about



Check it out! In April, dedicated volunteers from Viscardi's Day Habilitation without Walls program were celebrated for their ongoing commitment during a special brunch event at Farmingdale Public Library. For the past year, the group has spent two days a week keeping the library's many bookshelves organized and clean for customers and staff. When they finish the task, volunteers can then choose to hone their computer skills, dabble in craft projects, or pick up a good book.

Day Habilitation without Walls is designed for adults with disabilities seeking a personalized, community-based experience. Individuals are integrated as active participants in their local community through one-on-one guidance and enriching daily activities.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES



John D. Kemp, President & CEO of The Viscardi Center, received one of the first-ever Lifetime Achievement Awards at the 2018 *Long Island Business News* Diversity in Business Awards. Awardees recognized display unparalleled leadership in promoting diversity in the Long Island business community, and have made it their life's work to mold Long Island into an inclusive place to work and live. Pillars of our community, honorees motivate their peers to excel both personally and professionally.

Viscardi helped put disability front and center at last year's awards. Kemp delivered a keynote speech addressing the importance of workplace inclusion, which led into an event that recognized several men and women for leadership excellence across all areas of diversity — including age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, and, for the first time, disability.

NewsBytes



Watch as three Viscardi seniors highlight exciting experiences made possible by the **Reach for a Star Luncheon** — including visits from the NY Islanders, the NY Mets, Dunkin' Donuts, actor Kevin James, and Broadway's Chilina Kennedy!

View this clip and more at YouTube.com/AbilitiesOnline.



FREE Summer Recreational Program for Children & Adults with Disabilities

Town of North Hempstead Residents: Register for this fun six-week program offering recreational and educational activities.

For more information, contact **Barry Tussman at 516.465.1529 or btussman@viscardicenter.org.**

You're

I N V I T E D

6th Annual Golf Outing

**17 SEP | Glen Head Country Club
Glen Head, NY**

Fore! Join us for a round of golf, cocktails, dinner, on-course enhancements, and silent auction.



Whiskey Flight

**1 NOV | Cradle of Aviation Museum
Garden City, NY**

Taste whiskey and ultra-premium spirits from around the world!



For tickets, sponsorships, and information, call 516.465.1595 or visit ViscardiCenter.org.

YOUR LASTING IMPACT

Learning to drive is an important stride toward independence. For people with limited mobility, especially those living in regions that lack efficient public transportation, it greatly reduces the need to depend on others to get around, and improves the outlook for employment opportunities and community involvement.

Recognizing the need to make comprehensive adapted driver education a bigger priority in the New York metropolitan area, State Farm is collaborating with The Viscardi Center to put more teens and adults with varied disabilities in the driver's seat.

For over 45 years, Viscardi's Adapted Driver Education program has provided thousands of individuals with the keys to freedom through personalized evaluations and training in traditional or modified vehicles. With one-on-one lessons from an experienced instructor and the completion of a road test, new or returning drivers have more control over their day-to-day lives, with easier access



to work, health care services, and social activities. Thanks to support from State Farm, this translates to safer roadways, where people with disabilities — including those with newly acquired disabilities and the aging population — can operate their own vehicles and travel with confidence.

To learn more about the Adapted Driver Education program, visit ViscardiCenter.org.