

I remember clearly the day everything changed. It was a Thursday in March of my Senior Year of High School, I was at Track practice. I was ready to show everybody what I was capable of, not just expand the distance of my discus throw but also to run mid-distance, 400m, and 800m. However, that never happened. My coach announced to us “you’ll be having early release tomorrow so we teachers have time to scan in documents in case we move online”. That was the last day I was on the track team. I remember breaking down in the locker room, tears on the verge of leaking from my eyelids, I remember shaking my fist at the heavens pissed that some Virus was bad enough to ruin My Year, My Senior Year. Unlike my peers I didn’t get to go to prom, I didn’t get to have my end-of-the-year banquets, I didn’t get to have a traditional commencement ceremony. What hurt most of all I didn’t get to have my Graduation Party. I missed out on a lot, but I also gained something precious. The time away from others and the pause in my life led me to rethink my goals and priorities. High school was done, I no longer had to pretend to be someone I’m not, or conform to societal expectations. The extra-long summer led to me connecting with my family and observing cultural change as we phased in Covid-19 safety guidelines at work (angry customers yelled at me and pushed past me as I enforced those important policies). The summer was full of conflicting feelings as I was disappointed with all that I didn’t get to experience but also gratitude and stress relief as I gained control of my life. I started up a gratitude practice to help me cope. I learned how to make do with the resources I had available. The start of College in the Fall of 2020 is what appeased my soul, It gave me a fresh start, and opportunities to do things with others again, I found a religious community that encouraged and supported me in my walk with God. This group was vital to my confidence boost this year and made me feel like I was a part of the UWEC community. I also joined the UWEC Triathlon team, something I would’ve never done without running all summer as it was the only thing I could do during a pandemic, to maintain the level of fitness I had, and continue working toward my new year’s resolution of 2020 which I actually achieved. Pandemic life has been normalized and while I’m hopeful we’ll be emerging from this phase of our lives soon, It has greatly shaped who I am today.

Dorothy Baker