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Blind jazz singer and Voorhees resident Rocco Fiorentino, 13, will be appearing on one of the most beloved children's shows, Sesame Street, nationwide on Thursday, Jan. 21. Here he poses for a picture with the cast. The show will first air at 6 a.m. with a repeat at 10 a.m.

## Rocco takes a trip down Sesame Street

Blind jazz singer and Voorhees resident Rocco Fiorentino, 13, tapes an episode on the popular children's show

By ROBERT LINNEHAN  
*The Voorhees Sun*

At just 13, Rocco Fiorentino has had some memorable duets with some of the biggest members of the music industry such as Stevie Wonder and Tony Bennett. You can now add Big Bird to that list.

Rocco will be appearing on one of the most beloved children's shows, Sesame Street, nationwide on Thursday, Jan. 21.

The show will first air at 6 a.m. with a repeat at 10 a.m., according to the official PBS Web site.

Rocco traveled to Astoria, N.Y., several months ago to film the segment with some of the most

beloved Sesame Street characters. Elmo and Telly Monster filmed the short segment with Rocco, asking him what it was like to be blind. Rocco, who has been blind since birth due to retinopathy of prematurity, said it was a natural thing to be blind.

In the segment, Elmo is surprised that Telly has to describe Elmo's appearance to Rocco. Rocco explains it's because he is blind and can't see the furry monster. Elmo initially feels sorry for Rocco, but Rocco puts him at ease immediately.

"I told him, 'It's fine, it's natural,'" Rocco said. "We're just talking about blindness and letting kids across the country know that being blind is not a bad thing."

Elmo then invited his Sesame Street friends to meet Rocco and gather on the famous Sesame Street steps. Rocco sings a jazz version of "Everybody's Song" with Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Abby Cadabby, Zoe, Maria and Gordon.

It was a thrill singing with Elmo, Rocco said, his favorite character on the show. One of the characters on the show, Zoe, also described Rocco's hair as "crunchy," which he thought was hilarious.

The actor Brendan Frasier was also on set during Rocco's day of filming. He will also be featured in the episode.

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## Rocco Fiorentino's appearance on Sesame Street to air Jan. 21

### ROCCO

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"If you weren't there, there's not really a way to describe it. It was just absolutely unbelievable," he said. "The whole thing was just so comical and just a very neat experience. I had so much fun doing it."

His mother, Tina Fiorentino, said the day was unbelievable. She grew up on the show, she said, and was star-struck when she was able to meet some of the characters she enjoyed when she was a child.

All of the puppeteers who voice the Muppets stay in character throughout the entire filming process, riding around the studios on specialized scooters so they can manipulate their puppets the entire time, she said.

"What's mesmerizing, as an adult you see people walking around with puppets on their arm, they're always in character. You're focusing on the puppets, talking to them, and laughing be-

cause they're so funny," Fiorentino said. "It was quite intriguing for Rocco to be behind the scenes, experience how they set up the whole stage and recording process."

Rocco has spent countless hours working with the foundation to raise money and increase awareness about the blind and educating the public about the importance of Braille education.

Created by his parents, Tina and Rocco, the Little Rock Foundation has served the blind community since 1997.

For more information about Rocco and his music, please visit [musicbyrocco.com](http://musicbyrocco.com).