

Christian Juneau



TSA: Please tell us about your career as a Park Ranger.

Chris: My dad was a marine biologist and as a kid I'd go with him to his office and I'd talk to the law enforcement agents. When I was 25 and started dating my wife Katherine, I told her about my interest in law enforcement. One thing led to another and I took the civil service test and from there I went on to apply to several police departments. At first there was no feedback from the city, local sheriff's department and several town agencies.

The city told me they were hiring and they put me through their hiring process. They really put me through the ringer — the psych evaluation and all. The guy who does the hiring said that my TS might be a problem and that he didn't think I'd be able to do it. He sent me to the courthouse nurse to see if I was qualified. It almost took an 'act of congress' just to get to see her and it did not work out.

At the same time I heard back from the sheriff's office and started the entire process again: polygraph, psych evaluation, drug screenings, medical exams, IQ tests, reading and math tests, you name it! It was a five-week process. I passed everything with flying colors and at the last minute, when I hadn't heard anything, I thought for sure they

When you visit state parks in Louisiana, keep an eye out for Christian Juneau. He's a 30-year-old park ranger with TS, proving every day that the people who told him he'd never have a career in law enforcement were absolutely wrong. Diagnosed at the age of 7, and taken out of regular school classes because of his noisy tics, Chris found his own way toward a satisfying career.

were getting my uniform ready for the academy, I was told they no longer needed my services and that hiring was on hold.

Two days later I saw the same man on the local news promoting hiring policemen, and that anyone who was interested should come in and fill out an application. It was a huge blow to me. It crushed me. When I got upset my wife got upset, too, and that's when I got determined. Nothing was going to get in my way. I went on the Internet and looked at state jobs since there are four state parks an hour or so from where we live.

I took another civil service test and passed it. After all I'd been through you can imagine my shock when a woman called me and I told her everything about my TS and that I had no law enforcement experience and she hired me over the phone.

Then I was sent to the academy. This was especially tough, as I had to see the people who had turned me down. I consider myself very athletic and it made me strive even more going up against future policemen. I beat them at all the physical things, five ball run and pushups. As of right now I'm qualified to work in any police department in Louisiana except the state police and they'd have to take me because I not only graduated from the academy, I came out winning awards. It was a glorious experience.

TSA: What was your life like growing up with TS?

Chris: School was the worst part of my life, especially middle school. When I was bussed off to a bad

part of town, an hour ride, it was very, very, very intimidating. I had tics that irritated my classmates. I got beat up on a regular basis and I was not in my comfort zone.

They decided to isolate me in the resource classes. They were smaller classes and slower, too. The others were not like me. They had learning disabilities. It was very frustrating for me. I was ready to move on and they were stuck on chapter one. I never felt challenged and I was taken away from my friends. I was able to make it through 8th grade and then I went to a high school five blocks from my house. It was better. I was in some resource and some regular classes. I was back with my friends from elementary school. My grades were good and I started to feel challenged, but at the end of my sophomore year, teachers complained about me. They said they'd heard from parents and I was put back into resource classes. That put my education back to a 7th grade level.

As a senior I had an opportunity to go to a career center, a trade school. I worked with small engines, boat motors, etc. I felt better and wasn't stuck in resource classes. The teacher was the best I'd had in 12 years. He taught me about life and respect and that things don't come easily in the real world. It was a great year. I graduated with A's and B's, but the classes were too easy for me.

TSA: Any tips on stress reduction to share with adults and kids with TS?

Chris: The one that has always helped me on the spot is the old

fashioned, counting to 10 and taking deep breaths in and out. Whenever I get into a very serious situation or something happens, it's like my TS vanishes and I get into this zone where I can be assertive and quiet and get into it and I don't have any tics. In the academy we were required to be very quiet in an exercise. They were amazed when I didn't make a sound. When I get into a serious situation there's a shut off switch. Maybe it's adrenaline? It's always been that way for me. Being physically active also helps. The treadmill and lifting weights seem to get a 'layer of TS out of me' and I sleep better because of it, too.

TSA: Do you have any advice for kids and teens with TS?

Chris: School was very hard on my social life. It was difficult to get a girlfriend and I went through school thinking it would never happen. But after high school I developed a great social life with more friends and girlfriends, too. There is so much to look forward to after high school. People understand more than high school kids do and you can tic and it's like they don't even know or don't notice it anymore.

One thing I've always done is to have a positive attitude. I'm 30 and I just got into the career I wanted. If I'd given up after the sheriff's department had turned me down, if I had buried my face in my bed, then I'd have let them win. They saw me at the academy and I'm working for a great department. Never give up, never quit. It's the worst thing you can do. ●

Attention Government Employees: It's Workplace Giving Season

Fall is the time of the year when federal, state and municipal employee workplace giving campaigns get underway. If you work for a federal agency or department, remember that TSA's Combined Federal Campaign code number is 11411. Wherever you work, be sure to select TSA for your payroll deduction.