

The Henry Viscardi School

At The Viscardi Center

The Cougar Chronicle

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Special Edition

Getting to Know You... Welcome Dr. Chris



Last month the Henry Viscardi School students from all grades submitted questions for Dr. Chris Rosa, the new President and CEO of The Viscardi Center and President of Henry Viscardi School. The Cougar Chronicle went through and selected questions for a 45-minute interview to serve as a getting-to-know-you for HVS and the TVC community. On December 8th, three of our 11th graders got the chance to virtually sit down with Dr. Chris and interview him, asking your hard hitting questions. Special thank you to Dr. Chris for sitting down to talk to us and to Kyle Griffith, Hanna Music, and Yasmine Murchison for their budding interviewing skills.



Where did you go to school when you were a boy? (Jeremy P. 12th grade) Where do you live now? (Fanta D. 6th grade)

- ◇ I went to elementary at PS:163, then intermediate/middle school at IS:237, which is named for Rachel Carson who is an environmentalist. I went to Francis Lewis High School: GO PATRIOTS! I still live in my childhood home which is 6 blocks away from my elementary school in Flushing, Queens.



When is your birthday? (Tessah M. 5th grade)

- ◇ My birthday is March 13th and I am a Pisces. As a water sign, I am supposed to be empathetic and a good listener and like to think I am.

How many people are in your family? Do you have a big family? (Ricardo A. 5th grade)

- ◇ I have a younger sister named Christina and a younger brother John, who also uses a wheelchair.

Do you have any pets and if so, what are they? (Nicolas F. and Lauren R. 6th grade)

- ◇ I don't have any pets now! A long time ago I had a canary named Enrico who lived a long life. However, now I can barely take care of my houseplants. I love dogs and can't wait to meet Sunny, especially since I don't have to remember to take care of him.

Do you have a disability like us? If so, what is your disability? (Asaad RAMP)

- ◇ Yes, I have muscular dystrophy and have used a wheelchair since I was 12 years old. My brother John also has MD and uses a wheelchair to get around. Also, I love that you used the word 'us' as it connects us all as a community and together we will change the world.



You have Dr. before your name. What is your doctorate in? (8-1 class)

- ◇ I have a PhD which makes me a Doctor of Philosophy in sociology. I have a concentration in American Disability Culture. A culture means the unique way a group of people see, understand, and interact with the world around them. I believe that people with disabilities have their own culture, just like other groups which connects us as a family.

Why were you interested in working at Henry Viscardi School? (Adryana N. 6th grade)

- ◇ I believe that The Henry Viscardi Center and school are a shining beacon of hope for all generations. I always knew of the Viscardi Center and remember telling my friends I was going to learn to drive there. I knew about HVS even before I understood how remarkable it was. I knew of Dr. Viscardi, and believe his work is a shining example of empowerment and inclusion. I got to know a lot of its leaders, such as Mr. Kemp, who was a hero and role model for me. I value disability work and this place is one of the best. The work everyone at HVS does blows me away. This is the best job in the nation and it is a dream come true to follow in Mr. Kemp's footsteps.



Do you plan on visiting the classes and the school regularly? (6-1 class)

- ◇ I actually think that the best part of the job is the ability to be with you guys on a regular basis. I plan to, and I don't know if this is realistic, greet the students every morning when they come in. I want to come into the classrooms, as long as staff invites me in, I want to be a student like you and learn beside you.

How will you make the school better for us? (6-1 class)



- ◇ When I worked at CUNY, the best part of my job was working with students to give them a voice. My approach is to listen closely to the shared governance and to work with you and hear your needs and concerns. I want to work closely with the student councils and show you that you have a voice here.

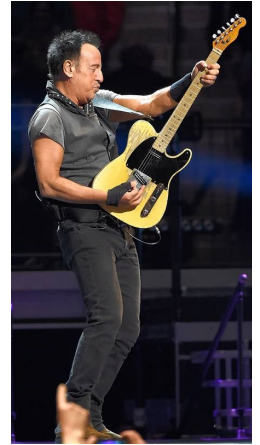


Do you use a power wheelchair? If so, is it green? (Joshua P. 1st grade)

◇ I have a power wheelchair, but unfortunately, it's just plain black. If they had offered me green I would have taken emerald green. It's probably for the better it's black though since I am a bit messy.

What do you like to do when you're not working? (3rd grade)

◇ I love sports, especially the Mets! I actually ran into Coach Joe and a few students at an Islanders game recently. I am also really into 'old people mu-sic,' mostly classic rock. Have you guys ever heard of Bruce Springsteen? Well I consider myself and my brother groupies for him. I have been to 129 Bruce Springsteen concerts, in 20 different arenas, and 10 different states.



