

## Turning the Page

I was just an ordinary girl in an ordinary world, but the pandemic of 2020 made me feel like a background character in an unfamiliar play. At the start of the year, I was confident, even cocky, in the way my story would unfold; family, friends, school, prom, college searches, senior status and the perks that go with that rank and ultimately my graduation ceremony. Then the fifteenth of March sneaks in, the world changes, and suddenly I must adjust expectations and embrace “the new normal.”

Like most of the world, my pandemic story begins at home. At first, it felt like an extended snow day, then morphed into that boring class that never ends. I felt like a character dropped into the second act of a play and I didn’t know my lines. I felt lost, untethered. Eventually, I flipped the script and found my cues. This cast of characters I call family wasn’t unknown to me and this was my chance to get to know them, and myself, even better. I found staying at home with my family to be nurturing and sustaining. Game nights, movie nights, and countless hours reminiscing have been a needed distraction from the scary world outside. I see this time at home as a blessing in disguise. As a senior in high school, I will soon start a journey that will take me farther from home than I have ever been. This extra time together will help me keep my home and family even closer.

The second chapter in this pandemic story must include school life. If my family is, well, family, then school is my second family. The Clearview staff came together and organized a parade for the community; a reminder that they are there for us through these hard times. It was a thrill to see my teachers again. To see my band director playing the school fight song from the back of a minivan gave me hope that better days were ahead. As we came back to a hybrid version of school for fall of my senior year, participating in different activities became a

necessity. Being a part of the band this year was completely different from previous years. We had to stay distanced at all times, and so many people had to drop out of band for personal reasons. Participating in theater has been yet another challenge. Rather than performing play on a stage for an audience, we put on several radio shows instead. Hearing the honking horns of a parking lot filled with family, friends, and teachers lifted my heart as much as the applause of a crowd. The opportunity to see my peers and teachers in-person rather than from behind a screen is a newly appreciated bonus that has been very encouraging during this pandemic.

My story of life during a pandemic would not be complete without including my community. This past summer, I created an obstacle course on the sidewalk near my house using chalk. Seeing children walking by and following the instructions was such a fulfilling experience, and I'm glad I was able to brighten their day. Every year, my youth club puts together a "Halloween Walk" for younger children to trick-or-treat. Due to COVID-19, though, we could not allow any indoor activities like normal. Instead, we came together and created a drive-through version. Despite how cold that evening was, I was so happy to bring smiles to the children's faces.

Compared to the loss so many have suffered, I know my pandemic story reads like a children's book and I am truly grateful for my blessings. I have been sustained by my family, friends, and community. I don't know if I'll get that graduation ceremony, but I will be proud of my accomplishments. As Toni Morrison told us, "If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it." The Coronavirus pandemic may not be the subject that any of us wanted, but I choose how it will affect me and the story I will tell.