Mission Snapshot: Educating, Employing, and Empowering in 2021

With cutting-edge technologies, expert staff, and the completion of major renovation projects, The Viscardi Center is advancing hands-on and virtual opportunities for a diverse community thanks to contributions to our recent capital campaign.

Our Growth

- **20+** State-of-the-art smart home and accessibility features in our newly renovated Independent Living House
- **54,000** Gallons of water to fill heated pool in new Aquatic Center
- **43%** Increase in Day Hab Without Walls enrollees
- **3** New and expanded programs serving young adults over 21, veterans, and budding entrepreneurs

Our Achievements

- **170** Medically fragile K-12 students attending in-person classes
- **$75,000** Equity-free cash grants and mentorship packages for budding entrepreneurs
- **2,500+** Youth & adults with disabilities benefiting from education/employment services
- **175** Bottles of hot sauce made from 75 pounds of peppers from on-site Smile Farms garden

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STAY CONNECTED WITH US: ViscardiCenter.org
NCDE Reflections

Recent alumni sound off about their experiences

“Although I have been running my animation company for more than 10 years, am a frequent public speaker, have an MBA, and am pursuing my PhD, I still learned so much. I will be using what I learned to grow my business globally as a minority female owner with autism of an entertainment, education, and employment social enterprise.”

Dani Bowman
DaniMation Entertainment

“Even with an MBA and nearly two decades of experience, I came to NCDE not too clear on my business concept, nor too confident in myself. The team, mentors, experts, and my fellow founders showed me how to develop a more viable concept and pursue something that I am passionate about. I have all the tools I need to be a boss.”

Ruben Ceballos
Haven Housing Consultants

“I came to NCDE feeling nervous as I transitioned out of a long-term career and got so much more than I anticipated. It has a high-quality curriculum with great experts and mentors. I learned new skills and won a pro-bono mentoring package in the PitchFest Competition to build out my entire brand and online presence.”

Susan Picerno
Little Tiger Productions

Diverse innovators with bright business ideas from around the United States. A panel of exacting judges. $75,000 in equity-free cash grants and mentorship packages. The National Center for Disability Entrepreneurship (NCDE) at The Viscardi Center will give the program’s second cohort a shot at self-employment success during its 2nd annual virtual Founders with Disabilities PitchFest Competition, presented in partnership with JPMorgan Chase & Co., on November 19 at 1:30pm.

The Viscardi Center itself was established by a founder with a disability. Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. first launched the organization in 1952 to provide better employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including veterans. Despite the efforts of advocates like Dr. Viscardi, and more than 30 years after the passing of the ADA, the labor force participation rate for people with disabilities remains low. Entrepreneurship may offer a strategic pathway for people with disabilities to overcome the many barriers that exist in the traditional employment model.

NCDE aims to provide participants with a keen skill set and lead a movement to spark a business ecosystem for entrepreneurs with disabilities nationwide. The 2021 PitchFest will advance these goals by connecting aspiring founders with the opportunity to present to industry experts, receive funding and mentorship, and successfully start up their own businesses.

Keynote speeches will be delivered by Major Jas Boothe, President & Founder of Final Salute Inc. and Chief Spirituality Officer of ANJA, LLC, and Jim Sinocchi, Head of Disability Inclusion at JPMorgan Chase & Co.

“We’re proud to sponsor this year’s PitchFest,” said Sinocchi. “People with disabilities are already hindered by limited access to affordable startup capital and a scarcity of programs and services tailored to their needs. Innovative initiatives like this are important because entrepreneurship is a viable self-employment option for individuals with disabilities.”

Join the disability entrepreneurship movement! Save your spot for the big event at pitchfest.ViscardiCenter.org
Meet Elizabeth

Elizabeth Santos gained international knowledge while serving eight years in the U.S. Army. Her duties focused on human intelligence collection and analysis and included a tour in Iraq. But after being discharged, Elizabeth struggled with the confidence to present herself as an asset to employers.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, up to 20% of American service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have experienced serve-connected PTSD. These veterans can face obstacles in securing employment.

