

DISTANCE

COVID-19 pandemic clears Coppell schools, streets, stores

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At 11 a.m., Kelly's Texican Grill owner Lawrence Kelly pushes open his restaurant's door, his footsteps breaking the silence that surrounds the unmoved chairs and tables. Sunlight seeps through the windows of the Sandy Lake Road restaurant, falling on empty delivery containers rather than the laughing faces of Coppell residents.

Since the coronavirus, or COVID-19, pandemic caused Dallas County to issue a mandate to only keep essential services open on March 21, all Coppell businesses have looked eerily similar.

"The people who work here and in this industry are social people," Kelly said. "To not have people in here see-

ing us and us feeding them and hugging them and asking about them every day is tough for people like us."

Met with a significant decline in business, Kelly was forced to reduce his approximately 20 person staff to five.

"I have a small staff here and we're all friends," Kelly said. "I know them really well - I know their kids and their spouses. To sit somebody down and say 'I'm not able to pay you' - that's by far the toughest thing I've had to do throughout all this."

Every resident and business has become victim to the virus in their own way.

COPPELL ISD GOES ONLINE

As an observant person, Coppell High School special education teacher Melissa Murray connects with her students by assessing their body language and reactions. Since school closures were announced, Murray has developed a different way to form that connection.

Through her new optional program, Grow with Murray, she has delivered packages to the porches of more than 21 students. The packages include a plant, trinket and note encouraging the student to update others on the growth of their plant on Schoology.

"I spent the weekend before we went virtual digging up all my strawberry plants and making cuttings from my herbs and other fast-growing plants," Murray said via email. "COVID-19 can't stop us from growing together as we share our plant's growth, the responsibility-

ties it helps us with and the great coping skills of taking care of something."

CISD has remained closed since spring break ended on March 16 and plans to remain closed until at least May 4. The district continues to email parents and students in addition to updating its webpage on the coronavirus response.

Distanced learning was implemented starting March 23 for all 18 schools in the district.

"Luckily, because we already had one-to-one technology devices and so many online learning resources in place already, it helped make the transition to online learning smoother." CISD Superintendent Brad Hunt said via email.

School-sponsored events were also canceled. Prom, originally scheduled for April 4, is one of many events that has slipped through students' fingers.

"As a senior, having everything being canceled from prom, to DECA Nationals, to maybe even graduation is sad because it's my last year," CHS senior Shivan Colecchia said. "Second semester senior year is the time when you're supposed to experience all these things and hang out with your friends before going to college. My friends and I were planning on having a good time every weekend and going out to restaurants and driving places. Now, we're missing out on all of that because of quarantine and it not being possible to see each other."

SOCIAL MEDIA: ANXIOUSLY SCROLLING, CONNECTED THROUGH QUARANTINE

Irving-based pediatric occupational therapist Rachel Torres and her husband Tyler, a Dallas nurse, were watching a live performance by Filipina singer Mia Flores in the auditorium of the Diamond Princess cruise ship when the captain made an announcement.

A man who had disembarked the ship, which departed from Yokohama, Japan on Jan. 20, had tested positive for coronavirus. The ship was accelerating to reach Yokohama Port a day earlier than scheduled to begin testing passengers.

"We were supposed to get off the boat on Feb. 4, but on Feb. 3 at about 10 pm, they told us to go in our rooms and stay there until further instructions," Mr. Torres said. "The Japanese quarantine officials went from the top of the boat to the bottom and had people screened. Anybody

who had a fever, shortness of breath or a cough would get throat-swabbed."

The ship eventually had more than 700 confirmed cases of COVID-19 out of the 3,711 people on board.

The couple was quarantined for 26 days - 11 aboard the Diamond Princess ship, and 14 at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, after they were given the option by the U.S. Embassy to return via a cargo plane. They arrived home March 3.

