

I still remember when Covid-19 began to hit the United States. My international relations class had been discussing the possible ramifications of a global pandemic and what it would look like in the US, blind to the fact that it would only be a matter of time before we too were quarantined. When cases began to pop up across the country, I refused to believe that my small town of Suffield Connecticut would ever be in danger from the virus, but I was mistaken.

Surrounding towns began to see surges in cases, especially among the older demographic. Nursery homes and retirement centers were the first to feel the impact of the virus, next schools, then everywhere seemed to have cases. The deaths of several turned to the deaths of hundreds across the state and before I could fully understand what was happening, my life would be put on hold.

It was Thursday when the news first broke that Connecticut would be looking to implement a quarantine. I tried to consider what would change in my daily life. The end of my senior season with my swim team was fast approaching. My team had trained the whole week and was preparing for the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) states meet. Three months of training every day for two hours had been building to this point, but we would never be able to compete one last time. Hearing that CIAC was shutting down all athletic events indefinitely seemed like a fantasy to me. I didn't want to believe that my 4 year tenure with my team would end like this. My senior swim season, the season that should've been the most memorable in my early career was tarnished.

Anger was the first emotion that I experienced. I was frustrated that the students participating in these events didn't have any say in the decision to close down athletics, upset that CIAC couldn't have let the last two weeks of the season play out and deal with Covid-19 afterward. At one point, several petitions were created in hopes of sending a message to the

director of CIAC that we wanted to compete, us seniors needed closure. Despite thousands of signatures on these petitions, the ruling was definite. All that was left to me now were the classes I shared and enjoyed with my friends.

Not a week went by before the announcement was made school would be closing down until Spring break with a possibility of complete online education being implemented for the rest of the year. I had only just come to terms with not racing one last time, but now I was being told I may not see hundreds of people I had spent the last eleven years of my life around ever again. We were left with one week to enjoy a normal life before saying goodbye. My friends and I agreed to stay in contact through text, facetime, Snapchat, whatever necessary to remain sane during our quarantine, but nothing could combat the feeling of isolation that was soon to come.

March 20th was the beginning of quarantine for our community and most of Connecticut. The governor had enacted several guidelines and regulations to ensure as little exposure from the public was necessary. Stores reduced their hours or closed down, gyms closed, schools closed their facilities, masks were required when indoors, etc. This created a massive change in how my family and myself conducted our daily lives. We had to conserve what we could to limit our trips to public places like grocery stores. We had to be cognizant of how much we were consuming because the masses were stockpiling things like toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Personally, altered my health habits because gyms and many facilities were closed. I began to run and track calories to hold off the *quarantine fifteen* so many were seeing. My place of employment had to change how we did business. These changes become permanent from the end of March to the beginning of June for our little community.

The end of May came with an email from my board of education saying graduation would take place on June 6th. It would not be the graduation ceremony I wanted, but it would

suffice given the circumstances. The parking lot would be transformed so that each family could have a spot and park their car. Each student would individually walk up to the front stand and receive their diploma. Receiving my diploma lifted a weight off my shoulders. It felt like I didn't have to think about being a senior anymore, I could just look towards the future rather than what I missed in the past few months.

Shortly after graduating the state coincidentally began to reopen businesses with social distancing and mask-wearing still in place. This allowed my friends and family to finally step outside and enjoy each other's company. For the remainder of the summer, I continued my healthy living and began to partake in some instances of normal living. I was able to see my close friends several times and take many, many hikes through nature. Life seemed to be somewhat normal for some time.

With summer coming to a close and the beginning of college fast approaching, the normalcy of life began to dissipate once more. Soon I would have to re-enter the habit of wearing a mask almost everywhere, online classes, and limited time with friends. While it seems like a drastic change from where we were just months ago, it all is beginning to feel like a new normal. It's now become a strange sight to see someone without a mask or not socially distancing themselves from others. Now, I'm waiting to see if this becomes a semi-permanent normal, or just how life will be for the next few months.