

Transcript of Interview with Christopher Krizek by Alexander Michalski

Interviewee: Christopher Krizek

Interviewer: Alexander Michalski

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Abstract: Interviewer, Alexander Michalski, and narrator, Christopher Krizek, discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on jobs, politics, the economy and families.

AM 0:00

All right. So can you real quick introduce yourself?

CK 0:05

Sure. My name is Chris Krizek. I'm the Vice President of Pro Healthcare Foundation in Waukesha County, Wisconsin.

AM 0:10

Okay, so, when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it? And how have your thoughts changed since first learning about it?

CK 0:21

Well, if it's a continuous virus, you know, people have to continue to evolve their thinking about the health side of COVID-19. I myself am going to receive cancer treatments as we speak. Is something as absurd (inaudible). If I catch it, it could kill me more than others. And it is something that I am not scared of and I am not actually out there looking for it. But it is something that I trust clinicians here from health care and the disease experts in the government will guide us and continue to work for antibodies and protection. The economic side is a whole nother game. We need to work on companies, businesses, individuals, need to get back to work. We need to continue to evolve in our way of thinking of how do we change our economics? How we continue to look at how we can get people back to work. Livelihoods and others that depend on it while also understanding that pressures on hospitals to be able to do that elective surgeries and other procedures are just as important as taking care of patients with COVID-19.

AM 1:52

Yeah, absolutely.

CK 1:56

You know, it's one of those things that until we have a known, such as the flu, which could take years and years. We need to continue to evolve our way of thinking. Quite honestly and not being political about it today. But understanding the politics of it. I'm a political science major so (inaudible) to everything. We just need to relax. This is not a time for partisanship. This is not a time for, for trying to inflict my way of thinking upon others. Businesses have the rights to "no shirt, no shoes, no service." If a company wants to put up a "no mask" on there, they have that right. In public spaces, that's another conversation for the courts to decide if government's can make a mandate to wear a mask in public. But when we are in private businesses, it's no different now than if you came to my house and I asked you to put on a mask. You have a choice to either come in or go somewhere else. I think we just need to relax and understand that other people are going to different things than you yourself. You're trying to do some class work and you have a lot of pressure put on you. Things that you never thought in a million years (inaudible) that people have different pressures all the way around, and we need just to understand and appreciate folks.

AM 3:36

Yeah, yeah, I completely agree. Yeah, I have a couple more questions. Okay. So, how has a COVID-19 affected your job? And in what ways has it affected your job?

CK 3:55

Sure. Well, the economics, the end of the day the foundation is just money if you will. (mumbling) From the economic side of things, there are lessons learned from the economic crisis of 2008. There are so many differences between today and what happened 12 years ago. The market was in a different place, jobs were in a different place. There were just so many things are different. However, there's so much that is still the same. People understand and appreciate that the fact jobs will come back. We have new jobs in COVID (inaudible). To our normal people will get back to work. Companies will reopen. And jobs will be there for the taking. When it comes to philanthropy, even though you know donors understand and appreciate their stability still, there's still the fear of the unknown when it comes to the stock market. And some people they change their way of giving or they slowed down their giving. They look at different (inaudible) for their support. From our standpoint, it's very important to continue to have a conversation with folks because Pro Healthcare is a gem and a great community partner. And it

has been for so many years because of the strong support the community and understanding support for Pro Healthcare. And we need to continue that going forward. Because Pro Healthcare does provide fully and compassionate health care, health care that we all deserve, right here in our own backyard. And as long as we can continue to connect with folks and explain to them and share with them the good that's happened with a public this bad. People will continue to - maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow but in the future.

AM 6:17

Yeah. So what have been your primary sources of news during this pandemic? And relating to that, have your new sources changed during this whole crisis? Yeah.

CK 6:37

You know, we watch a lot of local news because it is important to understand what's happening here locally not only necessarily in Waukesha County but in the southern part of the state. Because when you look at what's taking place, obviously, Milwaukee is the epicenter for that state of Wisconsin. Madison and Waukesha also who are up there in the two, and three and four ranking. Now we're seeing an outbreak and a surge in (inaudible) county and understanding of the pressures there not just from the COVID-19 side of things, just how they, how they look at healthcare and where they prefer to get their health care, understanding what pressures it may put on us. And so understanding what a lot of local newspapers, local news and ABC7 when it comes to the six o'clock news. I really try to search out the news organizations that rely on medical experts, because politicians - and this is going back to my political day - politicians will try to spin things a certain way. But when you look at your health care providers, you look at what the MD or PhD or RN. Typically when trying to looking out for those them best because there is so much uncertainty with how does COVID impact patients with cancer? How does it impact patients that have a (inaudible) issue that's known. And others and so I really try to search out news organizations that are not trying to slant my view one way or the other. They're sharing the facts so I make my own views. If I choose to go to a park as it reopens, I choose to go golfing because golf courses have re-opened, or other things that the governor continues to relax. If I want to make sure I'm making the best educated decision for my family and not have a box, and pressures put on me because of news organizations or how other people view it.