What is your favorite food or drink? (Ismaeel A. and Lauren R. 6th grade)



◇ I love a good cheeseburger. Actually, I am always looking for new places that have good cheeseburgers, so if you know any, let me know. Also I am Italian, so Italian food is always a favorite, but better than any other Italian food is my mother's lasagna.

Is there anything you can do to improve school lunches? (Juan R. 10th grade)

◇ I will definitely look into it and I am willing to try them all to speak to the quality and see what we can do and not do. I will say that as long as I've been around school lunch can be good, but it will never be as good as my mom's lasagna.



What kind of music do you like? (Kyle G. 11th grade)

◇ We talked about classic rock and Bruce Springsteen before. However, I am also acquiring a respect and appreciation for hip-hop and want to know more about it.





Do you like Star Wars, WWE, and Marvel? If so, who are your favorites (Gia M. and Maxwell K. 4th grade)

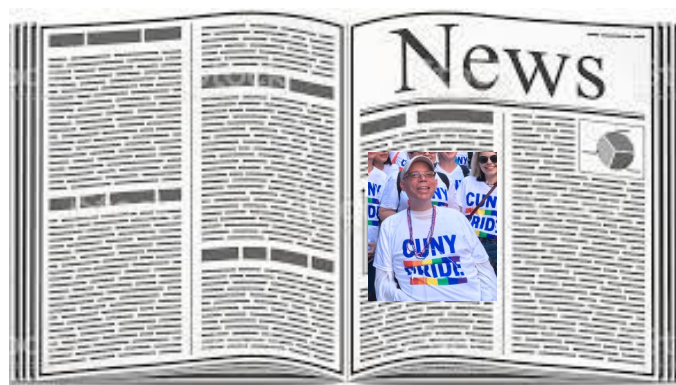
◇ I like Star Wars, especially the original trilogy, but I admit there are people that really know Star Wars and I wouldn't say I am all that knowledgeable. I was into WWE in the 80s when it was WWF, when it was people like Hulk Hogan, Andre the Giant, Junkyard Dog, those guys. My favorite wrestler ever though is Bob Buckland. He was always a good guy telling people to do the right thing. As for Marvel, I was never a comic book guy, but I like the movies. I like all the Spiderman movies, but my favorite hero would be Dare Devil, who is blind, because it's great to see a disabled hero.

What are some ways you think you can improve the community of The TVC and HVS to bring everyone together? (Jaser K. 11th grade)

◇ I would like to qualify this answer, put some parentheses around it, until I get the opportunity to spend some time here and get the vibe of the community. I cherish the opportunity for people to get together and to share a pride and an identity. I would like to work with the leadership of the school and center as well as you all and your teachers to make time and opportunities for us to connect socially, through civic engagement, advocacy, and education.

What was your first job ever? (Angelic M. 12th grade)

◇ My first job was when I was 14 in New York City at the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program. I was the editor of the program's newsletter at the New York Youth Medical Center which is now part of NYU.



How accessible were things when you were growing up and do you think they have gotten better since then? In what ways do you think things can still improve? (Anonymous)

- ◇ When I went to kindergarten things were not all that accessible, but that started to change as time went on as different acts and laws came into effect. The ADA changed things and accessibility for everyone. The biggest change I have seen recently is that New York City now has accessible taxis and Ubers. Now I can use my phone to call a cab or an Uber on demand that can take me anywhere I need to go. I believe that your generation of advocates will go to a different model of inclusion.



Did you do well in school? What was your favorite subject? (Mike C. RAMP)

- ◇ I have always been a strong student. My mother was a high school teacher who put a strong emphasis on studying and working hard, learning the material and understanding the world around you; not just learning for the test or the grade. I would say my favorite subject was social studies and later history, which probably led to my doctorate in sociology.





Quick Fire with Dr. Chris



Mets or Yankees?

- ◇ I already said the Mets all day, but if I had to pick another team it would be the Tampa Bay Rays. I like that they do very well on a small budget, their whole team together are paid what other teams pay one player.



Islanders or Rangers?

- ◇ ISLANDERS and let's just say we won't mention that *other* New York team in red.

Jets or Giants?

- ◇ Jets, which means I am unhappy most Sundays, but I like to think it builds character.



Knicks or Nets?

- ◇ Knicks! The orange and blue seems to be a theme.

Lastly, Dr. Chris, do you have any questions for the HVS community?

Yes. I would like to know...

- ◇ What makes you proud to be an HVS student?
- ◇ If you could change anything about your experience with HVS what would it be?

Dr. Chris would love to hear all of your answers, so please send in your answers, and they will be published in the next edition of the Cougar Chronicle.

**Welcome to
HVS,
Dr. Chris!**

