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Salus University Graduate Named to Philadelphia Eagles Cheerleading Team

Elkins Park, Pa. — **Cristina Rosano, OD '20**, has always been a dancer. In fact, her dream as a young girl was to be a National Football League cheerleader.

For four years at Virginia Tech, she was on the dance team that would perform sideline routines at football games and halftime routines at basketball games.

But after graduating from Virginia Tech, Dr. Rosano took a gap year before enrolling in Salus University's Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO). Now not only did she want to be an NFL cheerleader, she wanted to be an optometrist as well.

Dr. Rosano graduated from Salus PCO in May of 2020 and just a few weeks later, both of her dreams would come true: She got a full-time job as an optometrist in the very same week she was chosen to be a cheerleader for the Philadelphia Eagles.

“My best-case scenario is all coming to fruition,” she said. “I was hoping to be able to work full-time and be with the Eagles as well.”

Originally from West Chester, Pa., Dr. Rosano graduated in 2015 from Virginia Tech with a Bachelor of Science degree in human nutrition, foods and exercise. During her time at Salus PCO, she did miss the dancing aspect of her life, but she stayed fit by working out the Hafter Student Community Center, which provided her with a good balance during optometry school.

In March, the Eagles posted on their website that they were going to be hosting virtual auditions for the cheerleading squad this year as a result of the pandemic. Those interested in trying out were asked to learn a dance and then submit a video to the team doing that dance by the end of April.

“I thought when I graduate, I’m just going to go for it and audition for the Eagles. I think I have a good shot at it,” said Dr. Rosano, who graduated in May during the University’s first-ever virtual commencement ceremony.

She was one of 576 candidates who applied to be an Eagles cheerleader, spanning 23 states as well as Canada, Mexico and Japan. Over the course of two months and several elimination rounds, 30 contestants advanced to the final audition, which consisted of a choreographed dance routine and an in-depth business interview.

On Tuesday, June 16, the Eagles announced eight new members who had been chosen for the 38-member 2020 cheerleading squad. The next day, Dr. Rosano revealed on Facebook she was one of the eight. And, two days after that, she also signed her job offer to be a full-time optometrist.

“It was absolutely insane when I was chosen. They told us we were chosen over a live Zoom call so they could record our reactions and compile a video, which was really cool,” she said.

The time required to be an Eagles cheerleader, who only perform at home games, is very reasonable, according to Dr. Rosano. She has to practice with the team two nights a week and make some community appearances. But the Eagles know she's an optometrist with a full-time job. In fact, among the other new members chosen for this year's squad include a physical therapist, a student studying neuroscience, a professional dancer, a doctoral student, a NASA intern and a 13-year Air Force veteran.

Her new employer is also aware of her side gig as an Eagles cheerleader and are excited about it as well.

And, there's a connection there, too — the Eagles Charitable Foundation partners with Vision to Learn to offer eye-care services to students in the School District of Philadelphia. "I'd love to be involved with that and give eye exams to the students and be involved with the Eagles Charitable Foundation," said Dr. Rosano.

In a video to the new team members, Barbara Zaun, director of entertainment teams for the Eagles, stressed that they were about to embark on one of the most fulfilling and interesting times of their lives.

"As an Eagles cheerleader, you have a unique platform to make a difference in the community as well as a positive impact nationally and internationally," said Zaun in the video.

Dr. Rosano hopes the platform she's been given — as both an optometrist and an NFL cheerleader — can be an inspiration for young people and show them they can set high goals for themselves.

"Go out and be a doctor, be a lawyer, be a politician, reach for higher education and then also follow your dreams," said Dr. Rosano. "My dream was to be an optometrist and an NFL cheerleader. Someone else might have a different dream, but there is no ceiling on what you can accomplish."

About Salus University

Salus University, founded as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1919, today is a diversified, globally recognized professional academic center of learning that offers a wide range of degree programs in the professions of Optometry, Audiology, Physician Assistant, Public Health, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Biomedicine, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology. Salus operates four clinical facilities in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services. The University has more than 1,200 students and more than 11,300 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit www.salus.edu.