During their quarantines, the Torreses shared their experiences on the ship with news outlets and the public through Reddit, Twitter and Tyler's blog, The Torres Travels.

"We've done a lot of things on social media and interviews in an attempt to keep a human face on those who have been quarantined and those who have been affected by COVID-19," Mrs. Torres said. "But social media also helped keep us connected. In Japan, if we hadn't had Facebook, we wouldn't have had a way to call home."

Simultaneously, social media has spread misinformation about the origins of COVID-19 and created hysteria. As a result, many have stockpiled resources such as medical masks, hand sanitizer and toilet paper, taking away from others - such as hospitals - who require them.

"While at the hospital we have a good supply, when the hospital and people are stocking up on face masks, hospitals run out of supply," Mr. Torres said. "The people who are actually coming in contact with sick people aren't going to have the protection we need to keep ourselves, our families and anyone who comes into contact with us safe."

TROUBLE FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES, TEEN EMPLOYMENT

Every Saturday morning from 8-12, Coppell families fill Old Town Coppell's pavilion for the Coppell Farmers Market, sampling and purchasing goods from vendors such as Paul Wackym at Wackym's Kitchen and Amanda Van-

hoozier at Bishop Hill Farm Flowers.

After the COVID-19 lockdown, the pavilion sits empty, and about 27 vendors have set up stalls 8-10 feet apart in the surrounding area. Business has become strictly come-and-go, with revised procedures such as providing hand sanitizer and keeping all customers six feet apart.

"Especially if it's not their primary source of income and they can go without the earnings they generate, some vendors decided not to come,"

COVID-19 CAN'T STOP US FROM GROWING TOGETHER AS WE SHARE OUR PLANT'S GROWTH, THE RESPONSIBILITIES IT HELPS US WITH AND THE GREAT COPING SKILLS OF TAKING CARE OF SOMETHING.

**MELISSA MURRAY
CHS SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER**

Coppell Farmers Market manager Amanda Austin said. "People are adapting, but some vendors are actually doing really well with their sales. There's a lot of high demand for products right now so some people like our vegetable farmers and bread makers and our elderberry producer are selling more than they can handle."

The market is also encouraging consumers to pre-order and buy from vendors online when possible. Tipping generously, leaving good reviews online and buying gift cards are some other ways to support Coppell's local businesses during the pandemic.

All City of Coppell facilities, such as The CORE and the Coppell Family YMCA are closed for residents until at least April 28, excluding the Coppell Justice Center. The citywide closures mean that employees of all non-essential services and Coppell facilities are out of work, either temporarily or permanently.

"Both small and large businesses have been hit hard," Coppell-based Event Technology Services (ETS) employee Paolo Ricossa said. "I love my job and staying at home is against my nature, but for now I'm working on getting some new certifications and studying more for my job while I can."

To help stay safe amidst the pandemic, some essential services have been implementing new sanitation procedures for their employees.

"Every hour, we clean every register and we now have people coming in just to clean parts of the store rather than

working at a register or a department,"

said CHS junior Nicole Carroll, who works at Tom Thumb on Denton Tap Road.

"We have plastic [shields] on our registers that protect us, we have to wash our hands every hour or so and we wear gloves at times too."

The new lifestyles as a result of COVID-19 can be an opportunity to appreciate the people we interact with.

"What I hope happens through all of this is that we find a new normal," Murray said via email. "One where we value our grocery staff, food workers and first responders and doctors with an even greater appreciation. I hope people have relearned the value of spending time home with family, and that some things we thought were so important, really weren't."



Photo by Samantha Freeman

**MARCH 10
FIRST CASE IN DALLAS COUNTY**

**MARCH 13
CISD ANNOUNCES SCHOOL CLOSURES**



Photo by Samantha Freeman

**MARCH 18
FIRST CASE IN COPPELL**



Photo by Samantha Freeman

**APRIL 3
UIL ACTIVITIES SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY**



Photo by Tracy Tran

