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My Experience of the COVID-19 Pandemic

I remember some time in early march of 2020 I was in my highschool library i was scrolling through instagram, I came across a random post that read “BREAKING: A breakout of a virus by the name of COVID-19 or “corona” virus is rapidly spreading through wu-han china”. When I read this i thought nothing of it, I thought so what? It's a small virus across the world. A few weeks later I was sitting in my house completely separated from the life I was living just a month ago. When the lock down first started I was ecstatic, my last year of highschool and i didnt even have to do school work to finish it out. I already wanted to be home all day anyway so how hard would it be to stay home for a month or two? It was over this time I fully realized the scope of the situation I had entered. My experience with the COVID-19 pandemic has been an ever evolving puzzle of new challenges that I along with everyone around me has had to figure out to navigate.

The moment my mom told me that school had been canceled for the foreseeable future i could not have been happier. I didn't necessarily hate school, but it being the back half of my senior year I really felt like I was waiting out the last few months anyways. After the first couple of days of the lock down I was slowly learning the scope of this virus. I was seeing news reports of increased cases by thousands everyday. I started to realize the things I had given up to keep ma and my family members safe. Things like hanging out with friends, all the senior year activities like the class trip and graduation were the last thought in anyone's mind. The first few weeks of lockdown are really hard to remember because everyday was exactly the same as the day before. I would wake up mid-day and try to find anything to do around the house that usually consisted of finding something to eat, playing video games with my friends and sleeping.

This lifestyle quickly became extremely tedious and extremely boring and i was extremely lucky that I was one of the few people nationwide that was still working a job. There is not much more I can really say about the first few months of the lock down, it was just a repetitive process of waking up and waiting inside my house for any information about what we were to do next.

The unique part of my experience with lockdown is that I worked in a grocery store through the lock down. For the first month or two while I stuck at home while everything was closed and still trying to figure out the only business open were the essential business and this included the local grocery store i worked at. Before the pandemic I absolutely hated the tedious nature of my cashiers job but it was good highschool money and something to put on my resume so I reluctantly stuck with it through my senior year of highschool. I quickly learned that I was extremely lucky to have this job. Firstly I was one of the few people still actively working a job and making an income, I felt bad because I didn't necessarily need this job, I didn't have anyone relying on me or a family to provide for but since the store couldn't train any new employees during the pandemic I stayed because it was good money and the store needed all the help it could get. The store offered increased hourly wages for working during the pandemic as an incentive for employees to keep working, but after those first few weeks of lockdown I didn't need the extra pay, I was just happy to have a reason to leave my house. I believe that working this job helped me deal with the stress of the lockdown because it helped me take my mind off the current world epidemic. Some immediate changes I noticed in the store were that everyone had to wear masks and gloves at all times, our shifts increased to six hours and we had to count the number of people that entered the store because we had a maximum capacity. I was never nervous about contracting COVID, i lived in an area with very low case numbers and my brother was and still is an EMT so he was also working through the lockdown so I figured if i get it, I get it. The virus generally didn't seem to do too much to people of my age.

The most recent part of my COVID experience has been trying to attend my first year of college both in person and online. I am at this moment a student at Springfield College and

while I commend the effort by the school to give the most normal version of a freshman year possible it's definitely been a unique experience. Move in day was spaced out into three days and the tricky part of this part of move in day was that you had to pack for college like you could be sent home by next week. The threat of an outbreak always looms around campus, meaning that we would all be sent home immediately to finish the semester virtually. Exactly half of my classes are in person and online. Personally I find that online classes suck, it's hard to stare at a computer screen in a zoom meeting for an hour but like all other situations in this pandemic we have no choice but to continue to wait to get back to the new normal. The in person classes also suffer, teachers are forced to use online content to teach their classes. They no longer have access to field trips, outside the classroom examples, and even in some classes paper handout to rely on. For example, I'm taking an Event Management class currently and one of the assignments is to put on and host an event. My group has had to postpone and cancel our event because of virus concerns. This makes it harder to really get that critical hands on experience that this usually has to offer. My overall college experiences with the social distancing rules and regulations hasn't been necessarily bad, just another new situation that staff and students have to figure out to the best of their ability.

The puzzle of the ever evolving "new normal" is and will continue to be challenging to navigate and work through. Even though I think the worst of it is behind us, that being the complete lockdown of the country, I believe that it will be years before what we consider normal will come back. This had definitely been a experience that few generations ever ever have to go through and i can say while it hasn't been pleasurable it is interesting to think about my place in the history of the worldwide epidemic.