

VIOLA'S VOICE

A LOOK INSIDE A COLLEGE STUDENTS
LIFE DURING A PANDEMIC

Volume 2

9 Months Later

It has now been nine months since I first heard of the COVID-19 virus. Nine months later and scientists and doctors know so much more about the virus, yet there is also so much that is still unknown at this time. While it has become normal to wear a mask in public and social distance from others, there are some aspects of this pandemic that are much harder to get used to. One of the hardest parts of living through a pandemic for me is adjusting holiday traditions in order to stay safe. I am very much a traditionalist which makes it very hard to change things up even if it is for everyone's safety. Another difficult aspect of pandemic life is living in the unknown. I like to have everything planned, but when living during a pandemic it is hard to predict what the next week will look like as another closure or news about quarantine can come up at the last second. Nine months ago I did not know anyone who had even come in contact with the virus, but now I know a lot of people who have gotten the virus themselves. I also did not know nine months ago that the pandemic would last this long, and I definitely did not think that it would change the way we live our lives. I now realize there are so many unknowns when living during a pandemic.

A LOOK INSIDE THIS EDITION

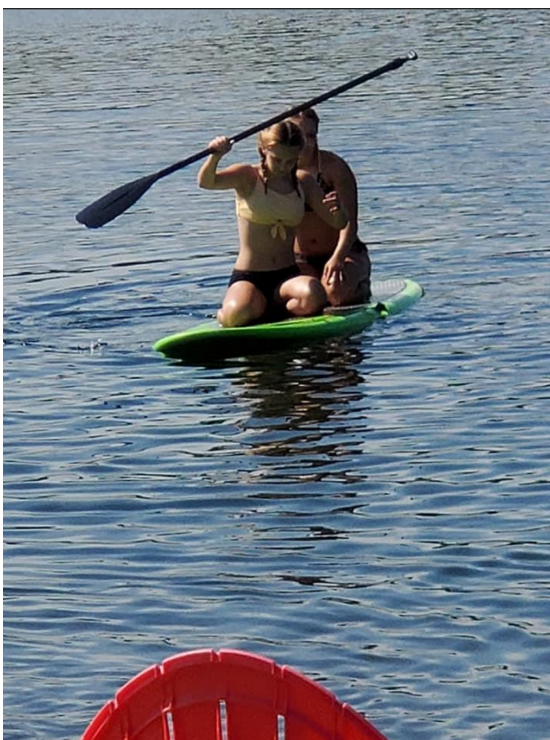
- Holidays at home
 - Birthdays
 - 4th of July
 - Halloween
 - Thanksgiving
 - Christmas
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- New Way of Life



Holidays At Home

BIRTHDAYS IN A PANDEMIC

When my brother had his birthday on March 23rd I felt bad that he had to spend his birthday at home instead of going out to eat and spending it with friends. I felt confident that by my birthday on June 5th restaurants would be open again, and we would be able to spend it at Mickey Lous. However as time went on it became clear that that was not going to happen. My sister's birthday is in May and it happened on the same day that my mom was supposed to bring her computer to Best Buy in Appleton to get fixed so she could continue to teach online. I offered to bring it, so that I could bring my sister to Chik-Fil-A and Baskin Robins. We went through the drive through and ate in the car due to indoor seating areas being closed. This was also one of the first times that I had to wear a mask in public, and it felt very strange. Normally I would have been upset that I had to spend my birthday working, but I spent the first months of quarantine hoping that I could go back to work in the summer, so I was happy to be training and learning our COVID-19 protocols on my birthday. While my family did not participate in any drive by birthday parties, it was a very common trend for people to have drive by birthday parties this year.



4th OF JULY

Normally my family starts fourth of July by attending a parade, however parades were cancelled this year for obvious reasons. We also normally spend the day on the boat with our extended family, but since a majority of my family members work in healthcare we decided to keep our groups smaller. My family ended up spending the holiday at a friends pond. We social distanced and kept our group small. We spent the day swimming and paddle boarding.

Holidays At Home

HALLOWEEN WITH COVID-19

While I have not personally gone trick-or-treating since middle school, my Halloween still did look quite different from normal. My grandma's birthday is a few days before Halloween, and we always go eat pizza at the same pizza place after we hand out candy together. This year we decided not to hand out candy for safety reasons, and it was the first Halloween that I can remember that my whole family did not go out to eat Pizza with my grandma. My sister who is in middle school went to her friend's house (the only friend she has been hanging out with since COVID) and they created a candy shoot in order to pass out candy safely. They also wore masks with their costumes, which fit perfectly since they went as Grey Sloan Surgeons. A lot of communities cancelled their Trick-or-Treating times but those like ours who kept them had a way smaller turn out.