AM 8:53

Yeah. I agree. It's difficult to sift through all of this - all the news to find, you know, to get to the core to the core of the issue and find out who's really talking about it from more educated standpoint instead of trying to spin their own side. Yeah, I agree.

CK 9:14

Well, to that point - when fake news make it into the Encyclopedia Britannica. That's a term that I don't ever believe will leave us as a society. And you have 24 hour news and these folks have to fill it and if you click on and watch anything, CNN, FOX News, MSNBC and any other newer spinoff, if you watched the first ten minutes every hour, your catching up the news. Everything else in the next 50 minutes is just hot air of them trying to fill their time and ratings and all the crap that happens. But it's really - what I shared with you earlier is where we all have in keep in mind and take into account people's personal opinions. There was a small protest this weekend down the line. Where folks were walking around downtown. Some had masks on, some did not. They were opposing choices. They're all heavily armed and some of them carrying grenade launchers. Now, I'm not sure where that is coming into the protests to try to re-open the economy because the 2nd Amendment (inaudible). Unless they are planning to shoot the virus there are so many things that I don't understand. I believe in the 2nd Amendment people should have an opportunity to carry their own weapon if they choose. But I also (inaudible) into a subway with a grenade launcher? Where we've heard a lot that way of thinking continues to slant my views. Every day the first thing I do in the morning is I log on to CNN and FOX News and MSNBC to see what the headlines are. Yeah and you know it's interesting to watch how there's so much different news in the city and what is the topic of today and what shouldn't be. And what it should be is making American safer and our lives better not to be number one job. And not trying to slap me towards carrying a weapon as I protest safer at home or not wearing a mask for the very opposite. It really comes down and I believe in justice for society but we are on the edge in so many different ways is because we try to impose our way of thinking on other people. (inaudible).

AM 12:33

Earlier you mentioned your family and you look at the news to make the best decisions for your family and for yourself. So how has COVID-19 affected you and your family's day to day activities?

CK 12:50

It has affected us significantly. My wife - I'm married - I have been married for 19 years. I have 2 teenage sons, a 16 year old and a 13 year old. It has impacted each one of us. You know my wife is considered an essential employee and she works each and every day. She is (inaudible) a long term care facility in (inaudible) Wisconsin. So she works with elderly. She continues to go in, and she continuously has very strong practices at work and how she can come into the building. But also because of my cancer diagnosis, the very perspective of me going out to the grocery store to the hardware store anything of that nature. So she has to do more of the shopping she tends to make errands runs to hardware stores and pick up whatever we may need. So it's changed the way she functions significantly. She comes home, she changes in the garage, heads

straight to the shower, she showers, throws the clothes in the laundry. And we do not see her until she comes out probably after she showers and the laundry. So - we're doing our best - but she's working diligently (inaudible).

CK 14:26

My 16 year old son, well, is a sophomore in high school. He's (inaudible) found all this new freedom of his. (inaudible) And now he's stuck at home. He does go out some. He does go buy himself some McDonald's, grab a burger and come home and eat it at home. (inaudible) It's very difficult for him. Also, as you are experiencing with your education, things are completely online. (inaudible) But now he's gotten into his rhythm, find it being able to adjust from there. Also wants now, he plays in three different baseball leagues if you will - a high school league, his Legion High School league, and a (inaudible) league. And, so far two of the three of those have cancelled for the year. (inaudible) ...starting catcher for Varsity, he put in a lot of work towards it, and I feel bad for him that he lost out on the opportunity. We have a nephew who is a senior in high school. He lost out on his final year of baseball and may not have the chance to walk in the ceremony. So this has effected a lot of other people. And that's why I talk about we need to understand and appreciate how this impacted so many homes and (inaudible).

CK 16:16

Going back to my 13 year old, he's ready to go into high school, he will not have a graduation ceremony this year. (inaudible) The commencement impacts him in a smaller way but still 8th grade was very important to him. He does go out of the house. He will drive around and look at things but he has not (inaudible) since this all began. So if (inaudible) outside an awful lot we allowed his gaming time to increase because it's an opportunity for him to connect with his friends even in a virtual world. You and I are talking through Zoom. Certainly being able to carrying on conversations even in a whatever game they are playing.

