



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Salutes Henry Viscardi Cougars For Big Win at Basketball Tournament

JACK M. MARTINS July 29, 2011

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Under sunny skies, the heat beat down on the basketball courts at the Dutch Broadway Elementary School in Elmont. The Henry Viscardi School Cougars waited patiently for their game to begin. The Cougars weren't taken on any ordinary team; they would be taking on the Nassau County champion Elmont Memorial High School Spartans.

Senator Jack M. Martins has spent time visiting the schools in the Seventh Senate District, including the Henry Viscardi School for the Disabled, located in Albertson, and Elmont Memorial High School. After visiting the Henry Viscardi School for its annual sports night, Senator Martins was so impressed watching the Viscardi team play basketball that he invited the team to participate in the annual basketball tournament in Elmont, sponsored by Senator Martins, scheduled for Saturday, July 16.

Senator Martins set up the game between the Henry Viscardi Cougars and the Elmont Memorial High School Spartans as a way to bring both school together for a friendly game of basketball.

The Spartans are used to passing the ball around to finding the open man. At times, they look almost as though they could play in the NBA. But, on that recent Saturday, they played a different opponent then they are used to facing with both teams playing the game in wheelchairs.

The Henry Viscardi Cougars showed that what they didn't have in height, they made up for in heart. The Cougars showed their resiliency in defeating the Spartans 70-53. For the Senator Martins and the Elmont community, it was an honor having the Henry Viscardi School at the tournament.

"We can all learn a lot from the Henry Viscardi School players, the staff and the parents. They don't let anything stop them from doing what they love to do. The gentlemen on Elmont Memorial are outstanding young men. They couldn't help but be impressed by their counterparts on the Viscardi team," said Senator Martins.

"They know how to play," said Elmont star player Robert Chambers.

Despite the heat, the Henry Viscardi team and Elmont Memorial squared off for a few hours after former New York Knick John Starks through up the ball for the opening tip-off.

According to the Henry Viscardi School, the school's Wheelchair Basketball Program was created to allow children of all levels of physical disabilities to play together as a team and to reach their highest potential as athletes. The program gives children a chance to have fun, learn to respect individual needs, as well as learn good sportsmanship and teamwork. The goal is to encourage individuality, heighten self-esteem, and provide a safe environment for each member of the team.

"I want to thank the Henry Viscardi School and Elmont Memorial High School for taking part in this special game. They both displayed their teamwork, sportsmanship and love for the game," Senator Martins said. "I hope this becomes a yearly tradition. I would be honored if both schools take participate again."