We’re Still Educating, Employing, and Empowering

As The Viscardi Center navigates uncharted waters, our commitment to transforming the lives of people with disabilities remains constant.

Like you, The Viscardi Center community has been deeply impacted by the unprecedented changes brought on by these challenging times. We recently made several difficult decisions to protect our employees, supporters, and the individuals we serve. This included cancelling our 54th Celebrity Sports Night, an annual fundraiser critical to the livelihood of our knowledgeable staff and the continuation of high-caliber programs and services children and adults with disabilities trust and expect.

Rest assured: Our team is still providing people in the disability community with the necessary tools and support to overcome obstacles and succeed, we’re simply doing things a little differently. We’ve discovered new ways to educate and employ by:

- Swiftly switching 170 pre-K-12 medically fragile students with severe physical disabilities to remote, online instruction complete with individualized lesson plans.
- Delivering supported employment services to 70+ workers in essential job roles.
- Establishing virtual touchpoints for “at-risk” adolescents and students with developmental disabilities as they develop vital skills for adulthood.
- Enhancing resume, job search, and video interviewing skills for veterans and individuals with disabilities seeking employment in a turbulent market.
- Guiding and mentoring innovators to launch their own business.

The Viscardi team is motivated to learn, grow, and adapt to our rapidly changing world. We’ve taken the opportunity to be thoughtful about our vital role in the disability community and the purpose of our important work. While this pandemic has radically shifted so much about our lives, what hasn’t changed is the core of our mission to empower people with disabilities.

Stay connected while social distancing: Follow @ViscardiCenter on social media for the latest updates and support our work at ViscardiCenter.org/donate.
We often hear references to the proverb, “it takes a village,” as it relates to raising a child. During these unprecedented times, it truly is taking a village to support all members of our society through this pandemic. It’s taking entire communities made up of diverse populations to see, understand and act on fulfilling the needs of all their residents, so everyone’s basic essentials – food, shelter, health care, financial assistance – are met equally.

While the past several months has brought much hardship and sorrow, we have also seen individuals step up to provide assistance. Whether it be health care professionals, first responders, essential workers or our neighbor next door, the compassion is remarkable and a ray of sunshine during, at times, an engulfing storm.

We see hope for the future. Perhaps this event has taught many to notice and think about the children and adults in our localities, near and far, whose needs may be different than our own and how together we can address them now and beyond. Perhaps it opened eyes to inequalities we were never aware of before. Let’s be sure to learn something from this experience. Most importantly, let’s be sure to act upon what we’ve learned from it.

Stay well.

President & CEO

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Much of the U.S. workforce is now working from home, signaling a shift that will likely impact employers for the long-haul. From The National Business & Disability Council (NBDC) at The Viscardi Center, an employer organization and comprehensive resource for disability best practices, here are some quick tips to empower remote workers.

1. **Hold check-ins** – Remote workers can experience isolation and loneliness from lack of human interaction. Regularly engage with employees through phone calls, video conferences, and your company’s internal communication platform.

2. **Ensure equal digital access** – If you haven’t already, now’s the time to consider digital accessibility at your workplace. Find out how our Digital Accessibility Services can help your colleagues fully participate through accessible websites and documents, video captioning, audio descriptions, and more at viscardicenter.org/digital-accessibility-services.

3. **Provide necessary accommodations** – Specific requirements around workplace accommodations for remote workers, such as modified office furniture or accessories, are not clearly defined in federal regulations like the Americans with Disabilities Act, but it’s good practice to communicate with employees about the best productivity tools to meet their needs.

4. **Set boundaries** – Without official office hours, it’s easy for remote workers to get lost in their work and even experience burnout. Consider setting boundaries around schedules and deadlines by encouraging daily start and stop times, with time built in for regular breaks.

5. **Encourage team building** – It’s still important for teams to form relationships and interact beyond work-focused discussions. Virtual office “socials” are a fun way to connect, or simply begin each meeting by asking employees how they are managing outside of work.

Learn about the benefits of NBDC membership. Call 516-465-1587.
Meet Shane
How This Sports Fan Reached His Goals

Although Shane has been busy since graduating from the Henry Viscardi School at The Viscardi Center in 2009, he made time to reconnect with old classmates at a multigenerational alumni reunion last November. The evening, which drew in hundreds from around the country, prompted him to look back on the experiences that shaped his life.

Reflecting on his school days, Shane says Viscardi gave him the confidence to aim high and accomplish whatever goals he set for himself. He even adopted a motto that he still lives by: “Shoot for the stars, land on the moon. The only disability is a bad attitude.”

