

## HEADLINE: **From Toledo to TV, Dr. Vin Gupta's passion for public health shines through**

A saying often attributed to Abraham Lincoln goes, "I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him."

Whether or not the former U.S. president uttered those words, they epitomize the career of Dr. Vin Gupta.

Gupta has become one of America's most well-known public health experts thanks to appearances on television networks such as [MSNBC, CNN and CBS](#). At just 37 years old, Gupta has an eye-catching resume in public health that includes studies at Princeton, Colombia and Cambridge, along with service in the United States Air Force.

He may have a national profile now, but Gupta has never forgotten the places and people that have made him who he is today. He may no longer live in the Toledo, Ohio suburb of Sylvania that launched his medical career, but Gupta's work today fights for the healthy and safety of all Ohioans and all Americans.

Over the past few decades, politics and public health issues have become intertwined in a way that makes it difficult for health care experts to push for correct policy decisions while remaining apolitical. Gupta has recognized that challenge and responded by stepping up as one of America's most efficient medical communicators.

"How we consume information is changing, especially in the public health domain," Gupta said. "... People don't want to have a complicated medical journal rehashed to them. They just want basic concepts communicated clearly, and they would like them ideally communicated from people who have an underlying credibility in the space of public health."

A key tenet of Gupta's messaging that makes him trustworthy is the fact he doesn't shy away from politics when they impact public health. Rather, he tackles these issues head-on. In 2018, Gupta [voiced his support](#) for Ohio's Democratic candidate for governor, Richard Corday, due to his emphasis on public health issues.

When Republican nominee Mike DeWine won office and began instituting his own policies in 2019, Gupta was there to stand up for the well-being of Ohioans. In a [column for The Columbus Dispatch](#), Gupta defended Medicare Expansion, a woman's right to abortion and an increase of renewable energy in Ohio.

Gupta wrote, "Ohio arguably faces the worst set of public health crises in the country: poor rankings on overall health outcomes, unacceptably high opioid death rates, a rising maternal health epidemic and the near-omnipresent threat of a water security crisis. In response, the Ohio GOP has pushed forward policies that would further deprive an already under-resourced health system and stayed silent as they further walk back progress on the environment and women's health care."

One doesn't pursue a career in health care without caring about the well-being of others, and that is clear in Gupta's actions. He has a deep affection for the area of Toledo, Ohio that he grew up in, and that [his parents still reside](#) in.

Gupta's earliest schooling lessons came at Maumee Valley Country Day School, a private K-12 institution. The school is known for its small class sizes and out-of-school initiatives that give students hands-on experience shadowing jobs in the field.

Even 20 years after his graduation from Maumee Valley in 2001, Gupta is still connected with the school. In November, he took the time to [write a blurb](#) for the school's alumni magazine celebrating the career of the school's music teacher, Colleen Sieberg, after her passing.

Another former Maumee Valley teacher, Karen Lundholm, fondly remembers Gupta's intellectual curiosity as an elementary-school student in her classes and is proud of the career Gupta has built for himself.

"When Vin's name comes up, if someone has seen him on CNN or NBC, I'll say that I taught him to read," Lundholm said. "You want to think you were part of that success, not because of what you did but because of the environment we tried to create as a school. He certainly has accomplished a great deal in his life, no doubt about that."

However, a life in the public eye isn't without consequences. As portions of the general public [rejected the seriousness of COVID-19](#), the loudest voices calling for government action became targets of criticism. For Gupta, that meant nasty messages left at his work, [death threats](#) and [unlabeled packages](#) in the mail.

"No one likes that stuff when they have to file a police report, because then it's worrying less about your own safety but the safety of my wife, who is a pediatrician, and my four-year-old son," Gupta said.

Gupta's unwavering confidence through one of the biggest public health crises of the last 100 years has never changed, and those messages won't stop him either. The issues of COVID-19 are not behind us, as Gupta points out much can be learned for the next pandemic.

No matter the health issues that will emerge in the United States over the next couple decades, it's clear Gupta will be there to help lead the charge for the medical community. From the love for his hometown of Toledo to his messaging on complicated medical concepts, Gupta has shown he's willing to fight for the well-being of all Americans.

He may be one of the first medical experts to take this plunge, but he won't be the last.

"One thing that I think this pandemic has shown all of us is that, gosh, there is a deep need for crisis communicators who understand journalism, who understand mass media, and who can

communicate complicated public health concepts in clear ways to the American people,” Gupta said. “... I've just been trying to do what feels right.”