Saving Lives with Social Distancing

By Nicholas Sajor ('21) STAFF WRITER

During this unique time in our lives, every Saintsmen must do their part to stop the spread of this contagion and help end the ongoing crisis. This new disease has been labeled COVID-19 (short for coronavirus disease 2019) and emerged in December of 2019 in Wuhan, China. Since then, the virus has spread all over the globe, infecting hundreds of thousands and causing (at time of publication) over 75,000 deaths.

Due to the severity of this new disease, it is essential that everyone does their part to limit its spread, and in the process, save lives. Social distancing is the simplest and most effective method to stop this virus from infecting more people. Put simply, social distancing is avoiding large groups and close personal contact so as to limit the potential for a virus jumping between human hosts. A term often used in the medical community to show the value of social distancing is ‘flattening the curve.’ This phrase refers to a graph that represents the virus’s infection rate, where a steeper curve shows more infections (essentially, to ‘flatten the curve’ means to stop the virus from infecting more people, which will bring about an end to this pandemic.

When dealing with the broad concept of social distancing, it is helpful to break it down into two general categories: systematic and personal. Systematic social distancing is when companies, governments (state, federal), or other organizations stop tend areas with large crowds. Many organizations have chosen to undergo this process, as is the case with every major sports league, which have either canceled their seasons or played games without fans, while movie theaters, beaches, concerts, all of Broadway, and many stores and restaurants have shut down. For the students here at Saints and most school districts across the country, in-person learning has been halted and students are staying home and doing their work over the internet. While many of the aforementioned measures are voluntary, California is under a mandatory stay-at-home order issued by Governor Newsom, ensuring that every Californian is legally required to engage in social distancing practices.

On the other hand, personal social distancing is, essentially, staying at least 6 feet away from others as much as possible. The general radius of a person from which this virus can spread is six feet, so staying outside that range will drastically reduce your chances of becoming infected. Therefore, if everyone constantly stays at least six feet apart, the virus will not be able to infect more hosts. Also, coughing or sneezing will disperse the virus into the air and outside the 6-foot radius, so either sneeze and cough into your elbow or at least 2 tissues, then wash your hands.

While social distancing is a key life-saving measure, the time needed for these actions to be effective is, as of yet, unconfirmed. The world medical community is conducting tests and studies to determine the time needed to not become infectious and whether or not you can get COVID-19 a second time after recovering. While these tests are in the labs, it is best to be cautious and continue to socially distance till this crisis is over, at least until California’s statewide stay-at-home order is rescinded.

In these uncertain times, many aspects of typical life have been upended in response to the ongoing crisis. Following the advice of the world medical community will be the most straightforward way to overcome new challenges and secure a return to normalcy. Social distancing may be inconvenient and uncomfortable, but unless we take these measures, unpleasantness will endure much longer. Why?

So, remain at least 6 feet apart, stay safe, and know that we will get through this together so long as everyone understands and employs the necessary tactics to flatten the curve and beat this virus.

COVID-19’s Unforeseen Effect on the Web

By Joseph Selfani ('21) EDITOR

It comes as a shock that millions of people in the United States, in the span of a couple of weeks, are now stuck at home in quarantine. The effects it has created are known to many, and, although street traffic has become nonexistent, internet traffic is way, way up. People may notice that their internet and websites might be slower than usual, and that is a direct result of many more people being active online right now. It is interesting to see what effect the quarantine will have on certain websites, services, and online platforms that will experience increased or, in some cases, decreased activity. The information available right now paints a fascinating picture as to the immediate effects of stay-at-home orders, and it can predict the long term effects it may have on internet usage.

To perhaps no one’s surprise, online gaming is on the rise. According to statistics provided by Valve, the number of users increased by two million (from 17 million to 19 million) in late January to early February of 2020 and increased by three million in March of 2020 (from 19.5 million to 22.5 million). In addition, the number of active users rose by one million (from five million to six million) in March. The only explanations for the uptick in activity are the quarantines in China in January and February and the quarantines in the United States in March. Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, a popular first-person shooter game released in 2012, saw its number of active players reach 1 million users (from 700k the month before) for the first time in March 2020, and it held that number for the rest of the month.

Video entertainment is also up. While there are no direct metrics available for free online to research traffic on a website, socialblade.com and downdetector.com are useful tools to check the progress of a specific channel and outages with websites, respectively. To determine usage for a video platform, The Augustinian took the top 25 subscriber/follower accounts in the U.S. on YouTube and Twitch and averaged their percent increase in views from February to March of 2020. The results showed YouTube with about a 10% increase (with some channels up as much as 50%) and Twitch with about 50% overall. While the metrics may not precisely reflect the performance of the whole platform, it does show the increase in viewership and uploads from the top creators of their website.