“Shoot for the stars, land on the moon. The only disability is a bad attitude.”

Shane was known among classmates as a leader who wasn’t afraid to advocate for his needs. A major achievement for him was when he contacted the Board of Education and successfully negotiated accessible transportation to the Saturday basketball tournaments so he and his peers across the New York area could participate.

Shane’s love of sports later translated into a meaningful career. He entered the workforce with a dream job as a seasonal Legends Customer Service Ambassador for the New York Yankees. Once the season ended in 2015, he worked his way up at Toys “R” Us, then landed a position as manager at Dick’s Sporting Goods.

He says the most rewarding aspect of the job is helping customers feel excited about their unique athletic abilities. His commitment recently paid off, as he was one of few managers selected nationwide to be nominated as a 2019 Manager of the Year.

Now in 2020, Shane’s nothing but optimistic about his future. Approved for a service dog and planning for his first apartment, he hopes to mentor fellow alumni striving for independence. When it comes to his ambitions, Shane continues to “shoot for the stars.” His goals? “Be happy, healthy, and wealthy.

NewsBytes

New video: The Viscardi Center is a vibrant community of educators, employment experts, advocates, students, parents, and job seekers – and together, we’re building a more accessible and inclusive world for all. Watch our corporate video to learn more about our unstoppable mission to empower children and adults with disabilities at YouTube.com/ViscardiCenter.

People with disabilities are an integral part of the essential workforce keeping communities going through the current crisis. We’re proud to continue providing supported employment services to 70+ individuals who remain committed to bringing their very best to work during this time of great need.

Pictured here, employment placement and supported services participant Roderick stocks shelves and prices auto care products at a local Pep Boys.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

The Viscardi Center’s President & CEO John D. Kemp has been named a National Honoree of the National Recognition Project for his service and advocacy work for people with disabilities, joining the likes of George H.W. Bush, Bob Dole, and Barack Obama. He was selected for his lifelong achievements, including his work in the areas of job training, employment supports, and assistive technology.

The National Historic Recognition Project: 2000-2020 chronicles key figures and trends that have shaped the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities in the U.S. Honorees were selected for their significant national contributions through research, practice, public policy, and advocacy initiatives that have enhanced quality of life for people with disabilities over the last twenty years.
Celebrity Sports Night Silent Auction

Experience our Celebrity Sports Night Silent Auction from the comfort of your couch! Bid on exclusive sports memorabilia and keep programs and services for people with disabilities going.

Open:
Now until May 15 at 8 p.m. ET.

Visit:
biddingforgood.com/sportsnight or give a gift at ViscardiCenter.org/donate

You’re INVITED

Reach for a Star Luncheon
15 OCT
Crest Hollow Country Club
Woodbury, NY

New date! Enjoy lunch with Ali Stroker, who became the first actress in a wheelchair to receive a Tony Award.

This unforgettable afternoon includes an eye-opening program, live music, cocktails, sit-down lunch, raffles, and a silent auction.

For tickets, sponsorships, and information, visit ViscardiCenter.org/luncheon.

YOUR LASTING IMPACT

The Viscardi Center’s Project Accessible Oral Health (PAOH) initiative aims to improve access to oral health care for people with disabilities; the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation supports organizations that address unmet health care needs that impact New Yorkers. Together, we’re serving the region’s most underserved communities.

As a grantee, we’re honored to expand PAOH’s efforts to make equal access to oral health care a priority. While oral health is linked to the wellness of the entire body, it’s often difficult for people to find high-quality, fully accessible treatment options. Since 2017, PAOH has acted to enhance the overall health of the disability community by educating caregivers, uncovering solutions to increase the number of culturally competent providers, and restructuring reimbursement structures.

The Project is now assembling a toolkit to be distributed statewide with details on finding an accessible provider, preparing for dental visits, and instructions for oral care at home. When it becomes safe to do so, PAOH will resume its educational seminars and dental screening events.

The Mother Cabrini Foundation continues the work of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, known as Mother Cabrini, who was drawn to those in need.

“Mother Cabrini spent her life devoted to those who faced the greatest struggles, and the Foundation named in her honor is proudly carrying on her legacy,” said Msgr. Gregory Mustaciuolo, CEO of the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation. “From supporting pediatric cardiac care units in children’s hospitals to expanding mental health services to enhancing immigrants’ access to services, our inaugural grants are already making a difference in communities across New York State.”