The Honors Passion Project: LEGO-Building with Grant Holyoak

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This semester the Utah State University Honors Program introduced The Honors Passion Project, a series of virtual lunchtime discussions with Honors alumni and friends about their passions, pastimes, or pursuits beyond work and academics. The series began on Tuesday, September 8, with Honors alumnus Grant Holyoak’s presentation, “Everything is Awesome (Again!): Rejoining the LEGO Community as a Quarantined Adult.”

Grant graduated from USU in 2016 with Honors and a degree in Sociology and Economics, and he volunteers to work with current students through our Honors Alumni Mentoring Program. He became a U.S. State Department Foreign Service Officer in April 2019 and is now in training to work as a Vice Consul at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China. In addition to his undergraduate degrees from USU, he earned a Master’s in Public Policy from George Washington University in December 2018. His research and academic interests include immigration and policy issues focused on refugees, Latin America, and China.

In keeping with the goals of The Honors Passion Project series, Grant’s personal love of LEGO-building, rather than these academic and career accomplishments, was the focus of his presentation. His LEGO passion began in childhood, but recently, Grant explained, the COVID-19 pandemic “forced me, like many people, to discover/rediscover socially-distanced indoor hobbies. Fortunately for me, my parents gifted me all of my childhood LEGO bricks a few Christmases ago, and I decided to try my hand at them again while stuck inside! I ended up completely re-falling in love with my childhood passion.”

Grant shared his LEGO creations with Honors students (his photo archive is also available on Instagram @masterbuildergrant) and his experience connecting with the adult-fan-of-LEGO (AFOL) community. After his presentation, Grant talked with Honors students and answered their questions about how he came up with ideas for LEGO builds and the best places to find used LEGO sets. This discussion in The Honors Passion Project series brought to life for Honors students the value of sharing creative work and connecting with a variety of communities. Grant’s passion shows that, even during a pandemic, everything can be awesome (again!).