

SAILING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY

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From Pre-Kindergarten to the middle of 11th grade, my life consisted of the same schedule. I woke up, got ready for school, attended school, came home, studied, and got ready for the next day of school. On March 12th, 2020, all students were told to go home because the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the School District of Philadelphia issued a stay-at-home order. The following week, cyber school had officially started. We were bombarded with new online learning platforms and online classes. With everything being digital and everyone staying at home, a new type of lifestyle was created. However, many people around the world have been affected in a much harsher way than most of us have been affected. I had an experience with this when I went to Italy.

On February 14th, 2020, I flew to Europe with my school's music department. We were visiting Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy to sing. Our last performance was held at the Vatican and what we had practiced for the past months led up to this one performance. However, I was not feeling well. The night before, I got a fever and felt extremely weak. After calling my parents and taking medicine, I hoped that I would feel better, but I didn't. COVID-19 had not fully spread around Europe at that time yet. Our return flight was the next day and after I got home, the only thing that I would hear on the news was about how Italy had become the new hotspot for COVID-19. Since I was still sick, my family and I were thinking the same thing – did I possibly have COVID-19? Though we were all thinking the same thing, everyone was too afraid to voice their questions. I would hear about COVID-19 at school, on the news at home, and it kept making us more worried about whether I had it or not. When we went to the doctor and found out that I did not have COVID-19, we were so relieved. That week was extremely stressful for my family.

India has been one of the leading countries in the world for having the most COVID-19 cases. My aunt and uncle recently got COVID-19. They have been in quarantine since lockdown started in India. When my Uncle started showing symptoms of a fever, my aunt tended to him. Because my aunt had a lung infection a few weeks ago and because she tended to my uncle, who had gotten COVID-19, she tested positive as well. Due to the lack of doctors and available beds at hospitals, they couldn't find any hospital that was ready to accommodate them. After driving for the entire day, they found a hospital at 12:00 AM. My aunt was in desperate need of oxygen and she refused to move from that hospital until they gave them beds. At 3:00 AM, they were finally given beds. After one week, they both recovered.

When one of our family friends in India who was in his 70s got a fever and cough, his family became cautious. When his pulse rate started dropping, they went to get him tested. Since where they lived did not have many facilities, they wanted to go to Kadapa. After making all of the arrangements and while he was being placed in the ambulance, he went into cardiac arrest and passed away. When the test results came back and it showed that he had COVID-19 before he passed away. The city officials told the family and those who attended the funeral to get tested. Thirty to forty people tested positive. In his immediate family, both grandkids and their mother had gotten COVID-19. In Kadapa, the self-quarantine centers were different based on age groups and the kids were separated from their mother. Fourteen days later, the kids and their mother recovered. Their family business was a pharmacy and they had kept it open to help the society. When the mother went to a store, the public would reprimand and harshly order them to leave. The same society that they were helping by putting their lives at risk by running the pharmacy every day was targeting them and making rude remarks.

COVID-19 and quarantine have changed all of our lives, some more than others. It has given us time to think, time to spend with loved ones, and time to learn more about ourselves. However, throughout these past few months, many of us have realized the importance of family. We took many things for granted, such as our health and everyday life, but it is time to be thankful for it all. As Robert Brault said, "Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things."

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