CK 17:07

You know, I continue to carry on with my medical treatments. I have a wonderful group that I work with here at the Foundation (inaudible). They still want me to come into the office. They try to make sure my office is always being clean, even on days that I (inaudible). We're a very tight knit group here at (inaudible). But even for me, I have not gone to (inaudible) since this all began. I have gone into a few just because we've had to do that. I come into the office a couple of times a week. I do my medical treatments. I have an appointment, not every day but they average about every three days. And those are really my only outings.

CK 18:10

And, you know, as a family use is reduced an awful lot for us. Our expenses are minimal at best because - we're not clothes shopping, we're not out at the hardware store twice a week buying stuff we did not need, but there's an awful lot of things that (inaudible) that are expensive (inaudible). And, you know, (inaudible) go back to the level that they were. That's not what the economy wants from us.

AM 18:46

Yeah. So we have a few minutes left, so I have one more question for you. Knowing what you know now, what do you think the individuals, communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

CK 19:07

(inaudible) You know will we have more outbreaks? We may get a handle on this COVID-19 pandemic, and then we've got another one followed by some wasp or something - a moth or something. So we've gotta realize what the outbreak is (inaudible) waiting to understand and appreciate. Maybe that's the standard for how we can keep everybody calm during 9/11 for the people liked George Bush or did not like George Bush, one thing he did (inaudible) at a time of crisis and great unknown - were we going to war? Was there going to be another Vietnam? And so much more. George Bush was a (inaudible). There we look back, there in the details, not projecting in a public way. (inaudible) where we're at. I think our government, politicians today, they need to figure out a better ways to have us protected. Better ways, of not just having (inaudible) on hand because N-95 masks, even having those, they are only good for so long. (inaudible) ...they deteriorate over time. So it may not necessarily be about having a actual paper (inaudible). How can you production in certain ways because the lights are off when protection when it comes to masks or eye wear or anything like that. How can you just ramp that up? How can we keep people supported? Why did it take this long to go through the economic impact of COVID-19 for government leaders to buy milk to buy other foods to keep our farmers busy, to keep them productive and get those items to food pantries that are helping millions and millions of people across the country. The argument here about dairy farmers dumping milk, because the price wasn't there. Why did it take so long?

CK 21:41

And, so, you know, there's always a time after this to look back and - and not be critical - but, you know, try to figure out better ways to go about it understand and appreciate the experts in the room that they're sharing this type of information. It's not in a way that the sky is falling today, but it certainly could tomorrow if we're not prepared for it. I do think I don't want to say how many political leaders in the room did not work because again, you have Democrats and Republicans, they're (inaudible). So you're going to have right minded calm rational people

saying "hey, here's what (inaudible)." If and when this happens again how we get through the pandemic side is health and the economy. So we're not going from a project of 60,000 Americans dying because they stayed home and social distancing. For now, I'm hearing numbers between 150,000 and 200,000 as we begin to open up and there's got to be a happy meeting in there. I certainly don't want to - I don't want to die. Just to reopen the country. So how can we best protect those that are most vulnerable without telling them "well just stay home for the next year and a half." People cannot do. So, I truly think if we sit down in a calm rational way, without pointing fingers, walk through this day by day, hour by hour, week by week and say, "what decisions were made? Why were they made? And what could we have done better or differently? Without (inaudible) at whomever made the decisions. Then I think we'll be better prepared in the society (inaudible).

AM 23:43

Yeah. Once again, I completely agree. I think that this blame game has made it difficult and I think it is important to just kind of look at what we've been doing now and move - grow from it. But yeah, I want to thank you so much for sharing your time and sharing your thoughts with me.

CK 24:10

I just want to share. You know, my history teacher during my freshman year in high school was once shared that if we don't understand our history we're doomed to repeat it. And I don't want to have to do this again. But I decided (inaudible) where aunts and nieces no longer talk because of (inaudible) it's just not good. And, if we do not understand and appreciate the situation that we are in, what we've experienced, we will never be prepared for what's to come. And that's a fear I have of all of our elected officials - Democrats, Republicans, independent Green Party, insert (inaudible). You have my cell phone number. As you're going through our conversation today. If you have any follow up questions, you're always welcome to call me, email or text and I'll be happy to go through into a little bit more depth on some of our conversation.

AM 25:45

All right. Excellent. Thank you. I hope you enjoy the rest of your day.

CK 25:52

Thank you. Good luck with your project. This will carry on with us (inaudible). You are a wonderful person and I really enjoyed working with you.

AM 26:02

Thank you.

CK 26:04

Thank you. Good luck with the project and good luck with graduation.

AM 26:08

Thank you.

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