Thanksgiving

COVID-19 did not spare any holiday celebration. Families around the country adjusted their traditions in order to keep each other safe. Even those who do not take COVID-19 very seriously were advised to change their plans per the Governor's order that limited household gatherings to less than 10 people. My household changed our plans as we normally host Thanksgiving for my entire extended family, but instead we kept it small with just the people who live in my household. My older sister did not even get to come home as she is an essential worker, and she feared that she would spread the virus by coming home. My family spent the day eating our traditional Thanksgiving meal, playing games, and watching a Christmas movie.



Holidays At Home

Christmas

CHRISTMAS PLANS DURING A PANDEMIC

With only a few weeks left until Christmas, it is already evident that this holiday season is going to look quite different from years past. My family is planning on staying home and celebrating how we normally do, only with less people. We are going to play games and watch Christmas movies and enjoy our break from schoolwork. This year my siblings will have an extra long break due to them starting school in August.



Holiday Shopping

The pandemic has caused the already increasing number of online shoppers to grow even more. With the increasing number of cases in our country consumers feel safer ordering their gifts online. This has caused packages to be delivered at a slower rate than normal due to the increased workload of delivery drivers and workers at the factories. A package that would normally arrive in two days could take more than a week.

One negative aspect of the pandemic is the fact that many small businesses are struggling to stay open. This has caused a push for people to shop local. My mom is doing her part, and she tries to buy local whenever possible.



Safe Festive Activities

Instead of attending Christmas parties and Friendsmas gatherings we have to find safer ways to celebrate to prevent the spread of the virus. Some safe festive activities that my family and I have planned are baking Christmas cookies, driving around to look at Christmas lights, decorating the house, and having Christmas movie marathons. All of these activities can be done safely with members of your household.



Continued Closures

Restrictions, Closures, and Mandates

THREE WEEK LOCKDOWN IN MICHIGAN

With cases rising and holiday season upon us, Michigan's governor made the decision to put a partial lockdown into place. The lockdown specifics are outlined in the image to the right. This decision affected me as I work at a Michigan YMCA as a gymnastics coach. Instead of holding practice as usual we held private lessons where the gymnasts could practice safely on their own. While many people were put out of work because of this decision I actually benefited and got the opportunity to work more hours. Many people have mixed feelings on this decision, as do I, but I know that these lockdowns are for our safety.

Closures

As a result of the increase in cases many school districts are transitioning to online school temporarily. Some of these transitions are due to precautions around the holidays and some are due to the lack of substitutes to fill in for sick or quarantined teachers. Students used to celebrate with joy when school would be cancelled for a snow day, but now they celebrate when they actually get to go to school. I know this because I work with children and they talk about how excited they are to get to go back to school. Prior to the pandemic I did not know what Zoom was, but now I have this app downloaded on all of my devices and I use it to log into a majority of my classes.



The infographic is titled "COVID-19 PAUSE TO SAVE LIVES" and is divided into two columns: "Open" and "Not open".

Open:

- Two-household gathering (high precautions)*
- Small outdoor gatherings (25 people)
- Retail
- Preschool through 8th grade (local district choice)
- Childcare
- Manufacturing, construction, other work that is impossible to do remotely
- Public transit
- Hair salons, barber shops, other personal services
- Gyms and pools (for individual exercise)
- Restaurants and bars (outdoor dining, takeout, and delivery)
- Professional sports** (without spectators)
- Parks and outdoor recreation
- Funerals (25 people)
- Health care

Not open:

- High schools (in-person learning)
- Colleges and universities (in-person learning)
- Workplaces, when work can be done from home
- Restaurants and bars (indoor dining)
- Organized sports, except professional sports
- Theaters, movie theaters, stadiums, arenas
- Bowling centers, ice skating rinks, indoor water parks
- Bingo halls, casinos, arcades
- Group fitness classes

For more information about the order, visit Michigan.gov/Coronavirus. Questions or concerns can be emailed to COVID19@michigan.gov.

**See Social Gathering Guidance. **Includes a limited number of NCAA sports.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) logo is located in the bottom right corner of the infographic.

Mask Mandates

The original Wisconsin mask mandate was set to expire in September, but it was later extended to November. Just recently it was announced that the new mask mandate will remain in place until the New Year. However, President Elect Joe Biden has announced that he will ask the American people to commit to 100 days of mask wearing starting on inauguration day. This will extend the mask mandate all the way until early May which will mean most people will have been wearing masks for over a year.



Hopes For A Vaccine

Pfizer, BioNTech, Moderna

VACCINE TRIALS APPEAR SUCCESSFUL

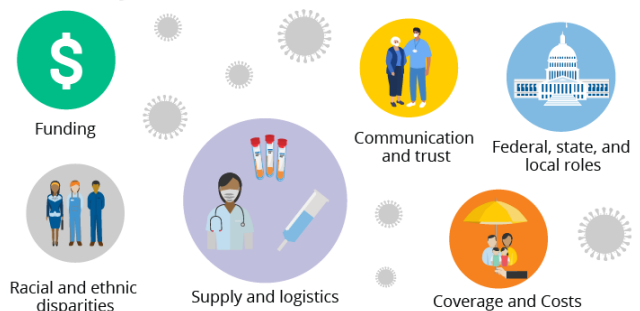
Since the beginning of the pandemic many companies through Operation Warp Speed have been hard at work finding a vaccine for this virus. There are currently three companies: Pfizer, BioNTech, and Moderna who have completed the trial phase and are awaiting approval by the FDA. While I do not know much about the science behind the vaccines, I do know that this is what we have been waiting for and that this is good news. It has also been advertised that once a vaccine gets approved within the coming weeks it will be in limited supply. This means that some groups of people will be "in line" with others.