“When you think of war veterans, you think of physical [disabilities]. Nobody really speaks about the hidden ones, the mental ones,” said Elizabeth. “One thing the military does is prepare you for being the best soldier you can be. But once you finish your service, it’s very difficult to adjust back to what we call civilian life.”

While studying for her MBA at St. John’s University, Elizabeth sought out the help of The Viscardi Center’s Employment Services for Veterans. A consultation with an employment placement professional led to employer networking events, a refined resume, and practice interviews with HR leaders from companies like Canon and BAE Systems.

“Growing up as a first-generation [American-born citizen], you don’t always get the opportunity to expand your horizons. You’re pretty much leading the way for your family,” she said. “I was grateful to learn basic things that I probably wouldn’t have learned — the importance of networking, the importance of resume writing, and the importance of properly communicating my skills from the military and how they translate over to the civilian world.”

Learn more about how The Viscardi Center’s employment services can help veterans enter or re-enter the workforce at ViscardiCenter.org/services

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

The Viscardi Center is proud to be named a Leading Disability Employer by the National Organization on Disability (NOD) for the fourth consecutive year. For the past seven years, NOD has selectively distinguished employers that are leading the way towards workplace inclusion while seeking to encourage others to tap into the benefits of building a diverse workforce. We join top national nonprofits and businesses recognized for demonstrating exemplary practices in recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing employees with disabilities.

As we observe October’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), which commemorates the vast and varied contributions of people with disabilities to workplaces and our economy in the United States, The Viscardi Center’s mission to improve employment outcomes for the disability community will always begin here within the walls of our organization.

The 2021 NDEAM theme — “America’s Recovery: Powered by Inclusion”— reflects on providing access to employment and community involvement during the national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have openings in your workplace, The Viscardi Center can link you to qualified job candidates. Contact our Employment Placement Services team at 516.465.1546.

NewsBytes

Read our blog

WCAG guidelines are a powerful tool when it comes to developing an accessible website. But what does it take to create an enjoyable online experience for all users? A recent guest blog from the American Foundation for the Blind unravels the significance of prioritizing usability. Check it out at ViscardiCenter.org/viscardi-blog

Watch our Achievement Awards

Get to know influential role models with disabilities and the profound impact they are making in the lives of others around the world. Visit our YouTube page on December 9 at 12 p.m ET to catch the virtual 2021 Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards and learn about their work! Tune in at YouTube.com/ViscardiCenter
Reach for a Star
Online Auction
November 8-18

Support the Henry Viscardi School and activities that enable its students to simply have fun with friends outside of class, just like other kids. Bid on over 50 items, including a JetBlue Vacations package, a shopping spree at Americana Manhasset, and more. Unique sponsorship and “fund-a-need” opportunities are also available. It’s never too early to shop for the holidays!

View details and start your bidding at ViscardiCenter.org/auction

Your Lasting IMPACT

This one goes out to all of you. Our friends, partners, and fellow employees who have done so much to keep us moving toward a better future. As we count down to the end of another calendar year this fall, we’re grateful for those we could count on during times of intense need.

At the start of the pandemic, The Viscardi Center launched a Sustainability Fund with a goal to preserve vital education and employment services that individuals with disabilities rely on daily. The support we received in the face of uncertainty validated the importance of our work to empower children and adults and elevated our ability to safely deliver needed programs.

★ Medically fragile children are confidently attending school five days a week with access to customized assistive technologies, therapies, and excellent teachers.
★ Adolescents and at-risk youth are developing the skills to successfully transition into adulthood.
★ Job seekers and entrepreneurs are connecting with meaningful careers and the resources to start businesses.
★ Adults and seniors, many of whom went months at home with little social interaction, are engaging with their community in a fast-growing day habilitation program.

Your contributions made a direct impact. They provided critical protective gear and ensured a healthy environment in our building. They distributed laptops to students, allowing for remote learning when necessary, including core academic classes and enriching virtual field trips. They proved that, together, we can adapt and create better opportunities at school, work, and in our community. Thank you!

Want to make a Lasting Impact on the lives of people with disabilities? Call 516.465.1593.