In addition, using downdetector.com, one can see that Netflix had a major increase in outages, with 37 reported in March compared to only 4 published in February. This increase in outages is seen across the board on most social media platforms like Snap, chat, Instagram, and Facebook, with an exception being Spotify.

According to an article released by Quartz, the top 200 most streamed songs on Spotify actually dropped in listeners since February in all European countries and the United States. Apart from decreases in Spotify usage, the BBC, U.S. music streaming “fell by 8.8%” during the week of March 13–19, and the use of music-streaming apps like Spotify “fell by about 8%.” Interestingly, the St. Augustine High School
By Angel Perez ('21)
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As thousands of students prepared themselves for their SAT test on March 14th, many of them received news that has become common in recent weeks. The impending threat of COVID-19, the highly infectious virus that has sent the world into a frenzy, numerous testing facilities were forced to cancel their portions of the test.

Although some of these institutions announced a March 28 test make-up date, Collegeboard moved quickly to squash any hopes of taking the exam in March, and, soon after, the May administration of the test was canceled internationally by order of Collegeboard. This assessment (or the equivalent ACT), which many students view as a pivotal piece of their college applications, was required by a staggering 95% of colleges and universities. With the sudden advent of the COVID-19 crisis, many feared the explosion of this frightening global health Pandemic, modifications will be made that test the college application and admissions process for millions.

With the cancellation of both the March and May SATs as well as the April ACT, a massive move by a great number of post-secondary institutions to become "test-optional" has begun. Case Western Reserve University, a highly ranked college in Cleveland, was one of the first to go test optional due to the coronavirus.

"Understanding how much turmoil this is injecting into the process, it's just so clearly, in every way, the right thing to do," said Rick Bischoff, the vice president for enrollment management at Case Western Reserve, to NPR about schools to adapt in the wake of this situation.

Many more schools have similarly deemed this move the "right thing to do." In an interview with the Boston Globe, many counselors, students, and parents alike, the University of California system announced on April 1 that the chain of nine schools would temporarily go test-optional for the coming application term without the ability for virtual meetings upon request.

"For current juniors, UC and CSU are going to be test-optional for next year, but this will not be a permanent change," the statement said.

"The National Merit Scholarship exam for Tuesday-Thursday classes online," Mr. Chesser said.

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"The coronavirus outbreak is a disaster of historic proportions disrupting every aspect of our lives, including education for high school students, among others," UC President Janet Napolitano stated. "The universality of the flexibility at this crucial time will ensure prospective students aiming for UC get a full and fair shot no matter their current challenges."

However, this decision has caused many future applicants to wonder how college decisions will be affected. The UCs, which have historically rejected the prospect of making standardized tests optional in order to improve equity, typically receive approximately 200,000 applications each year according to the UC Office of the President. Although it may prove beneficial for many smaller universities to stay away from the SAT or the ACT, it seems unlikely that UC admissions officers will be able to truly review 200,000 applications without the limiting criteria of standardized testing and minimum grade thresholds.

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A Message from the Managing Editor

I am not going to lie to anyone who is reading this, this situation is awful. There was always a knowledge that all of this would end. However, this feels as if it was taken from us. As we wait for an announcement from the administration, the second half of this year seems as if it is gone for good.

This will be my last issue as Managing Editor. I was asked by the last article that I will write for The Augustinian. As I end my two and a half years as a member of the paper, I want to take time to reflect on the current situation and what this paper means to me.

The situation that we find ourselves in is a once in a lifetime occurrence. All sports and majors events have been shut down and we have been reduced to hermits in the most connected society ever to exist. There are a lot of unknowns and a lot of anxieties.

We really don’t know the extent of the threat that this virus might pose to our society. At this point, it seems unlikely that we will be able to finish out our school year with a sense of normalcy. Looking at the recent declarations from our governor and State Superintendent, it seems as if the state government is skeptical that schools can resume by the end of May. That means that I may have nothing. As cliché as that might sound, it still rings true. I have been blessed with a support group around me and people who care about me. Things have not always been easy. I have struggled with anxiety and depression for several years, and, much of the time, I have felt alone. However, these people that I got to create a newspaper with six times every year have helped to make me feel whole.

Of course, there have been other people who have helped me, and those people know who they are. Still, the ability to just spend 8 hours after school working on something that was bigger than myself helped to give me purpose.

I say all of this because I took the routine of my own life for granted and took those around me for granted. Sometimes dear ones are the ones in thinking you are alone even when you have people in your life who love you. If this terrible situation can help with anything, let it teach you this essential lesson. Reach out to a friend or a loved one who may be lonely, and, if you are struggling with mental health issues, talk to a professional. Be kinder to each other. Tough times like these have the potential to bring out the best in humanity.

