Arts & Life

Professor of kindness: An interview with Chester

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When you walk into The Bobcat Den, better known by the students as “the Rat,” the first smiling face you see is Chester.

Standing behind the cash register, the jolliest man at Quinnipiac is ready to check out your purchases. Beloved by many, Chester is one of Quinnipiac’s campus celebrities. During an interview with The Chronicle, he started with a joke. When asked his age, Chester responded, “My age, the real one? Okay 59.” Always a light spirit with a sense of humor.

Chester Jones, a food service employee at Quinnipiac, has worked here for almost 19 years. As the students like to say, he is “the professor of food.” Over the years, he has worked in the Café Q on the Mount Carmel Campus, on York Hill, and presently at The Rat. As he says, “The Rat is my home.”

Time and time again, Chester would mention his love for the students and coworkers at “the Rat.”

“All my co-workers and all the students are just top-notch; the best,” Chester said. “You know, they treat me the way I treat them, and that's a pretty good feeling.”

Growing up, Chester moved frequently while his father went from job to job. He lived in Florida, Waterbury and Derby, Connecticut. In Florida, his family of eight lived in a double-wide trailer park. Later, his family grew to become a total of 11 people.

As a pastime, he liked to go fishing with friends. At night, when the ground was moist, they would grab night crawlers — also known as earthworms — and use them to fish. Chester explained that not having a lot of money meant fishing was one of their only pastimes.

While in Derby, Connecticut, Chester met his wife, Cindy. They first met through Chester’s older brother, who used to date Cindy. But then they worked together making the heavy metal magazine, Hit Parader, at Charton Press. The two would go out after work and eventually fall in love.

At age 22, Chester and Cindy, then 28, tied the knot. They decided on marriage because they were happy, and it helped save money with insurance.

But as Chester likes to joke, “One day I picked up Cindy for a date and her mother was standing on the porch with a shotgun and said, ‘Haha, you were late, you know what else was late?’” indicating they had a shotgun wedding.

Chester and Cindy never had children of their own. Instead, they would help babysit their nieces and nephews and later their nieces and nephews' children. Chester spoke fondly of his whole family and loves watching them raise their own families. Most of his family lives in Florida, but he tries to see those who live in Connecticut as much as he can. He says, “They're so grown, and you watch them by kicking back and watching them take care of their families, like you used to do, and it's a pretty amazing feeling.”

They did, however, have cats at one point. One was named Tramp and the other Zoe. They loved their pets and suffered a great deal when they passed. When asked if he would get another cat, Chester said, “It hurts so much when you lose an animal that we just didn't want to do it anymore.”



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Chester Jones is Quinnipiac University's friendliest face. He has been working at QU for 19 years and currently occupies the register at the Bobcat Den on Mount Carmel Campus.

Working at Charton Press, his wife and his wife’s cousin’s husband were his bosses. Chester said, “He was my boss, my friend, my tax guy, he was like a father to me, you know, after my dad had passed.” Chester enjoyed working at the magazine company, but had to leave when they started to close in 2007. Losing his job is what led him to apply to Quinnipiac.

As Chester puts it, “I love it here (at Quinnipiac), this is where I belong.” He loves working on campus and believes it's where he is meant to be. “I'm glad to be here, and I thank God every day. I mean, I'm not a praying man, but I say he's the reason why I'm here, Cindy's the reason why I'm here, you folks are the reason why I'm here.” Chester really loves Quinnipiac, “because I love everybody and it’s just the most amazing place on Earth, seriously, great.”

Chester's goal here is to make us students happy. “I get up every day and I say, ‘how can I make their day today?’ Just be yourself, that's all you need.” According to him, his job is to make us happy. “That's what I came here to do, if I can give somebody a smile or a nice word, you know, if it makes their day, my job is done.”

All Chester wants is to give us a smile. “If you see someone without a smile, give them yours,” he advises.

Chester is very admirable, especially through hardship. Sadly, in June 2024, Cindy passed away. Even sick, “...she still got up every day and tried to do something in the house.” They were married for almost 35 years. Chester said that it was difficult losing his wife. He said, “It wasn't always perfect, but that’s what marriage is, and we just took really good care of each other. We didn't have much, but we had each other.”

When asked if he would ever get another pet as a companion, he said his wife always wanted a puppy, but doesn’t think it would be a good idea. “It's not fair to the dog because I would be working all day. The dog needs attention. The dog needs to be walked, you know. I'm in and out, that's a real handful, and you gotta take care of him,” he said. “You gotta get him to the vet because they're just as important to you as we are.”

Chester says students contribute to his happiness and uplift him.

“You know, I miss my wife sometimes, but like I said, I come to work and I have all you fine folks. You make me feel like I can't do anything wrong.” Chester even joked that we students keep his blood pressure low.

As Chester says, “You've got to give a little to get a little.” Being kind is the best thing you can do for others. Even if you don’t like someone, it’s important to be compassionate. Chester says, “People just need to learn to leave people alone, and if you don't like somebody, leave them alone. But if you do treat them like you want to be treated, nine times out of ten you can't go wrong.”

Chester’s joy in life and love for others are why he is so popular on campus. His positivity and the energy he is putting into the world are what make him so great. Chester is unknowingly teaching us how we should interact with others. He isn’t just the professor of food; he is the professor of kindness. And lucky for us, “I'm not going anywhere, not unless they get rid of me!”