Who gets vaccinated first?

Advisors on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) board called the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) have been meeting to decide what order the population should be vaccinated in due to the initial limited supply. This committee consists of experts from all around the country. As of right now it is assumed that health care workers will be among the first group to get vaccinated due to their proximity to the virus. Older adults and those living in long term care facilities will also be vaccinated at this time known as Phase 1A. Essential workers will be next in line followed by adults with health conditions that put them at greater risk. The last group of people consists of healthy adults who do not fit into any of the other categories. Right now the CDC hopes that there will be enough approved vaccines for everyone to be vaccinated by early June of 2021.

Key Issues for COVID Vaccine Distribution



Key Planning Assumptions



A Virtual Semester

From Elementary and High Schools to College

A VIRTUAL SEMESTER FOR ALL

While elementary schools are more likely to be in person during the pandemic, students of all ages have learned to adjust to learning in a new format. Students are stressed and frustrated about this unpredictable situation, but so are teachers and administrators.



Elementary Schools

Districts near my hometown gave parents the option to pick how their children go to school. They could choose completely in person or completely online at this age level, although district wide closings, sub shortages, and state wide mandates have made many students flip between in person and online. From talking to the children that I coach, most highly prefer in person class as they can see their friends. Some of them have also noted how confusing online school is. Even though I am many years older I also feel this way about online school.

Colleges

At the college level classes range from completely in person to completely online with many being in hybrid format. I personally have two hybrid classes and three completely online. Hybrid courses mean that you meet one day in person with some of your class and you meet the other days online. My online classes are both synchronous and asynchronous, meaning that some require me to log into an online meeting at a certain time and others I am responsible to do on my own time. The first weeks of college I was super stressed as I was nervous that I would meet online when I was supposed to be in person or that I would miss an assignment on accident. After 14 weeks of the semester I have adjusted to this new normal, but I still look forward to the day when all of my classes can be in person again. After Thanksgiving my University and many others around the country have transitioned completely to online learning in order to prevent the spread after many travelled home for the holidays.

High Schools

Similar to elementary schools, parents were given the option of how they wanted their students to learn. However, completely in person was not an option at this level. My siblings (8th grade and 12th grade) chose the in person option which means they go to school in person on Tuesday and Friday and do online school the other days. My brother also gets to go to school on the other days for his college level classes. My brother is obviously upset to be going through his senior year during a pandemic. He would like to go to school everyday with his friends like normal. My sister however does not mind getting to sleep in most days of the week, but she agrees that online work is more confusing and that she does not feel that she is learning as much as she should.

Teachers

Students are not the only ones who are stressed and frustrated about this situation. Teachers have also had to learn to deal with the pandemic. My mom who teaches at both the high school and college level has had to learn a great deal about technology in a very short period of time. She has had to redo her lessons in order to teach two different groups in a week. She also misses teaching students face to face everyday and feels this way of teaching is very impersonal.

New Way Of Life

New Vocabulary, Postponed Funerals, New Normal

NEW NORMAL

We have been living in a pandemic and wearing masks for less than a year, however I already find it more normal for someone to be wearing a mask than to not be wearing one. I often find myself question why characters in a tv show are not social distancing or wearing masks until I remind myself that this show was created prior to the pandemic. Testing sites have also become normal to see around communitites. My city has a drive-through test site one block from my house.



Delayed Mourning

The pandemic has prevented many families from being able to give their loved ones a proper funeral. Even if the death was not a result of COVID-19 gathering in large groups is still not encouraged or even allowed in some instances. My Cousin Deb passed away in April, but we were never able to have a funeral. Our family was originally planning to delay the funeral until the summer, but the cases continued to rise instead of improve so we have still not had any ceremony for her. My Great Aunt decided to send every female in our family a cookie tin labeled "Debbie's Cookie Day" in honor of Deb's desire to gather family members each year to have a cookie day.



New Vocabulary

Below are words or phrases that I have either learned because of the pandemic or have used way more frequently due to the pandemic.

- Quarantine
- Isolation
- Close-Contact
- Asynchronous
- Synchronous
- Zoom
- Hybrid
- "You're on Mute"
- Masks
- PPE
- Social Distance
- Pandemic
- Vaccine
- Lockdown
- Flattening the curve
- Asymptomatic