This is real to you, to the Saints community for everything over the last four years, and I hope that you of all your families stay safe during this time.
The Struggles of Distance Learning
By Matthew Cross ('21)

Mauricio Torre ('20) demonstrates a typical day of quarantine.

Joaquin Torre ('21)

By Graeme Morand-Telles ('21)

EDITOR

Although it is not the month of April, 2020 is already looking to be a year like no other. COVID-19 has affected nearly everyone in the world to some extent as nations rush to quarantine their inhabitants and to enforce social distancing. Among those quarantined are athletes, the elderly, babies, the majority of adults, and stay-at-home moms. But that’s not all. There is another group experiencing the intrinsic wonder of quarantine, a group of restless and sleep-deprived individuals fueled by unhealthy amounts of caffeine: high school students.

A simple measure with dramatic effects, quarantine serves to thwart the spread of the dangerous virus and has been accepted as sufficient means to stay healthy by most of the population, except the brainiac college students who insist on dictching the “lame” measures of social distancing to celebrate spring break. After all, you know what they say, “Spring break is the healer of all things”—that is, until one gets a dry cough and a fever.

Saints was quick to transition to an online system after hearing that the San Diego Unified School District was closing down schools, and after an apocalyptic-like clearing out of student lockers, quarantine time in association with the online Saints experience ensued. My quarantine experience should be similar to that of other Saintsmen as we are all, or should be, attempting to learn diligently through online means and abiding by the new societal norm of quarantine. That being said, my own daily routine goes something like this:

Every morning begins generally the same. Although I am able to technically “sleep in,” I still manage to screw up, ignore my alarm, and roll out of bed just in time for my first class. As I log into the Zoom class, my computer reflects an image of my drowsy face and asks a deep and personal question: “Do you wish to start your day with a dose of wake-up call?” I respond with a checkmark, a button that has grown on my head and quickly select “no.” About 15 minutes into the class, my stomach begins to growl and I decide to quickly burst downstairs to scrounge for something to eat. At around two, when I am finally finished, I stumble downstairs in search of food but generally consists of my parents nagging me to go outside, do chores, or get “exercise.” I am done with school for the rest of the day. However, it is also at this time when all of my teachers seem to post multiple assignments and lengthy announcements. As a result, I lock myself in my room and finish a load of homework. I am unsure if other Saintsmen feel the same way—my parents call it “something productive.”

April 2020

MISSING SCHOOL LEADS TO MISSING FUN

By Graeme Morand-Telles ('21)

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But, really, quarantine is as bad as you think. Generally, I spend most of my day sitting in a dark room listening to music just trying to pass time. Sure, I could do what my parents call “something productive,” but that’s not really what I am about.

School is not that much easier as the stress is, if anything, augmented because there is this notion that I cannot really do anything. With finals just being canceled, the likelihood that we get to return to campus is extremely low, if not impossible, and such a reality causes me to sadly profess three words: I miss school.

I miss coming to Saints in the morning despite usually barely staying awake. I miss all my classes from the energetic experience of a Mr. da Luz lecture to the socratic-seminar-turned-political debates in Mr. Chesser’s AP English Language class. Although the online classes provide a minor resemblance to the physical class, I wouldclassify them as “knock-off brands.” I suppose either way you are still getting the same item, but the name-brand is always better. Always.

I am unsure if other Saintsmen feel the same way that I do. I understand that many of them might enjoy the online experience more than actual classes mainly because they can stay in bed all day and avoid putting on any form of a collared shirt. Despite the stress that many students are currently feeling, this has also served as an avenue for students to bring their grades up with these new online opportunities.

In this trying time, it is essential that Saintsmen support each other and work together to adjust to this new system. To all Saintsmen stuck in quarantine, in order to survive, you must do three things: complete your homework, hide your face on Zoom, and try to enjoy yourself.

Dear Saints community,

Despite the trying times we now find ourselves in, it is imperative that we remember the importance of our upcoming holiday. On Sunday, April 12, we will celebrate Easter, thus commemorating the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As this Lenten season comes to a close, we must reflect on the significance of this occasion and remind ourselves of the most consequential sacrifice in our lives: Jesus’ sacrifice of his own life on the cross in order to cleanse the world of sin. This holy day is pivotal to our spiritual lives, and The Augustinian wishes the entire Saints family a happy and memorable Easter. Despite circumstances making travel difficult, we urge all Saintsmen to cherish the essence of Easter and spend time with their families on this festive day.

Warm regards,
Angel Perez, Editor-in-Chief